

BUILDING SOCIALISM IN THE NATIONAL CLASSROOM:
EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN SOVIET UKRAINE, 1923-30

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BUILDING SOCIALISM IN THE NATIONAL CLASSROOM: EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN SOVIET UKRAINE, 1923-30

In the early 1920s, the Soviet government in the republic of Ukraine embarked on an ambitious project to teach Ukrainian children in their native tongue. The establishment of a network of Ukrainian-language primary schools was part of a republic-wide program known as Ukrainization, which called for the promotion of the Ukrainian language and professional advancement of Ukrainian ethnic elites. This study, based on archival evidence and contemporaneous press accounts, analyzes the Ukrainization of primary schools, arguably the policy's greatest success. It contends that educational planners pursued a program for social transformation by linking Ukrainian-language instruction with an innovative, progressive pedagogy. Soviet authorities believed that a Ukrainian "new school" would allow teachers to effectively and quickly train children for a public role in the new socialist state. However, the number of Ukrainian-speakers in the Communist Party remained proportionately small. Authorities relied on non-party intelligentsia for the design and implementation of Ukrainization. As educators assumed a central role in the campaign, the party grew apprehensive about its capacity to control their initiative. Complaints by Russian-speaking parents regarding the forced Ukrainization of their children also gave the party further reason for concern.

Although teachers' qualitative knowledge of Ukrainian continued to be poor after Ukrainization was formally achieved in the schools, this study concludes that the enthusiastic efforts of some educators and the ardent support of their patrons in the government unnerved the party's leadership. It condemned what it viewed as nationalism

in the schools because it did not have direct management over the classroom and feared the potential corruption of the very generation it hoped would “build socialism.” It ultimately sanctioned the arrest and trial of teachers who had too warmly welcomed Ukrainization and the pedagogical experimentation it had permitted.

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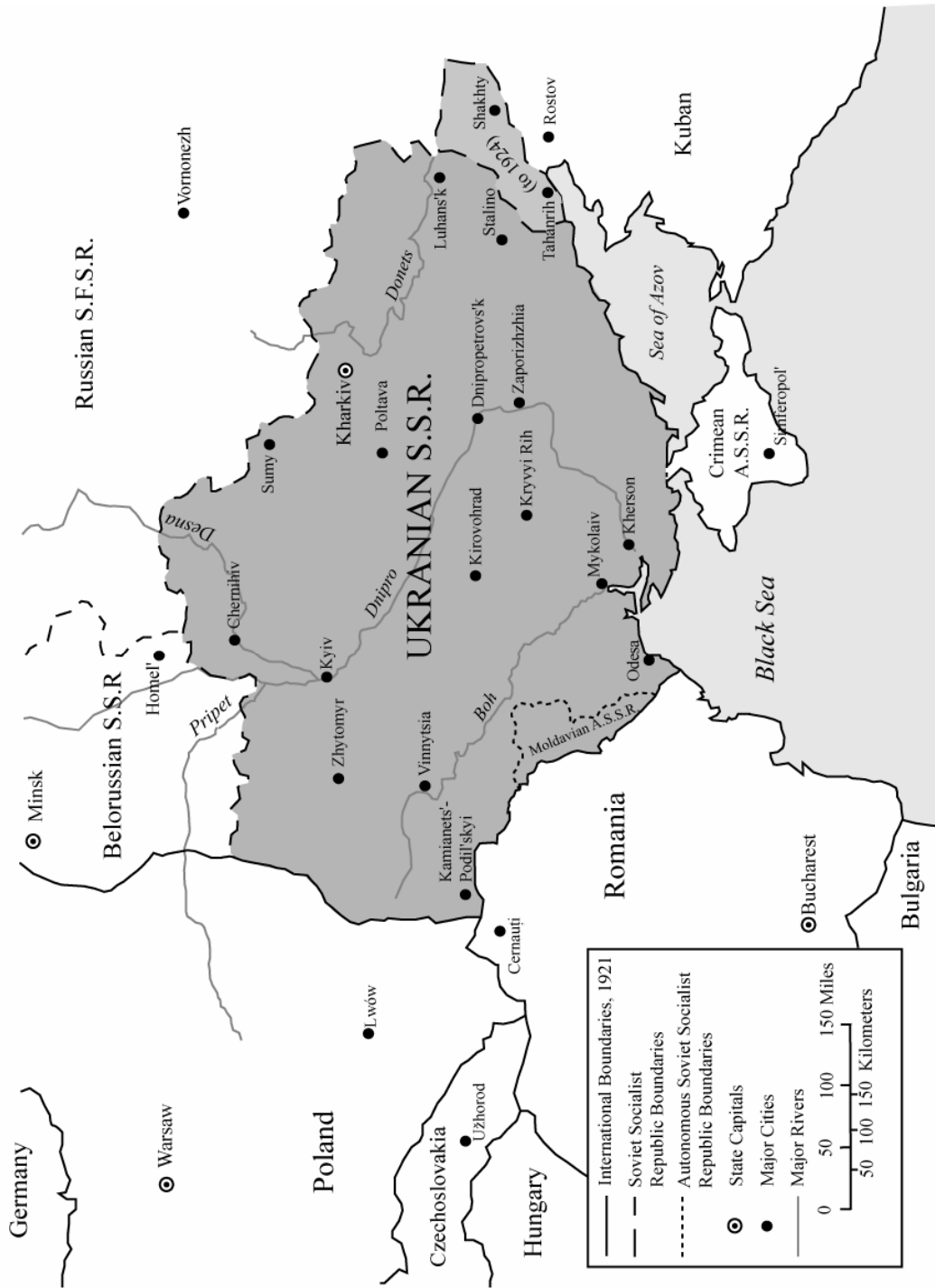
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List of Terms

agitprop	Central Committee propaganda section
Borotbist	Member of left wing of the Ukrainian SRs
DPU	State Political Directorate, the Soviet security apparatus
FZU	Factory Apprenticeship School
DVU	State Publishing House of Ukraine
Holovsotsvykh huberniia	Main Administration for Social Upbringing, later Upratsvykh administrative territory (province), replaced gradually by okruha
KP(b)U	Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine
KPZU	Communist Party of Western Ukraine
<i>kraieznavstvo</i>	regional studies
Komsomol	Union of Communist Youth
<i>korenizatsiia</i>	policy promoting non-Russian cadres and languages
liknep	Narkomos committee to liquidate illiteracy
Narkomos	People's Commissariat of Education, UkSSR
Narkompros	People's Commissariat of Education, RSFSR
NEP	New Economic Policy
okruha	administrative territory (region), smaller than huberniia
<i>perevirka</i>	examination, used to test teachers' Ukrainian knowledge
<i>poradnyk</i>	guide to instructional methodology, distributed by Holovsotsvykh
<i>profshkola</i>	professional school
Radnarkom	Council of People's Commissars, UkSSR
raion	small administrative territory (district)
Robos	Ukrainian branch of the Union of Educational Workers
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
ShKM	School for Collective Farm Youth
SR	Member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party
SVU	Union for the Liberation of Ukraine
SUM	Union of Ukrainian Youth
<i>trudshkola</i>	labor school
TsK	Central Committee of the KP(b)U or VKP(b)
UkSSR	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VKP(b)	All-Union Communist Party
VUAN	All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences
VUTsVK	All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee
Young Pioneers	Communist organization for children, overseen by Komsomol

A Note on Transliteration

This study uses the Library of Congress system for transliteration of Ukrainian. I have suppressed soft signs for proper names in the text, but retained them in the footnotes and bibliography for accurate reference. Additionally, I have used Ukrainian place names and Ukrainian abbreviations for republican branches of government, noting the Russian variant in parentheses at their first mention. Lastly, I have relied on transliteration from the Russian for non-Ukrainian party figures.



Map 1. The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, 1921-1933.
 Adapted From Paul Robert Magosci, Ukraine: A Historical Atlas. (University of Toronto Press, 1985), p.22

Introduction

*Now we issue a call for Ukrainization, for a rebirth of national culture for social reasons, in the name of a living historical current which takes us through the vast mouth of a river to the sea of a new social life.*¹

In 1923, Soviet authorities began a nationalities program that promised the transformation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR) and the creation of a new society. Labeled Ukrainization, the campaign was part of the larger policy of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization), an all-Union strategy for the advancement of non-Russian languages and promotion of non-Russians in the Communist Party, republican governments, and trade unions. While there has been much scholarly attention placed on party level debates over Ukrainization, there has not been a detailed examination of how the program was realized on a local level. Thus, this dissertation begins with a simple question: How was Ukrainization both experienced and interpreted by the individuals who were entrusted with its execution and success?

Primary schools provide the most productive arena in which to investigate this question since these schools were the sites of Ukrainization's most rapid achievements. According to the 1926 census, 80.0 percent of the UkSSR's population was ethnically Ukrainian.² On paper, the percentage of Ukrainian-language schools rose from 50.7 percent at the beginning of 1923 to 87 percent by 1932.³ Ukrainian Commissariat of

¹ P. Sapukhin, "Spravy ukrainizatsii. Oblik ukrainizatsiia vchytel'stva," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 15 December 1925, 3.

² George Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1928-1934* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 188. The 1926 census was the last official census until 1939.

³ *Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vykonnykh orhaniv Ukrainy (TsDAVOU)*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 129; Krawchenko, 135.

Education (*Narodnii komisariat osvity - Narkomos*) records, party communications, pedagogical journals, and the teachers' newspaper not only chronicle the development of Ukrainization, but also how educators both understood and employed directives. What emerges from these documents, however, is not simply an account of the development of Ukrainian-language instruction, but the reimagining of the entire school curriculum. The party intended schools to be the training ground for a new generation of skilled, politically conscious, and economically informed Soviet citizens, and Ukrainization was seen as the primary means to this end. It was through the national language that the Soviet ideal was to be realized.

But as this material illustrates, Ukrainization in the schools was by no means easily accomplished. The success of the linguistic aspect of Ukrainization relied on educators who would not only teach children in Ukrainian, but also instruct government bureaucrats, party officials, and rank and file workers in the language. Additionally, they had an immense amount of responsibility within the classroom itself. Teachers had to use and, in many cases learn, not only a new language of instruction, but also a radical form of pedagogy. Further, despite proclamations regarding the importance of education, the reality was that the Communist Party's support of the new educational system and its trust of teachers were limited. A group of leading educators was among the first to suffer because of the party's suspicion of their management of everyday Ukrainization. This fear stemmed less from an actual threat and more from the concern of republican and central authorities about a program that had the potential to become unmanageable. The arrest and denouncement of prominent non-party Ukrainizers foreshadow the

abandonment of a particular form of social transformation that they had supported. What ultimately becomes apparent through an investigation of Ukrainization on the local level is that language and the school house were inextricably linked.

Assessing Ukrainization

By choosing to focus on the daily implementation of Ukrainization, this study parts with previous works largely concerned with high level discussions of nationalities policy. James Mace's groundbreaking look at Ukrainian national communism centers on Moscow's response to debates over the scope and intent of Ukrainization within the UkSSR.⁴ He ably describes some of the party leadership's early identification of "deviations" in nationalities policy and his account of the active Ukrainization work undertaken by administrators in the Commissariat of Education (Narkomos) and the intelligentsia provided direction for this study's focus on schooling. However, Mace's final concern is the formulation (and constraint) of an ideology of national communism, not the day-to-day implementation of Ukrainization. Similarly, George Liber's work on identity formation during Ukrainization describes the policy's quantitative successes, but says less about the mechanics of the program. He cites a trend towards increased Ukrainian self-identification in the trade unions and party and an important rise in the urbanization of ethnic Ukrainians: between 1920 and 1926 the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians in the republic's cities rose from 32.2 to 47.2 percent.⁵ However, Liber stops

⁴ James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1983).

⁵ The proportion of ethnic Russians and Jews in the cities dropped from 33.4 to 25.0 percent and 29.0 to 22.7 percent respectively. Liber, 187.

short of broadly demonstrating how individuals interacted in and understood this newly legitimized and defined Ukrainian-speaking environment. It is only by highlighting the story of those whom Soviet republican authorities tasked to carry out Ukrainization that we approach a real understanding of the policy's degree of acceptance and impact.

This work's close reading of the daily implementation of Ukrainization points to an important conclusion underemphasized by other scholars: the formal, linguistic Ukrainization of institutions did not mean a qualitative improvement in their use of Ukrainian. This phenomenon is particularly troubling regarding schooling, an area frequently cited for evidence of the policy's greatest success. Liber argues a Ukrainian environment had developed beyond its rural core due to the campaign of the KP(b)U - the Ukrainian branch of the Communist Party - for the promotion of Ukrainian culture, literature, and press and advancement of Ukrainian cadres. Terry Martin, in his authoritative work *The Affirmative Action Empire*, maintains that an urban linguistic predominance of Ukrainian never existed in any prevailing fashion and, unlike Mace and Liber, Martin provides detailed statistical and anecdotal evidence to demonstrate some of the problems associated with Ukrainization.⁶ However, he views language transformation in the schools as largely untroubled, a finding which this study disputes.

Martin describes the Ukrainization of schooling as "natural" and "routine."⁷ While this was Narkomos's goal, teachers did not make the transition easily. They continued to use Russian or a mixture of the two languages that few Ukrainian speakers could recognize. Most Young Pioneer youth groups continued to use Russian exclusively

⁶ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-39* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 122-123.

⁷ Martin, 86-87.

and urban children fell into Russian outside the classroom. Martin is correct in noting that by 1926 Soviet republican leaders considered the formal Ukrainization of primary schools complete. However, this meant only that educational authorities had succeeded in grouping ethnic Ukrainian schoolchildren together. Furthermore, the process was far from automatic. It met resistance from both educators and parents who opposed or passively resisted a shift in the language of instruction. Narkomos considered Ukrainization unfinished until there had been both a significant improvement in language instruction and universal enrollment of school-age Ukrainian children. At the beginning of the 1925 school year, only 34.8 percent of all 8 to 15 year-old children in the republic were enrolled. If the account is limited to children 8 to 11 years-old, 63 percent of this subgroup was enrolled. Significantly, school enrollment of 8 to 11 year-old children was worse in the largely ethnic Ukrainian countryside relative to the city: 59 percent compared to 79 percent.⁸ Although the proportion of children attending school increased throughout the 1920s, rural areas would continue to lag behind. In 1926, ethnic Ukrainians constituted 87.5 percent of the rural population in the republic as a whole.⁹

While it is true that teachers often exhibited apathy and hostility towards Ukrainization, the documentary record illustrates that this was not universally the case. The fact that teachers were publishing critical articles in the teachers' newspaper *Narodnii uchytel*,¹⁰ exhorting their colleagues to build socialism in the manner advocated by the party, meant that some had taken up the charge. This study highlights a number of the problems associated with Ukrainization, but it should not be forgotten that there was a

⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 166, ark. 77.

⁹ Liber, 188.

¹⁰ This spelling is the correct transliteration of the newspaper's title as it was originally published.

cohort of committed Ukrainizers, most of whom were teachers. Without them, the policy would have died a much earlier death. Furthermore, there is evidence that if teachers gave children time and proper instruction, they adopted the Ukrainian language with relatively little effort. A confident Ukrainian-speaking generation might have developed throughout the republic if the prevailing climate had been different.¹¹

Redeeming “Soft-Line” Ukrainization

Additionally, this dissertation stresses the importance of a discussion of “soft-line” Ukrainization and contests the assumption that activities in this area had little meaning. According to Martin, hard-line Ukrainization had two components: firstly, the party, Central Control Commission, and Council of People’s Commissars would assume responsibility for Ukrainization and apply it to economic and political institutions; secondly, it would use force to ensure compliance.¹² By contrast, Martin places education and so-called “culture building” in a category of soft-line Ukrainization, characterized by Narkomos oversight and persuasion. Since Narkomos’s activities did not control party administration, Martin minimizes their significance. This division seems overdrawn. Success in Ukrainization did rely on the party’s authority, but it was Narkomos agents and “soft-line” Ukrainizers who decided what officials in “hard-line” institutions needed to know. It was their yardstick that determined whether progress had

¹¹ Bohdan Krawchenko cites Iosyp Hermaize, a well-known pedagogue and literary specialist to argue that such a new generation, “organically tied to the Ukrainian language,” had already developed. Soviet security services would later arrest Hermaize for membership in an alleged Ukrainian nationalist organization. Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth Century Ukraine* (Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1985), 92.

¹² Martin, 119.

been achieved. Narkomos had considerably less power to enforce agreement, but educational officials acted against troublemakers in organs directly under their control and could draw attention to problems elsewhere. Lastly, perceived problems in soft-line areas, such as education, occasioned direct party interest.

In the discussion that follows, the hand of the party leadership is often absent with the exception of key junctures: the First All-Union Party Meeting on Education in 1920, the promulgation of Ukrainization in 1923, the KP(b)U's repeated rejection of "forced" Ukrainization of ethnic Russians in 1926, its censure and ousting of Commissar of Education Oleksandr Shumskyi in 1926-27, its growing suspicion of nationalism among educators and sanction of a trial of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in 1930, and the Second All-Union Party Meeting on Education's decision to eliminate a separate Ukrainian educational system. This is not because central and republican party authorities did not care about the direction of educational policy, but rather because they entrusted daily management of its course to Narkomos and intervened most directly when they perceived a need for a correction. Narkomos had considerable freedom to design educational policy in the interim.

Apart from the Shumskyi affair, less is said here about central party interference because, for the period between 1923 and 1930, Stalin's views regarding Ukrainization generally coincided with those of the principal republican leaders tasked with overseeing the campaign, namely Lazar Kaganovich and Mykola Skrypnyk. Ultimately, the party leadership in Moscow determined the direction of nationalities policy and its instructions to the KP(b)U were instrumental in designing the campaign against non-party educators

in 1930. However, the KP(b)U also reported internally about a supposed growth in nationalism and was concerned with maintaining party control over Ukrainization.

While the KP(b)U assigned the field of education little funds, in time it came to fear the potential influence educators might have. The party's own lack of attention in the end became the liability it identified most. Martin suggests that the central and republican party leadership instituted a campaign of repression against prominent members of the intelligentsia and educators because it had always viewed them as opportunistic collaborators and saw the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan as an auspicious time to get rid of them. This conviction is certainly part of the reason for the intelligentsia's repression. Yet, fundamentally party authorities grew fearful because non-party educators defined and instituted Ukrainization on a daily basis. Soft-line Ukrainization was not innocuous. The party believed that the consequences of it going awry were considerable and acted to correct its course. For republican leaders, like Skrypnyk, who were actively involved in Ukrainization's promotion and alteration, the repression of the campaign's non-party activists was a fatal act.

Decisions made in defining the course of language policy can have profound social and political consequences. Speaking on the standardization of French during the first French Revolution, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that, "the conflict between the French of the revolutionary intelligentsia and the dialects of patois was a struggle for symbolic power in which what was at stake was the formation and re-formation of mental structures."¹³ This intelligentsia sought not just to facilitate communication, but assert a

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 48.

“new language of authority” that incorporated a political vocabulary that peasant dialects could not express. Similarly, the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education hoped to disseminate a standardized Ukrainian through the schools, not only to supplant Russian as the dominant language and enable efficient communication between regions, but alter peasant and urban attitudes. Although there was disagreement within the central party leadership regarding the former task, most authorities aligned themselves with the latter. In the years following the civil war, Narkomos believed that an urban-rural union was a necessary prerequisite to the building of socialism. Socialism would falter if cities could not effectively administer rural communities and procure the agricultural goods necessary to feed a workforce for industrialization. The peasantry had to see familiarity in the city to accept its leadership. Furthermore, a common linguistic (and symbolic) culture would enable peasant migrants to the city to work effectively upon arrival. As Michael Smith puts it, for Soviet authorities, language was “a fundamental tool of political power, economic production, and social management.”¹⁴ It intended language to assert control over Russians and non-Russians alike.

Schools played a critical part in this campaign. To return to Bourdieu, an educational system is essential “in the process which leads to the construction, legitimation, and imposition of an official language.”¹⁵ Groups fight for control over education because the rewards are high. An educational system has a monopoly on the creation of producers and consumers of language because it assigns “a social value to linguistic competence.” If schools legitimized Ukrainian and made proficiency in

¹⁴ Michael G. Smith, *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR, 1917-1953* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998), 7.

¹⁵ Bourdieu, 48.

standardized Ukrainian a requirement for educational advancement, speakers would act to protect and perpetuate this “linguistic capital.”

As will be discussed below, the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN) worked through the 1920s to define accepted rules for grammar and syntax, but Narkomos relied on teachers to inculcate standardized Ukrainian in children. This was a purposeful act: “through its grammarians, who fix and codify legitimate usage, and its teachers who impose and inculcate it . . . the educational system tends, in this area as elsewhere, to produce the need for its own services and its own products.”¹⁶ At least, this was what Narkomos intended. An educational system had the capacity not just to transfer knowledge, but to shape the habits of language speakers and the general language environment. As such, it had intrinsic power.

Scholars have underscored the role of education as a component of *korenizatsiia*, although generally native-language instruction at the primary school level is assumed to have been an accomplished fact.¹⁷ Clearly, the potential of education to influence the wider language environment was critical. For example, in Turkic regions of the Soviet Union, authorities promoted “selected patterns of linguistic and ethnic separation already

¹⁶ Bourdieu, 60-61.

¹⁷ Collections of essays on Soviet nationalities policy include Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Isabelle Kreindler, ed. *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Soviet National Languages* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1985); Michael Kirkwood, ed., *Language Planning in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990). In addition to those already cited, some monographs which deal with the subject include Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development: The Uzbek Experience* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991); Helene Carrere D'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917-1930*, trans. Nancy Festinger (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*. Rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

in place.”¹⁸ In doing so, they codified and raised linguistic categories, thereby fostering the predominance of specified identities perpetuated in cultural institutions such as the schools. Similarly, the Soviets hoped a move towards latinization of Turkic languages would break the authority of Arabist clerics and the old intelligentsia, as well as increase literacy in newly defined vernaculars for Turkic speakers and Europeans alike.¹⁹ The effect of these measures was not immediate in the schools due to low enrollment by non-European children. This dissertation seeks to move beyond a discussion of language planning to an investigation of its implementation, to its use as an instrument of political and social control.

The Intersection of Education and Language

Work on this study began with research on Ukrainization in the schools, but it soon became apparent that much more was taking place in the field of education than a shift in the language of instruction. The revolution offered an opportunity for substantial reform in what and how schools taught. With the exception of Stepan Siropolko’s 1934 classic, no comprehensive work on the early years of Soviet Ukrainian schooling has been published outside of Ukraine.²⁰ Soviet-era surveys reveal less about the true course of educational policy or the acts of individual educators and planners due to their focus

¹⁸ Smith, 50.

¹⁹ William Fierman, “Language Development in Soviet Uzbekistan,” in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Soviet National Languages*, ed. Isabelle T. Kreindler (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1985), 210.

²⁰ Stepan Siropolko, *Narodnia osvita na soviets’kii Ukraini* (Warszawa: Pratsi ukrains’koho naukovooho instytutu, 1934). For a brief sketch on the Ukrainian educational system, see I. Krylov, *Systema osvity v Ukraini: 1917-1930* (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1956).

on statistical successes.²¹ A 1996 edited volume by Oksana Sukhomlynska presents a broader and more accurate picture, but is concerned foremost with methodology and uses limited archival evidence.²² This dissertation attempts to address the gap in our knowledge of what occurred at the level of the primary school classroom, by examining the understudied intersection between the two overriding demands the school faced: Ukrainization and pedagogical reform. Narkomos conceived of the two objectives as fundamentally compatible strategies and any history of schooling in this period must consider both Narkomos's rationale for this correlation and how the policies actually interplayed.

While research on non-Russian schooling has generally focused solely on the language aspect of educational policy, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Larry Holmes have addressed the other side of the equation, structural reform and methodological innovation, but almost wholly in the Russian context. Both Fitzpatrick and Holmes emphasize that leaders of the Russian Commissariat of Education (Narkompros) expected primary schools would function as a conversional mechanism. Fitzpatrick writes that once teachers had adopted a progressive curriculum, "it was hoped that they would automatically develop a Marxist world-view and pass it on to their pupils."²³ Similarly, Larry Holmes argues that "Narkompros wanted nothing less than a world of

²¹ See, for example, H. I. Iasnyts'kyi, *Rozvytok narodnoi osvity na Ukraini (1921-1932 rr.)* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Kyivs'koho universytetu, 1965); A. H. Bondar and others, eds., *Narodna osvita i pedahohichna nauka v Ukrains'kii RSR* (Kyiv: Radians'ka shkola, 1967).

²² O. V. Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstva (1905-1933)* (Kyiv: Zapovit, 1996). See also P. I. Drob'iazko, *Ukrains'ka natsional'na shkola: vytoky i suchasnist'* (Kyiv: Akademiia, 1997).

²³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union: 1921-1934* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 18-19.

fundamentally-altered structures and values.”²⁴ In Ukraine, this approach took on an added transformative aspect along the lines Bourdieu suggests. Not only would Ukrainian schools use new pedagogy for this “reformation of mental structures,” they would empower a new “language of authority”-- Ukrainian. Furthermore, an overriding Soviet conviction in the state’s responsibility to assume control of the raising and reorientation of children had greater force in Ukraine because of the territory’s experience with the civil war. Much of the fighting took place on Ukrainian soil and it left thousands of children orphaned or homeless. Narkomos placed these destitute children in homes and emphasized the superiority of their collective education in these institutions over the individualistic family. The legacy of this conviction reinforced a commitment to “social upbringing” in the schools. While the Young Pioneers- the Communist children’s organization- remained weak, the responsibility for a socialist education fell to the teacher.

The principal structural difference between Russian and Ukrainian schools was at the secondary level, but the distinction between the two was also theoretical. Unlike its Russian counterpart, the Ukrainian Narkomos did away wholly with a general secondary education and established a two-year professional school (*profshkola*). Part of the rationale for this change was Ukraine’s desperate need to train workers quickly to rebuild and develop industry. However, it was not the case that the Ukrainian system was simply predicated, as Fitzpatrick argues, on the “distant ideal of a smoothly functioning socialist economy, in which all resources including human ones were rationally supplied and

²⁴ Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1991), 4.

distributed according to a central plan.”²⁵ Narkomos officials regularly insisted that the *profshkoly* were not trade schools. Rather, they intended to give students a familiarity with a type of production and its place in the economy as a whole. At the primary school level, Narkomos linked the seven-year labor school (*trudshkola*) to the *profshkola* through an emphasis on exposure to labor. Hryhorii Hrynko, Ukrainian commissar of education from 1920 to 1922, insisted that Ukraine must have the freedom to design schools attuned to the republic’s specific needs. This meant that in Ukraine, unlike in Russia, cultural training in the schools would ideally coincide with pursuit of economic goals and not precede them. A Ukrainian program for a production-oriented “complex system” at the primary school was similar to that in Russia, but it had greater significance because of the direction of the whole system of education.

In both Russia and Ukraine, educational planners pushed schools to localize study as much as possible. Russian provincial educational departments even recommended that teachers instruct students in local dialects, the “living languages,” instead of teaching them formalized grammar.²⁶ In the Ukrainian republic, authorities encouraged native language schooling for national minorities, but codified and promoted a standardized Ukrainian for ethnic Ukrainian children. National minorities studied this standardized Ukrainian as a separate subject. Furthermore, although Narkomos ordered that all study begin at the local level, teachers were to broaden the circle of this study outwards, as the students progressed, to the Ukrainian republic. Part of the intent of this expansion was to link the city and village in the minds of schoolchildren, but it also served to reify a notion

²⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 45.

²⁶ Holmes, 10-11.

of a Ukrainian territorial homeland, a benefactor for Ukrainians in Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as the other Soviet republics. Narkomos hoped that schools would function as a base for regional studies (*kraeiznavsvto*) for the communities in which they were situated and encourage study of the republic. It placed heavy emphasis on a public analysis of the economic potential of the UkSSR and sought to motivate citizens to contribute to its further development.

Reality, however, did not always match the ideal. This study corroborates Holmes's findings regarding the difficulties Soviet authorities had in implementing a bold educational plan. Teachers lacked the experience to understand what was expected of them, let alone innovate in the manner that Narkomos advised. They taught with little pay, instruction, or support. As their attempts to implement instruction by the complex method faltered, so did the academic achievement of their students. Parents, and even some educational authorities, demanded a return to instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In Ukraine, teachers confronted the added burden of abiding by and enforcing Ukrainization. Some complained that the Ukrainization campaign, put in place ostensibly to aid teaching, was complicating their best efforts to institute the new pedagogy. Narkomos's solution was better Ukrainization: an improvement in teachers' use of Ukrainian and the complete transfer of all instruction to Ukrainian in designated schools. Language and Ukrainian studies were fundamental components of the drive for educational innovation.

The Importance of the SVU Show Trial

Narkomos was pursuing a dangerous experiment. It advocated a methodology that required individual creativity on the part of teachers, asking only that they conform to broadly outlined standards. They were teaching the values of socialism in Ukrainian and through distinctly Ukrainian subjects. The party began to worry about what information teachers were actually passing to their students. Ernest Gellner has argued that states institute "universal, standardized, and generic" education systems in order to equip society for economic development.²⁷ These educational systems enable members of a community to speak with each other not only in the same language, also but on the basis of the same experience in the "universalized" national culture introduced in the schools. The Communist Party leadership developed its own innate Gellnerian sense of the potential capacity of schools to teach an orientation it did not control. In actual fact, the Ukrainian educational system was not universal, standardized, or generic, but the party was concerned that the ties between schools were strong enough to enable a common transmission of a mentality that diverged from Soviet aims. The educational system's mixture of flexibility in implementation but coordination in strategy is precisely what made Soviet leaders fear its combustibility. The progressive educational system that Narkomos had created relied far too greatly on teachers' individual initiative. It was possible they would use the classroom for subversive instruction.

In the end, the party did not trust educators. Part of this was a result of a longstanding suspicion that the cooperation of non-party elements with Soviet authorities was temporary, as Martin argues. However, this distrust was also a consequence of the

²⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 29.

lack of the KP(b)U's command over Ukrainization. The course of Ukrainization could not be neatly set. Michael Smith writes: "We should not underestimate the dynamism and treacherousness of language. It was conducive and valent in ways which Soviet leaders were able to control, and in ways that they never could."²⁸ In pursuing Ukrainization, the KP(b)U conceded a dependence on national elites and simultaneously created "political and cultural spaces" in which Ukrainian-speakers moved without strict restraint. This did not mean that teachers acted against Soviet power, just that they were not always passive executors of the party's intent.

The final ambition of this study is to demonstrate the central role that the show trial of the Union for Liberation of Ukraine (*Spilka vyzvolennia Ukrainy, SVU*) - a nationalist organization fabricated by the Soviet security apparatus (DPU or OGPU in Russian) - played in determining the future of Ukrainization. Although the KP(b)U's identification in November 1933 of "local Ukrainian nationalism" as the preeminent danger to Soviet power in the republic is generally seen to be the definitive marker of an end to Ukrainization, this study questions whether any progress could have been achieved in the field of education after 1930, despite statistical evidence of "complete" Ukrainization in schooling. Responding to central and republican party concerns about growing nationalism in the Ukrainian cultural field, the DPU sent a critical signal to would-be, activist Ukrainizers with the SVU affair: it arrested some of the most prominent Ukrainizing educators, claimed that teachers throughout the republic were involved in counterrevolutionary nationalist activities directed by the SVU, and suggested that one of the organization's chief activities was the indoctrination and

²⁸ Smith, 7.

recruitment of the young into a parallel youth organization. In the climate of fear that followed the trial, teachers had every reason to shirk the task of Ukrainization and evidence from 1930 demonstrates that many had already taken this course. Schools were formally Ukrainized, but teachers did little to improve their quality of instruction.

The SVU show trial coincided with moves towards the abandonment of the complex system and the subordination of the Ukrainian school system. The indictment of leading Ukrainizers, who were simultaneously well-known educational innovators, permitted republican authorities to blame what they now identified as the disorder of the complex method on nationalist saboteurs. The perception of a wayward educational system offered a rationale for the centralization of education under stricter all-Union control. The same suspicion of independent teachers and scholars that had led to the fabrication of the SVU motivated these moves towards a regimentation of the methodology and structure of education. Narkomos had looked at progressive pedagogy as a way of shaping the next generation, but the potential errant development of this group became a lurking political fear. The commissariat had intended Ukrainization to enable educational progressivism. The damage that the SVU show trial did to Ukrainization created an opportunity for the rejection of this task.

Education in Central and Eastern Ukraine Prior to 1920

In order to fully understand the impact of Ukrainization and radical pedagogical reform in the 1920s, a brief discussion of education in Ukraine in the late tsarist and revolutionary periods is necessary. Few children in Russia's Ukrainian provinces

received a satisfactory education in the years leading up to the revolution. After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, zemstva (local government bodies) assumed responsibility for the management of rural general education. Their initiative led to the construction of new schools and the replacement of rote learning of religious texts with instruction in subject areas such as mathematics, history, and geography.²⁹ Nevertheless, between two-thirds to four-fifths of school-age children still did not attend school in 1914-15.³⁰ Peasant families often could not afford school materials and fees or risk losing the labor of their children. For the 1.5 million children who were enrolled in some form of primary school, the number of teachers was insufficient. A single teacher sometimes oversaw a student body of over 100.³¹ Teachers in the Russian empire were drawn from a variety of educational institutions, but the overwhelming majority had a secondary or incomplete secondary education and 12.3 percent had only a primary school education in 1910.³² Many lacked formal certification and, as new schools were built and men and women were recruited to staff them, the proportion of qualified teachers dropped.³³ In the Ukrainian provinces, less than a 25 percent of teachers were ethnic Ukrainians according to the 1897 census. However, their proportion was higher on the left bank of the Dnipro (Dnepr) river: 40 percent.³⁴ Where they were present, Ukrainian teachers played a significant role in the growing national movement.

²⁹ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 300.

³⁰ Krawchenko, 23; Bondar, 8.

³¹ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 11.

³² Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1917* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 195.

³³ Scott Seregny, *Russian Teachers and Peasant Revolution: The Politics of Education in 1905* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 13.

³⁴ Krawchenko, 35-36.

There were no state-supported Ukrainian schools in the Russian Empire before 1917. Tsar Alexander I's educational reform of 1804 forbade instruction in the Ukrainian variant of Church Slavonic and the government extended this prohibition to modern literary Ukrainian.³⁵ Although Ukrainian activists established over one hundred Ukrainian-language Sunday schools from 1859 to 1862, provincial authorities eventually shut all these down.³⁶ Furthermore, in July 1863 Minister of Interior Petr Valuev proposed that censors only permit the distribution of *belles lettres* in the "Little Russian dialect." He barred, in specific, the publication of Ukrainian instructional and religious texts. An imperial commission appointed by Alexander II in 1876 to investigate rumors of subversive activity by Ukrainophilic intelligentsia recommended a further ban against the importation of Ukrainian texts from abroad (chiefly, Austrian Galicia, where a large Ukrainian community resided) and instructed the Ministry of Education to prohibit Ukrainian-language instruction in primary schools, replace Ukrainophilic teachers, and remove Ukrainian literature from libraries.³⁷ Alexander II confirmed these provisions in what became known as the Ems decree, named after the German town where he was then vacationing.

The 1905 revolution forced the government to make some limited concessions to its population, including a modification of its practices towards the Ukrainian language. The national intelligentsia took advantage of the more liberal environment that followed the tsar's apparent promulgation of civil rights and established eighteen Ukrainian-language newspapers and journals throughout Ukraine and in Moscow and St.

³⁵ Krawchenko, 24.

³⁶ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 14.

³⁷ Subtelny, 283.

Petersburg. However, the government placed subscribers under police surveillance and shut down nearly all the newspapers by 1914.³⁸ The first official attempt to open Ukrainian-language primary schools was made in 1908 by thirty-seven deputies in the newly created parliament, the State Duma. Their proposal was passed to a committee on education and promptly shelved.³⁹

Teachers recognized that Russian instruction negatively affected Ukrainian student performance. They claimed that their students found it difficult to learn and retain new information taught in the classroom. The Ukrainian-language newspaper *Rada* reported that truancy rates for ethnic Ukrainian children were twice as high compared to their Russian and Jewish counterparts (a phenomenon that could equally be attributed to rural Ukrainian families' reliance on child agricultural labor).⁴⁰ Teachers attending summer courses in Kyiv (Kiev) in May 1906 passed a resolution demanding the opening of national schools for Ukrainians and students enrolled in pedagogical courses throughout the Ukrainian provinces began to demand coursework in Ukrainian literature, history, and geography.⁴¹

In spite of the fact that the government had conceded native language instruction for other national minorities, the Council of Ministers obstinately refused to permit state or *zemstvo* sponsorship of Ukrainian-language primary schooling. The Ministry of Education did allow two private schools to use Ukrainian prior to the 1905 revolution and

³⁸ Drob'iazko, 78.

³⁹ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 19.

⁴⁰ Krawchenko, 23, 25.

⁴¹ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 20; Drob'iazko, 80.

three thereafter, but no more.⁴² Although the intelligentsia continued to back the publication of Ukrainian-language textbooks, these were primarily used by the reading circles set up by the Ukrainian cultural and educational society, *Prosvita*. The government closely monitored the activities of even this institution. Ministry officials continued to maintain that there was a single Russian nation and saw no need to set up schools to instruct children in a dialectal variation.

The February 1917 revolution dramatically altered matters. The Provisional Government, set up in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) after Tsar Nicholas II's overthrow, issued orders for Ukrainian-language schooling to begin in the first grade.⁴³ The Central Rada, the representative body which held de facto power in Ukraine, established a General Secretariat of Education after issuing a manifesto (the First Universal) declaring Ukrainian autonomy. After the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, the Central Rada proclaimed the establishment of an autonomous Ukrainian National Republic. The General Secretariat of Education subsequently installed a highly decentralized network of provincial and district educational commissariats and multi-national school councils. Actual day-to-day administration of education fell to these local institutions.

Due to the absence of funds and a strong administrative structure, teachers and public associations assumed much of the work for Ukrainian-language schooling. The All-Ukrainian Teachers' Union organized short-term courses for training teachers in Ukrainian-language instruction during the summer of 1917.⁴⁴ Its Congress in August 1917 resolved to begin Ukrainization of primary schools on September 1, although it is

⁴² Krawchenko, 264.

⁴³ Drobi'iazko, 96.

⁴⁴ Sukhomlyn's'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 80; Drobi'iazko, 96.

difficult to confirm what percentage of schools actually began this process. It planned to Ukrainize secondary schools more slowly, preferring to set up new ones initially rather than combat anti-Ukrainian sentiment among instructors in existing institutions. Fifty-three Ukrainian gymnasia were established by fall 1917.⁴⁵ A private organization, the Society of School Education, formed to begin publication of Ukrainian textbooks. The government also founded a Ukrainian National University and Pedagogical Scientific Academy. The Bolshevik invasion of Ukraine in December 1917 meant an end to the Central Rada's plan for a new system of education.

The government of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi, installed with the help of the German army after it ousted the Bolsheviks from Kyiv, attempted to recentralize education. It abolished nearly all local educational commissariats and school councils and placed educational policy under the direct control of its Ministry of Education.⁴⁶ However, the Hetmanate government continued the Central Rada's commitment to Ukrainian-language schooling. It required Ukrainian language instruction for ethnic Ukrainians beginning in the first year of primary school, published several million Ukrainian-language textbooks, and established approximately 150 new Ukrainian gymnasia.⁴⁷ Russian secondary schools were also required to teach the Ukrainian language and history as separate subjects. During the summer of 1918, it organized fifty-nine teachers' courses for Ukrainian instructors and five for Polish and Jewish teachers.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ George Y. Shevelov, *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1900-1941): Its State and Status* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1989), 74; Drob'iazko, 96.

⁴⁶ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 83.

⁴⁷ Subtelny, 357.

⁴⁸ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 84.

Lastly, it established a Ukrainian Academy of Sciences under Volodymyr Vernadskyi and Agatangel Krymskyi.

The Directory, which overthrew the Hetmanate, returned to the decentralized educational administration of the Central Rada, but continued to push for Ukrainian-language schooling. In January 1919 the Directory officially made Ukrainian the state language and its Minister of Education, Ivan Ohiienko, released preliminary rules on a new orthography to be used in the schools. The Directory also established nine new teachers' institutions, a network of two-semester courses, and a pedagogical mission in Vienna to see to the publication of textbooks.⁴⁹ The Directory, however, was constantly on the move, retreating from the Red Army. One Soviet source claims that the Directory forbade the teaching of Russian altogether and began to dismiss Russian teachers.⁵⁰ The reality was that Petliura's forces occupied land for too little time to ensure that basic educational goals were met, let alone a comprehensive program of Ukrainization, coercive or otherwise.

The Question of Language Standardization

When Ukrainization was begun in 1923, linguists had not yet definitively agreed on syntactical and orthographic norms for the language. A modern literary Ukrainian existed, but pre-revolutionary publications still displayed some dialectal variation. Progress had been hampered in Russian Ukraine due to the nineteenth century restrictions on Ukrainian-language use. The problem of linguistic standardization was complicated

⁴⁹ Sukhomlyn's'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 85

⁵⁰ Bondar, 33.

by the existence of two literary variants, one based on the Kyiv-Poltava vernacular and another on a western Ukrainian form. Furthermore, the Ukrainian speaking community remained divided by a political boundary, now between the UkSSR and Ukrainians concentrated in Poland (Galicia) and Czechoslovakia.

The principal work on language standardization took place in the UkSSR. In the pre-Ukrainization period, progress was slow. The Ukrainian Academy of Sciences set up a Section on Orthography, headed in part by Volodymyr Durdukivskiy, the director of the Taras Shevchenko Gymnasium (later Kyiv Labor School No. 1). In 1921, with the sanction of Commissar of Education Hrynko, it published a sixteen page booklet of orthographic norms modified slightly from rules compiled under the Hetmanate government.⁵¹ The Academy also established a commission under philologist Agatangel Krymskyi to compile a dictionary of the “living” (*zhyva*) Ukrainian language. In 1924 it published the first volume of a Russian-Ukrainian dictionary (*Rossiisko-ukrainskyi slovnyk*) for letters A-Zh. Ethnographic researchers recorded lexical material on stacks of cards that served as the basis for the dictionary’s entries. Linguist George Shevelov writes that the dictionary’s “vacillations between standard and dialectal, urban, and rural (often folkloric), made it somewhat eclectic and the effort to represent the standard language often collided with a desire to introduce the richest material possible.”⁵² By casting its net as widely as possible, the commission complicated the task of promoting a universalized language.

⁵¹ Shevelov, 102.

⁵² Shevelov, 104.

As the Ukrainization campaign accelerated, so did work on language standardization. Literature specialist Serhii Iefremov took over the chairmanship of the VUAN dictionary commission and published five more volumes of the *Rossiisko-ukrainskyi slovnyk*. Under the directorship of Hryhoryi Kholodnyi, the Institute of the Ukrainian Scientific Language had all but ceased work in the early Soviet period due to lack of funds, but after 1925 it gradually began to increase its activity, publishing over two dozen terminological dictionaries after 1925.⁵³ Furthermore, its researchers took a leading role in the publication of textbooks and self-study guides. Language planners regularly debated the question of how closely the literary (and, by extension, academic and technical) language should reflect dialectal forms. Paul Wexler divides what he calls “regulators” into two camps: a purist, ethnographic group that prioritized unique Ukrainian features over breadth and frequency of use and a modified ethnographic group that allowed for the incorporation of some non-native characteristics in the interest of promoting a language that could be widely recognized and used.⁵⁴ By the mid 1920s, the latter approach assumed greater importance. Iefremov minimized the *Rossiisko-ukrainskyi slovnyk*’s emphasis of local forms and it became “a representative, reliable, and fairly complete collection of Ukrainian words and idioms.”⁵⁵

The work that had the greatest impact on how Ukrainian was used on a daily basis was undertaken by a special orthographic commission, appointed by a Radnarkom (the Ukrainian Council of People’s Commissars) decree of July 23, 1925. Formally, two

⁵³ Shevelov, 108.

⁵⁴ Paul Wexler, *Purism and Language: A Study in Modern Ukrainian and Belorussian Nationalism, 1840-1967* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1974), 113-114.

⁵⁵ Shevelov, 130.

successive commissars of education headed the commission: Oleksandr Shumskyi and Mykola Skrypnyk. An orthographic conference, held from May 25 to June 6, 1927 in Kharkiv (Kharkov) under Skrypnyk's auspices, began the most concerted work on standardization. The most contentious issue at this conference was how to render loan words. The presidium of the orthographic commission later decided on a compromise that allowed for a distinction between words of Greek origin and those of modern European origin. In reality, this decision simply reflected a variation in the central and eastern Ukrainian tradition of borrowing words through Russian and the western Ukrainian practice of borrowing through Polish.⁵⁶ Skrypnyk confirmed the orthographic rules on September 6, 1929 and required their use in all schools and publications. This compromise was to ultimately break down in the mid 1930s after Skrypnyk's fall, but the conference represented an important attempt at bridging the gap between competing literary traditions. Skrypnyk invited three Galician scholars to attend the 1927 conference and their input was critical in forcing the presidium to consider an agreement that would satisfy the wider speaking community. From this perspective, the 1929 orthography should be considered a positive beginning. It was flexible enough to incorporate the two leading conventions in Ukrainian orthography and yet it significantly reduced dialectal variations as a whole.

Although by the end of the 1920s, Ukrainian scholars, writers, and publicists could still debate aspects of what was "proper" Ukrainian, the number of questions open for dispute was much smaller. When educational officials or the press criticized teachers for failing to use Ukrainian well, they already had a clear idea of what constituted a

⁵⁶ Shevelov, 131.

significant departure from a “standard” literary Ukrainian. To be sure, some teachers still relied on dialectal forms in the classroom and had difficulty procuring guides on correct terminology and the evolving orthographic rules. Nevertheless, the chief culprits of “language abuse” had little sense of literary Ukrainian at all, and used a Ukrainian based wholly on Russian cognates or interspersed with Russian words.

National communities throughout the former Russian empire were dealing with many of the same questions regarding linguistic standardization. The “normalization” of Ukrainian, like that for other languages, was neither inevitable nor immediate.⁵⁷ It required the active intervention of government and scholarly authorities. Yet, even before Ukrainization had begun, there was widespread agreement among the Ukrainian national intelligentsia and the literate population regarding the corpus of literary Ukrainian and language planners made significant progress during the 1920s towards a consensus for standardization. They intended teachers to inculcate these language norms among the next generation.

The Commissars of Education

Wherever possible, this study has attempted to give voice to the local officials and teachers responsible for carrying out Narkomos’s dual mandate for a progressive curriculum and Ukrainian-language schooling. As will be argued, educational policy in the 1920s was greatly decentralized. Narkomos set targets and outlined methodological expectations but left much of the decision-making regarding the organization of language of instruction and the content of class room lessons to its local organs. Therefore, this

⁵⁷ Wexler, 136.

study is not a history of the Narkomos apparatus, but rather an attempt to describe the consequences of its policy-making. However, a brief description of the commissariat's leading figures is offered here for the reader's reference.

During the 1920s, four Commissars of Education oversaw the development of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's educational system: Hryhorii Hrynko (1920-1922), Volodymyr Zatonskyi (1922-1923), Oleksandr Shumskyi (1924-1927), and Mykola Skrypnyk (1927-1933). All these men were ethnic Ukrainians. Two (Hrynko and Shumskyi) were former members of the Borotbist party - a nationally oriented, radical socialist offshoot of the Ukrainian SRs that joined the Bolsheviks after a failed attempt to remain independent - and two (Zatonskyi and Skrypnyk) were longstanding Bolsheviks. With the exception of Skrypnyk's tenure, their terms in office offer a general periodization of Ukrainian educational policy. *Narysy istorii ukrainskoho shkilnytstva*, edited by Oksana Sukhomlynska, contains a valuable series of biographical sketches that provides much of the information for the following accounts, apart from where noted.⁵⁸ The outline of Volodymyr Zatonskyi's life is drawn largely from the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, edited by Volodymyr Kubijovyč.

Hryhorii Hrynko was born in 1890 in the Sumy region, the son of a civil servant. He studied at the University of Moscow, was expelled in 1913 for participating in a student strike, served in the army, and then found employment teaching in a gymnasium in Kharkiv in 1917.⁵⁹ It was during the Ukrainian Revolution that he became associated with the Borotbists and in 1919, after the Borotbist merger with the Bolsheviks, served as

⁵⁸ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narysy istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 256-270.

⁵⁹ Iwan Majstrenko, *Borot'bism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism* (New York: Research Program on the USSR, 1954), 248.

a member of VUTsVK (All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee) and Radnarkom. He became commissar of education in 1920 and established the foundations of an independent Ukrainian educational system which asserted the primacy of the state's role in "raising" children (first through children's buildings and then the labor school) and began professional training of children at age 15. He headed the Ukrainian delegation to the First All-Union Party Meeting on Education, held in Moscow from December 31, 1920 to January 4, 1921. His defense of the professional orientation of the Ukrainian system won him supporters among the Komsomol and labor unions. As early as September 1920 Radnarkom had ordered Ukrainian schools to teach Ukrainian as a separate subject and government institutions to use the language alongside Russian. However, Hryenko's commissariat was much more concerned with setting up a network of schools for the war weary republic and ensuring the economy would have a trained labor force for its recovery. In 1922, Hryenko was appointed chairman of the UkSSR State Planning Commission. From 1926 to 1929 he served as deputy chairman of the USSR State Planning Commission and then USSR commissar for finance. He was arrested in 1937 and executed the following year, accused of plotting to kill Stalin.

Volodymyr Zatonskyi was born in 1888 in the Podillia huberniia (province). He was the sole commissar of education in the 1920s to complete a post-secondary degree, graduating from Kyiv University in 1912. He had a brief career as an instructor in physics at the Kyiv Polytechnical Institute. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1917, served as secretary of education in the first Soviet Ukrainian government centered in Kharkiv, and was instrumental in the formation of the KP(b)U. He was also a member of the second

Ukrainian government, founded in Kursk to reassert control over Ukraine after the Red Army was ousted by German troops following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In December 1920, he worked briefly as this government's commissar of education.⁶⁰ He was appointed chief of the All-Ukrainian Association of Consumer's Cooperative Organizations (1921-22) and then took over from Hrynko as commissar of education in 1922.⁶¹ Although Zatonskyi himself published two works on Soviet nationalities policy in Ukraine, there has been little written on his short tenure in Narkomos for this time.⁶² It was under his administration that the Soviet Ukrainian government issued the first decrees on Ukrainization. Although the re-organization of schools according to the ethnic composition of a given area was begun in 1923, real work on Ukrainian as a language of instruction did not begin until Shumskyi assumed the post of commissar of education. Zatonskyi took over editorial duties of the literary journal *Chervonyi shliakh* in 1926 and worked in this capacity until 1930. He was also served as deputy chairman of Radnarkom from 1927 to 1933 and was elected a member of VUAN. He reassumed the position of commissar of education after Mykola Skrypnyk's dismissal in 1933. In his 1934 publication *Natsional'no-kul'turne budivnytstvo i borot'ba proty natsionalizmu* he ridiculed the "whimpering" of the intelligentsia, claiming that a Soviet Ukrainian

⁶⁰ Jurij Borys, *The Sovietization of Ukraine: 1917-1923*, rev. ed. (Edmonton: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1980), 215.

⁶¹ Volodymyr Kubijovyč, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 826.

⁶² See V. P. Zatons'kyi, *Natsional'na problema na Ukraini* (New York: Ukrains'ki schodenni visti, 1926); V. P. Zatons'kyi, *Natsional'no-kul'turne budivnytstvo i borot'ba proty natsionalizmu* (Kyiv: Vyd. Vseukrains'koi akademii nauk, 1934).

culture had grown in spite of their malfeasance and Skrypnyk's negligence.⁶³ He was arrested in 1937 and later executed.

Oleksandr Shumskyi was a contemporary of Hrynko's, also born in 1890 into a peasant family in the Zhytomyr region. He received only a two-year formal education in a rural school, later attending evening lectures at Shianiavskii University in Moscow. He took part in anti-government demonstrations on the southwestern front during the war. After the February Revolution, Shumskyi became a member of the Kyiv huberniia Ukrainian SR Committee and served as its representative on the Central Rada. In 1918 he aligned himself with the Borotbists and pushed for their merger with the Bolsheviks.⁶⁴ He became a member of the Commissariat of Education's collegium in 1919 under the second Soviet Ukrainian government and occupied numerous party and government posts in Ukraine from 1920 to 1925, including UkSSR commissar of Internal Affairs (1920) and head of the KP(b)U's propaganda section, agitprop (1923-1925).⁶⁵ He became commissar of education in 1924. It was under his tenure that the Ukrainization campaign truly accelerated and progressive pedagogy reached its widest use. He clashed with the Lazar Kaganovich, the KP(b)U TsK (Central Committee) secretary, who supported Ukrainization but differed with Shumskyi over its extent and purpose. Shumskyi's defense of "deviationist" Ukrainian intellectuals and his protest to Stalin regarding Kaganovich's leadership raised the ire of the central party's leadership in Moscow. He was forced to resign his post after a party censure. He was reassigned outside of Ukraine to the directorship of the Institute of the National Economy in Leningrad. He also served

⁶³ Zaton's'kyi, *Natsional'no-kul'turne budivnytstvo i borot'ba proty natsionalizmu*, 7.

⁶⁴ Majstrenko, 260.

⁶⁵ Majstrenko, 261.

as deputy head of the VKP(b) (All-Union Communist Party) agitation section and head of the Central Committee of the Professional Union of Educational Workers. He was arrested in 1933 and sentenced to an initial ten year imprisonment. According to the official sources, he committed suicide in 1946 while incarcerated.

Mykola Skrypnyk was the son of a civil servant, born in 1872 in the Katerynoslav (Dnipropetrovsk) region. After completing a two-year rural school, he studied at a *realschule* (trade school) in Iziium, near Kharkiv and was expelled for distributing socialist literature. He became a member of the Social Democratic Labor Party in 1899 and in 1900 enrolled in the St. Petersburg Technical Institute where he continued his political agitation. After 1917, he was instrumental in the formation of the first and second Ukrainian Soviet governments. From 1919 to 1927 he served as commissar of state control, commissar of internal affairs, and commissar of justice. In 1927 he was appointed commissar of education after Shumskyi's downfall. He is widely credited for being a strong defender of Ukrainization and of Ukrainian "state" interest, fighting with central authorities to extend the Ukrainian republic's border and ensure cultural autonomy for ethnic Ukrainians in the RSFSR.⁶⁶ On paper, the Ukrainization of schooling, post-secondary education, and publishing increased markedly under his tenure. However, Skrypnyk also fought against non-party participation in Ukrainization and critically weakened his own campaign by 1930. He was a vocal critic of Shumskyi, coining the term "Shumskyism" in a 1927 article in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy* to denote Shumskyi's alleged distancing of Ukrainian literature from the proletariat.⁶⁷ This term

⁶⁶ For example, see Mace, 304.

⁶⁷ Mace, 111.

was later applied to any reported discovery of Ukrainian nationalism, incubated under the guise of socialism. It was Skrypnyk's direct action that led to a weakening of the Ukrainian Academy of Science's independence prior to the 1930 trial of the SVU. In 1929, he pushed through the election of seven Party members to VUAN (including himself) and disbanded all voluntary societies associated with the Academy.⁶⁸ Although the number schools vastly expanded from the 1929-30 academic year, this date also marked a critical juncture in educational policy. In addition, Skrypnyk advocated the dismantling of a separate Ukrainian educational system and a turn away from progressive pedagogy, first towards political mobilization and then educational conservatism. Skrypnyk came under fire in 1933 for his work on the linguistic standardization of Ukrainian. He was removed from his post as commissar, accused of separating Ukrainian from Russian, and tied to sabotage in linguistics. He committed suicide on July 6, 1933.

Chapter Summaries

Having introduced the broad trends of educational and language policy in Ukraine, this dissertation moves to a focused examination of their application in the 1920s. The first chapter introduces the reader to the particular design and aims of the educational system in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR) at the time of Ukrainization. The Bolshevik party had come to power and emerged victorious from civil war with the promise of radical social change. Educational theorists and planners in Ukraine took this promise seriously and set about orienting schools towards the perceived

⁶⁸ Shevelov, 124.

needs of socialism. After a brief discussion of the theoretical foundation of this system, the chapter sketches how the progressive impulse of Ukrainian educators was formally realized. In Narkomos's idealized conception, the state was to assume charge over the "social upbringing" of children. This objective led Narkomos to advocate and support the complex system, a classroom methodology that would not only educate children in basic skills, but allow for the integration of labor training and lessons in industrial and agricultural production. At the primary school level, differences between the Ukrainian and Russian system were largely ones of emphasis. However, the Ukrainians regularly maintained that they had the truest form of a united labor school and enjoyed support for their position among some in Russia. Furthermore, the Ukrainian emphasis on participatory learning also enabled educational planners to promote the incorporation of activities based on observations of a school's local environment. The approach was part of an all-Union movement for regional studies (*kraieznavstvo*). In Ukraine, educators regularly broadened this form of study to a wider extent, an investigation of all things Ukrainian.

The second chapter outlines the initial governmental orders for Ukrainization in 1923. In the educational sphere, the Soviet Ukrainian government foresaw a rapid move towards Ukrainian-language schooling for all ethnic Ukrainians. The Ukrainization of schooling was a fundamental component of the party's overall strategy of strengthening the tie between the city and the village. The city would always assume a preeminent position, but in Ukraine the party could not afford to ignore peasant concerns. In the schools, urban children needed to understand the language of the peasantry if they were

to eventually assume administration over the economy. Rural children had to cease viewing the city as alien in order for the government to work efficiently with the next generation in the countryside and attract a labor force to industrial centers. Generally, Narkomos maintained that the best way for schools to raise a literate, skilled, and politically conscious population was through native language education. The 1923-24 Ukrainization plan for the schools was, however, too ambitious. Narkomos issued directives, but it offered little practical guidance or support to local educational authorities whose responsibility it was to ensure the transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction. Progress was particularly slow in the eastern and southern parts of the republic due to the shortage of Ukrainian-speaking teachers, a fact that Narkomos recognized, but did little directly to remedy. Educational officials and the party linked incomplete Ukrainization to unsatisfactory academic achievement and viewed an improvement in language instruction as an essential prerequisite to use of the complex methodology. Similarly, authorities saw resistance to Ukrainian instruction as a mark of a conservative pedagogy and an anti-Soviet attitude.

The third chapter describes some of the demands and problems the Ukrainizers faced in attempting to oversee a transfer to Ukrainian-language teaching. Teachers were paid poorly and lacked literature and basic supplies. The number of teachers able to read and write in literary Ukrainian, let alone lead instruction in class, was small. Training was expensive and the government's priorities lay in economic development and not in educational improvement. Teachers remained unwilling to study Ukrainian themselves, even when faced with an examination and threat of dismissal. Party and government

officials also set a poor example by resisting training. Local sections of Narkomos therefore pursued a selective approach, pushing Ukrainization most aggressively at first in largely Ukrainian-speaking rural areas. They did, however, advocate the transfer of national minorities in urban areas to native language schools. This tactic was part of a general policy of trying to break Russian-language dominance in the cities. National minority children would also learn Ukrainian in the schools so that Ukrainian would form the basis of a republican identity. Outside the republic, Narkomos assumed responsibility for ethnic Ukrainians and pushed Russian authorities to assure native language instruction for them. However, the reality was that educational authorities had insufficient means to both implement and monitor the progress of its mandate at home. Its inspectors were poorly qualified and the number of competent teachers that could champion native language schooling too few. Narkomos pressed the party for greater support.

The fourth chapter focuses on the actual implementation of the complex system and kraieznavstvo and details the problems that arose due to a lack of direction and resources. The move to a progressive pedagogy, like the transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction, was frustrated by an inadequately funded school system. School attendance was low, and a shortage of well-maintained schools limited the feasibility of any plan to increase enrollment. Educational authorities could push the complex system in only the best schools. Even inspectors had a poor understanding of the new methodology. Narkomos instituted a new campaign for teacher re-qualification in 1925 which privileged incorporation of a production-oriented kraieznavstvo. However, teachers were

to extrapolate on the basis of a general provincial model for instruction. Such latitude was frightening both to teachers, who were baffled by the complex system and wanted much more guidance, and some educational planners, who worried that confused teachers would do more damage than good in the classroom. In fact, Narkomos received regular reports that schools were not providing basic knowledge because teachers had little idea how to institute the complex system. Student knowledge of grammar was particularly poor and parents were beginning to complain. Although incorporation of Ukrainian was an essential part of the new methodology, few teachers were up to the dual task of both switching the language and method of their instruction. Good teachers, with even the most basic professional qualifications, were hard enough to come by. At a select experimental school in Mykolaiv (Nikolaev), teachers posited the blame for problems associated with the complex method squarely on Ukrainization among Russified Ukrainian and ethnic Russian children. Narkomos, however, did not relent. It advocated more Ukrainization for ethnic Ukrainians, largely regardless of their preference for language of instruction.

The fifth chapter examines the consequence of internal party debates over the scope of Ukrainization in education. It was increasingly clear that, in spite of the Ukrainization of schools on paper, the quality of instruction was inadequate. The announcement of a new examination of teachers' Ukrainian knowledge caused a fresh wave of panic. The end result was that many local educational sections postponed the test and others granted exemptions to those who demonstrated some degree of language training. Continued pressure on teachers was required because of the results of an earlier

party decision on Ukrainization. In response to a complaint made by Oleksandr Shumskyi that the party's Ukrainization campaign was having little effect on the proletariat, Stalin intervened. Stalin argued strongly against forcible Ukrainization of the proletariat, while at the same time maintaining that the party needed to take a more active role in the promotion of Ukrainian culture. A vigorous campaign was needed and it had to involve the proletariat to have any significance. Yet, its participation could not be coerced. The solution that Narkomos decided upon was the gradual Ukrainization of the children of the proletariat (and, for that matter, of any Russified Ukrainians). Not only did the commissariat have to exercise greater oversight over teachers, it would now take the campaign to city centers. Narkomos intended this push to simultaneously counter established prejudices against Ukrainian as a peasant language and to break pedagogical conservatism in tradition-bound urban schools. The sweeping nature of this shift meant that children of ethnic Russians sometimes found themselves attending schools that had been quickly Ukrainized.⁶⁹ This led to charges of discrimination against Russians. The KP(b)U leadership acted quickly to protect the educational rights of Russians, now recognized as a national minority. The question of what to do about Russified Ukrainians was left open to interpretation.

The sixth chapter details Narkomos's continued preference for the Ukrainization of proletarian children, largely regardless of initial parental preference. Narkomos officials in fact argued Ukrainization remained incomplete because Ukrainian children were still not attending school in numbers proportionate to their standing in the

⁶⁹ This study uses the term "Ukrainized" as the adjectival form of the completed process of "Ukrainization."

population. Furthermore, in the cities Ukrainian parents were beginning to form a majority of the proletariat. New schools needed to be built and high quality Ukrainian instruction ensured if the state was going to fulfill its obligation to the proletariat. Narkomos, however, still relied greatly on the effort of individual teachers and the party was beginning to grow increasingly worried about the influence of “nationalists” on them. Shumskyi blamed the growth of nationalism on insufficient party support for educators and argued for greater inclusion of sympathetic intelligentsia. However, KP(b)U TsK reports continued to emphasize the growth of Ukrainian nationalists, maintaining that they had taken advantage of the policy of Ukrainization and were trying to co-opt it by recruiting teachers to their cause. There was no nationalist movement, however. There were few qualified Communist Ukrainizers in the schools or elsewhere and the party leadership was fundamentally uncomfortable with its reliance on non-party intelligentsia. Ukrainization’s aim was a linguistic unification of the laboring populations of the republic and yet the proletariat could not yet lead the charge. The potential distortion, real or imagined, of a campaign the party did not control was alarming.

The seventh chapter makes a case for the central importance of the SVU show trial to the course of Ukrainization in the schools and explores the motivation and consequences behind the subordination of the Ukrainian educational system to all-Union norms. In the charged political environment introduced by Stalin’s “revolution from above,” local party reports and the press began to point to the danger of nationalism in specific schools and to an increase in rural anti-Soviet activity led or permitted by teachers. These accounts set the stage for a show trial of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

The Soviet state police rounded up a total of forty-five defendants. A significant proportion of these defendants were educators and investigations around the republic implicated numerous other teachers in nationalist conspiracies. The SVU trial performed a critical symbolic role. It confirmed the party's formal commitment to Ukrainization, yet communicated to teachers that the risks for "incorrect" Ukrainian cultural development were high. The incentives for high profile, activist Ukrainization were few. Fundamentally, Soviet authorities feared non-party control over the campaign and, in particular, its effect on youth orientation.

Press articles on the SVU affair coincided with reports of violence against teachers and provided educators with a model for normative behavior. Although Narkomos continued to push hard for Ukrainization of schools in industrial areas, an increase in the number of "fully Ukrainized schools" did not mean real improvements in teacher instruction. Teacher illiteracy in the Ukrainian language and studies remained high and Narkomos had no new solutions to propose. Teachers' priorities lay not in Ukrainization, but in a demonstration of their commitment to the public campaigns of the Five-Year Plan. The SVU show trial corresponded with a rejection of the progressive pedagogy that educational planners intended Ukrainization to support and a move towards the subordination of Ukrainian education to all-Union norms. Prominent Ukrainizer pedagogues (and now imprisoned members of the SVU) were blamed for the "chaos" of the discredited complex system. Their condemnation provided a rationale for the eventual return to traditional, subject-oriented methodology and strict all-Union party control over educational affairs through a centralized educational system.

1: The Ukrainian Variant of a Soviet Educational System

Theoretical Foundations

Russia's October Revolution set off a period of tremendous violence and disorder, but it also created opportunity for significant intellectual, scientific, and artistic experimentation. Former subjects of the tsar who had not necessarily embraced the particular Bolshevik brand of socialism, found themselves applauding revolution for revolution's sake. A progressive stratum of the former empire's educated elite welcomed the chance to do away with hated practices of the old. The pedagogical world was no exception. Revolution gave way to a tremendous amount of discussion throughout the former empire, regarding the task of building a radical "new school." Educators debated numerous options, but their overwhelming concern was a disassociation from the classical education of the tsarist gymnasia and promotion of pedagogical innovation.

In Soviet Ukraine, the campaign for a transformation of pedagogy led to the development of a highly progressive and distinctive educational system that lasted until the late 1920s. The founders of this system argued that the republic required schools attuned to its economic and social particularities, in their view a result of the devastation of the civil war and centuries of tsarist oppression and economic exploitation. Ukrainian educational planners recognized the critical importance of linguistic Ukrainization to the creation of the "new school" and progressive pedagogy created opportunities for Ukrainian national exploration and expression. However, these were means to an end.

For the Ukrainian Soviet government, the intent of “new school” was the creation of a new Soviet generation and the transformation of society.

In the early years of the Soviet state, educational theorists and the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education (Narkomos) did not rely exclusively upon Marxist theory for inspiration, but rather turned to the wealth of pedagogical theory developed in the West. Hryhorii Hrynko (Commissar of Education from 1920 to 1922) publicly argued in an article entitled “Our Path to the West” that “spontaneous-revolutionary pedagogical activity” unleashed in Ukraine could be grounded with ties with the West.⁷⁰ Narkomos representatives traveled to Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia to secure material and solicit ideas for creating new schools in Ukraine. From 1922 to 1927 a permanent representative of Narkomos resided in Berlin in order to facilitate ties with German educators, collect publications on the subject of educational reform, and see to the publication of Ukrainian textbooks abroad. Foreign educational theorists regularly contributed publications to the Ukrainian educational journal *Shliakh osvity* (literally, Path of Enlightenment), a periodical that became well-known abroad for its promotion of educational change. According to one count by education historian O. V. Sukhomlynska, *Shliakh osvity* published 458 articles regarding problems in foreign pedagogy and education and maintained ties with 113 organizations and individuals abroad.⁷¹

Drawing upon this contact with the West and research published in pre-revolutionary Russia, Ukrainian educational theorists sought to develop an educational

⁷⁰ G. Gryn'ko, "Nash put' na Zapad," *Put' prosveshchennia*, no. 7-8 (1923): 1-19, cited in O. V. Sukhomlyns'ka, "Zarubizhnyi pedahohichnyi dosvid v Ukraini v 20-ti roky," *Ridna shkola*, no. 2 (1992): 3-7.

⁷¹O. V. Sukhomlyns'ka, "Zarubizhnyi pedahohichnyi dosvid v Ukraini v 20-ti roky": 6.

system tailored to a child's aptitude for learning. Several prominent Ukrainian pre-revolutionary pedagogues such as Iakiv Chepiha helped formulate pedagogy for the new educational system. One theory which gained particular favor among educational progressives was reflexology, elaborated by pre-revolutionary Russian researchers such as Ivan Pavlov and Vladimir Bekhterev. According to Bekhterev, "the essence of reflexology is that all the behavior of a person begins with elementary organized reactions and ends with deep acts of creation, which come together in reflexes."⁷² Ukrainian educational theorists believed that an instructive methodology which accounted for these reflexes and directed them towards a prescribed educational goal would achieve the most effective results in the classroom.

Ukrainian progressives coupled reflexology with an interest in the ideas of American educational theorist John Dewey, who emphasized the necessity of connecting instruction with real life and allowing children to solve problems through independent application. Furthermore, his arguments for the merger of math and humanities and against the textbook as the central instructional device proved attractive to Ukrainian educators searching for ways to offer effective education with scant resources. Yet another approach that appealed to Ukrainian educational planners reluctant to mimic their Tsarist predecessors and impose an obligatory and universal curriculum was the so-called Dalton Plan. Designed by American Ellen Parkhurst for a Massachusetts high school, it allowed for individualized instruction based on a child's knowledge. Parkhurst's students

⁷² Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 124.

entered into contracts with teachers and then joined small laboratory groups. Teachers and students decided the course of instruction collectively.⁷³

The Ukrainian Variant

In a broad assessment of the Ukrainian educational system, written on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, Narkomos Deputy Commissar Ian Riappo maintained that Ukraine had developed an educational “path” distinct from the Russian Federation which better satisfied the republic’s needs.⁷⁴ In designing its educational system, Riappo wrote, Ukraine benefited from the fact that civil war prevented establishment of a network of schools in Ukraine until 1920. Russia already had two years of experience by this time and planners made liberal use of Russian debates over the intent and form of education.⁷⁵

Initially, Ukraine did not concern itself with implementation of progressive pedagogy in the schoolhouse. Narkomos’s preeminent worry was the civil war’s legacy of millions of homeless children. Their numbers grew even higher as the result of a 1921-22 famine in the Volga basin which stretched into southern Ukraine and brought countless refugees to the republic.⁷⁶ Narkomos’s first duty then was to organize, protect, and provide for these children. Unlike its Russian counterpart, Riappo argued, Narkomos was forced to fully realize the child rearing aspect of its directive. The principal

⁷³ Holmes, 35.

⁷⁴ Ia. P. Riappo, *Narodnia osvita na Ukraini: za desiat' rokiv revoliutsii* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1927), 31

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Alan Ball suggests the number of homeless and half-homeless children for Ukraine reached 2 million on the basis of published Soviet statistics. Alan Ball, "The Roots of Besprizornost' in Soviet Russia's First Decade," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 2 (1992): 247.

institution for this task was the children's building, described by Riappo as a "lighthouse" (*maiak*) for Ukraine's neglected children.⁷⁷ In 1923, at their high point, 1,928 children's buildings in Ukraine cared for 114,000 homeless and neglected children.

As the economy in Ukraine stabilized to some degree and starvation no longer posed an immediate danger, the number of children's buildings steadily declined. However, the ideology of "social upbringing" that motivated the formation of children's buildings did not diminish. Hrynko had argued for children's buildings to take charge of all children, claiming that a school's pedagogical and organizational influence on a child left in the care of the "individualistic" family will be lost "in a night."⁷⁸ Although this idea was abandoned as both impractical and fiscally impossible, the state's desire to ensure instruction by the "social collective" persisted and influenced Narkomos's preference for a progressive pedagogy that emphasized the centrality of the school, shared projects, and civic activity. Narkomos labeled this approach "social upbringing" (*sotsialne vykhovannia - Sotsvykh*)

With the gradual decline of the children's building, Narkomos turned to the schools as the basis of the Ukrainian educational system. Hrynko's commissariat outlined the structure of a separate Ukrainian variant at the First All-Ukrainian Meeting on Education in March 1920.⁷⁹ Whereas the Russian Commissariat of Education retained a four-year primary school followed by a five-year general secondary school, the Ukrainian Narkomos opted for a seven-year extended primary school followed by a two-year professional secondary school. The professional schools offered vocational training

⁷⁷ Riappo, 62

⁷⁸ Ninel' Kalenychenko, "Problema sim"i ta simeinoho vykhovannia," *Shliakh osvity*, no. 4 (1997): 47.

⁷⁹ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 86.

in a specified field of employment as early as age 15. The Ukrainian Commissariat saw them as not only as models for proletarian schooling, but also as the answer to Ukraine's desperate need for qualified workers.⁸⁰ Hrynko was a strong advocate for this type of applied instruction and a critic of the duplicative general education function of the Russian secondary school. Although he insisted it was not Ukraine's initial intent to pursue a separate path, he added he would not permit "any slave-like copying" of the Russian educational system.⁸¹ Hrynko believed that not only was technical-vocational orientation better suited to the needs of Ukraine, but also that this orientation should form the basis for a united educational policy for the Soviet Union.

The differences between the Russian and Ukrainian systems were most striking at the secondary level. Historians such as Sheila Fitzpatrick and Larry Holmes have referenced these distinctions, particularly in regards to the discussions held at the First Party Meeting on Education in 1920-21.⁸² Riappo and Hrynko's promotion of professional schools at this meeting elicited support from Komsomol, Vesenkha (Supreme Economic Council), and labor union representatives and the meeting passed a resolution criticizing Russian moves away from vocational training. In instructions to the VKP(b) Central Committee and in a February 1921 *Pravda* article Lenin also proposed early vocational training, as a "temporary and practical expedient."⁸³ The Komsomol continued to press the case and the Russian Commissariat did permit several types of professional schools, the most widespread being the factory apprentice school (known by

⁸⁰ Riappo, 31

⁸¹ V. V. Lypyns'kyi, "Kontseptsia ta model' osvity v USRR u 20-ti rr," *Ukrains'kyi istorichnyi zhurnal*, no. 5 (1999): 5.

⁸² Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 45-46; Holmes, 22-23.

⁸³ Holmes, 23.

its Russian acronym, FZU), to operate parallel to its general secondary schools.

However, the Komsomol maintained its pre-existing suspicion of junior trade schools as “circles of hell” for the poor, which stifled their cultural liberation and restricted their advancement.⁸⁴ While it allowed for the FZU, it insisted on its inclusion of a general educational curriculum even in this institution.

The Ukrainian preference for early professional training at the secondary level inevitably influenced the character of its extended primary school, the chief concern here. The continuing battle for the expansion of vocational training in Russia detailed by Fitzpatrick, and to a lesser extent, Holmes, was absent in Ukraine because it had already committed itself to this path. Emboldened by the party meeting’s decision, the Ukrainian Commissariat insisted on an educational system oriented towards vocational training.⁸⁵ The curriculum of Ukraine’s primary schools reflected their mandate to prepare and matriculate students into professional secondary schools. Although both the Russian and Ukrainian educational systems embraced the principle of a “united labor school,” the Ukrainians insisted that their institutions truly embraced labor oriented methodology and successfully integrated a general educational foundation with technical preparation. Graduates of the Ukrainian seven-year primary school, Riappo maintains, were far more ready to undergo this training than the many Russian youths who sought admission to a FZU or other alternative professional school with only four years of completed primary schooling.⁸⁶ The reality, of course, was that probably an equivalent proportion of Ukrainians left school before completion of their seven-year degree, but on paper the

⁸⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 44.

⁸⁵ Riappo, 38.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

Ukrainian system did offer the opportunity for uninterrupted study leading to professional schooling. The Russian route towards this end was indirect and one that enjoyed little institutional support by the Russian Commissariat of Education.

The Complex Method

The principal medium for a labor approach at the primary school level was not a uniquely Ukrainian solution. Labeled the complex method, it was a system of instruction derived by Russian and Ukrainian Soviet educators alike from the progressive pedagogy embodied in Dewey's writings and the Dalton plan. Ukraine's annual teaching guide, the *Poradnyk sotsialnoho vykhovannia* (Handbook for Social Upbringing), had embraced child-centered instruction early on, arguing that education should be tailored to the natural development of children and to children's surroundings. An explicit shift to complex instruction was a natural consequence of this approach and Ukrainian educational planners looked first to the 1922-23 program of the Russian State Academic Council for a model on how to proceed.⁸⁷ The program mandated instruction around a set theme or complex placed under one of three broad headings: Nature, Society, and Labor. All traditional disciplines (such as mathematics, science, history, and language) would be subordinated to this complex. The children's talents and interest played a significant part in the selection of this complex, which often called for the study of children's immediate surroundings through the performance of various practical tasks.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 185.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

Primary school teachers in Ukraine were far from enamored with the complex method. When implemented in Russia, educational planners had attributed near “mystical” powers to the method and offered few details on how it should be employed.⁸⁹ The Ukrainian Narkomos was little better in supplying instructions. Narkomos set the structure of complexes in the annual *poradnyk* (guide), published them in the pedagogical press, and purportedly distributed to all schools (in fact, local educational sections were lucky to receive it). The guide was simply that, a guide: short on details, but filled with tables of possible complexes and the type of material that teachers should cover. It provided grand abstract models, but stopped short of offering a comprehensive and universal program. Narkomos believed that the actual content of work in the schools must have a local character and relied on local institutions to work out specifics.⁹⁰ Teachers remained confused. Having never encountered, let alone been trained in this method of instruction, teachers were understandably skeptical about the method’s benefits and at a loss on how to innovate.

A 1923 report by the Kharkiv provincial educational section stated that schools in the city of Kharkiv were transferring to instruction by the complex system, but in the countryside old methods of teaching persisted. It argued that rural teachers lacked instructions and basic educational material to carry out this task.⁹¹ After a 1924-25 push by Narkomos, one school director at a okruha (region) meeting of the heads of district labor schools in Kyiv noted that although schools were moving to complex instruction, teachers often worked strictly according to the guides with entirely abstract material and

⁸⁹ Holmes, 32.

⁹⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 13.

⁹¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 888, ark. 18.

were unable to integrate them with material that students could readily understand. These were the better teachers. Others abandoned the method altogether: “Often instruction by the complexes has turned into idle chatter and has entirely ignored technical skills and mastery of material on their reproduction.”⁹² Even when local educational sections took it upon themselves to provide additional material on the complex method, perhaps in an attempt to outdo the central planners, the guides remained theoretical and only served to baffle teachers more.⁹³

Those who did not accede to complex instruction were in practice forced to employ it: a 1925 internal order from the Narkomos collegium, stressed that its Sotsvykh program, which formally endorsed the complex method, should be mandatory and any other approach was impermissible.⁹⁴ However, it also called for “attentive checks” on the work carried out as part of this program. Narkomos was anxious to demonstrate that instruction by the complex method could supply required skills. In particular, it ordered that local educational sections monitor not just the general development of children, but also their skill level in reading, writing, and arithmetic (*libcha*). As will be discussed in more detail below, teachers who remained unable or unwilling to implement complex instruction sometimes abandoned a methodology altogether, fearing being accused of defending the old school.⁹⁵ The result was a lack of any sort of discipline in the classroom and a high incidence of academic failure.

⁹² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 2.

⁹³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 7.

⁹⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 82.

⁹⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 2.

To be sure, the challenge for teachers was immense. Their own material situation was often desperate. Dependent upon local authorities for their salaries, rural teachers went unpaid for months and subsisted on a minimum ration.⁹⁶ Some fled to urban posts or quit the profession entirely. Schools closed down due to lack of financing or limped along as best they could without fuel, light, or paper. Teachers, inspectors, and local educational sections alike decried the lack of Ukrainian language textbooks, noting that even when new ones finally became available, they remained either too expensive or impossible to acquire.

Narkomos leaders also had lingering questions about teachers' political commitment to the new Soviet school. They continued to rely largely on teachers who had received their education before the revolution due to a shortage of Soviet trained staff. Oleksandr Shumskiy (Commissar of Education from 1924 to 1927), conceded that rural teachers had fallen in with the agrarian Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) during the civil war because of their "weak tie to the city" and peasant origins. He argued that after Soviet power came to the countryside: "The public teacher honestly and openly returned to the working masses, the truant is catching up and with his efforts Soviet power will be victorious on this third front."⁹⁷ Teachers, he insisted, were not the same as the intelligentsia because they had "returned" to the working population. Just in case, he recommend continued Komsomol oversight.

Narkomos was determined to implement instruction by the complex method regardless. It conceded that textbooks were in short supply and not until 1924 was

⁹⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 313.

⁹⁷ Shums'kyi, O. "Na tret'omu fronti: do uchytel's'koho z"izdu." *Shliakh osvity*, no. 11-12 (1924): xiv.

literature available in the Ukrainian language that corresponded to Ukrainian conditions and to the requirements of the new Soviet school.⁹⁸ Until then, pre-revolutionary textbooks were simply translated from Russian. From the perspective of Narkomos and progressive educators, however, textbooks remained an auxiliary device, to be used to stimulate class activity and, in the particular circumstances of linguistic Ukrainization, to provide Ukrainian language vocabulary for class discussion. Salvation, however, was to be found in the new methodology, not in the book alone. One presenter at the 1925 Kyiv okruha conference of school directors noted that teachers remained entirely too reliant on textbooks when attempting to teach by the complex method and were failing to incorporate “concrete material” into their lesson plans or engage in true interactive activity with their students.⁹⁹ Another delegate claimed that teachers had taken educational authorities concern with the quality of instruction to mean an abandonment of the complex method. In fact, “the system of complexes, which the programs provide, gives the only means to implement the whole structure of Soviet schools. It is impossible to do away with them, it is rather necessary to manage the transfer to them by the schools.”¹⁰⁰ Narkomos and progressive educators were concerned with perfecting complex instruction, not rejecting it. They stuck stubbornly to this course until the late 1920s.

⁹⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 179

⁹⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 92.

¹⁰⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 4, 13.

An Introduction to Kraieznavstvo in the Schools

If the professional schools were to offer hands-on vocational training at the secondary level, it was the responsibility of the seven-year primary school to prepare students with the proper proletarian mentality. The complex method, however imperfectly applied, was the means Narkomos chose to purge schools of the didactic teaching of the past and instruct students in value of labor and the promise of the revolutionary future. In 1927, Riappo argued that because of Ukraine's early adoption of the complex method "the life of the school began to adapt to the demands of the children's communist society and the program to the productive tasks of a Soviet country."¹⁰¹ Although the Russian Commissariat of Education also adopted the complex method, it constantly battled for its continued use and scaled back its expectations. As Holmes demonstrates, it ultimately was forced to reintroduce traditional instruction by subjects in its 1926 and 1927 curriculums.¹⁰² Because the object of the Ukrainian educational system as a whole was the vocational training of its youth, the Ukrainian Narkomos continued to advance the preparatory value of the complex method for the cultivation of future laborers.

Narkomos's most successful application of the complex method was in the field of *kraieznavstvo*. Strictly speaking, this term means "regional studies," but its definition shifted. In the early 1920s, *kraieznavstvo* denoted a general, often folkloric, study of a region surrounding a school and the larger Ukrainian republic.¹⁰³ In the 1920-21 *poradnyk*, courses on Ukrainian studies had formed a significant part of the school's

¹⁰¹ Riappo, 64.

¹⁰² Holmes, 76-83.

¹⁰³ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 208.

curriculum. Through the third grade, general courses labeled kraieznavstvo predominated and in the fourth through seventh grades more specific courses on civics history (*istoriia z hromadianoznavstvo*) and geography covered Ukrainian studies. According to one calculation, out of an aggregate of 173 instruction hours per week, the program devoted 79 hours to subjects that were considered to be Ukrainian studies.¹⁰⁴ These included courses on kraieznavstvo, native language instruction, civics, geography, and singing. However, the 1920-21 plan and subsequent plans did not explicitly detail the content and form of kraieznavstvo. For this reason, schools interpreted kraieznavstvo and related subjects differently and developed variant plans.

In the 1924-25 academic year, when Narkomos mandated a full scale transfer to education by the complex method, kraieznavstvo proved agreeable to this shift because of its early emphasis on self-discovery of a region's features and places of interest. The year 1925 saw the publication of several articles in the Soviet Ukrainian pedagogical journal *Radianska osvita* on the subject of teaching kraieznavstvo, using in particular the complex method. One author, Lazaris, pointed to a lack of ideological and organizational leadership in kraieznavstvo prior to 1924 to explain confusion over its teaching.¹⁰⁵ According to Lazaris, initial efforts to tie kraieznavstvo to practical work were insufficient and its instruction had little to do with concerns of real life. Now "proletarian students" had taken over leadership of kraieznavstvo and directed its application to present concerns. A 1924 All-Union Congress on Regional Studies set the defining agenda for all future kraieznavstvo work. Kraieznavstvo could no longer devote time to

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ A. Lazaris, "Ukrains'ke kraieznavstvo i perspektyvy ioho rozvytku," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 5 (1925): 49.

the study of customs and tradition, but should rather concentrate on an examination of the “productive forces and general growth of planned economic construction.”¹⁰⁶ Although the congress placed primary schools at the center of kraieznavstvo work, it called upon “a wide circle of workers” to involve themselves in the development of this work.

Chapter 4 will explore in detail the challenges teachers faced in attempting to implement a kraieznavstvo curriculum. I. Haliun, a contributor to *Radianska osvita*, described the ideal in an article on experimental work with children. He and other progressives believed that kraieznavstvo should form the basis of instruction for all disciplines, rather than be set aside as a separate subject of study. They argued for the “unification” of all school work to the study of real life.¹⁰⁷ It was their concern for this goal that motivated them to promote the instruction by the complex method.

Kraieznavstvo could not be studied from textbooks, Haliun wrote, but should be tied to “living, passionate feelings towards life and toiling people, who with the sweat and blood of struggle have built their labor life and culture.” The complex method was favored because it organized school work towards this end, but the primary concern with kraieznavstvo advocates was instruction integrated with “productive” life.

Kraieznavstvo’s new emphasis on the active engagement with the community promised greater localization of its application. Teachers were encouraged to favor the study of the immediate surroundings of the school first and foremost. Urban children had the advantage in the study of kraieznavstvo because of the great variety of “productive forces” in their place of residence. Haliun argued that constant change in a child’s urban

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ I. Haliun, “Kraieznavstvo i shkola,” *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 5 (1925): 56.

environment produces a “type of existence that is more developed, with a sharpened interest to everything that surrounds him.”¹⁰⁸ He further insisted that schools must develop courses suited to this particular “psychology” of the urban child with the ultimate goal of producing a “future, conscious worker” for socialism. Kraieznavstvo in the cities should also encompass the surrounding region’s topography, natural world, and material culture. Haliun recommended that urban teachers collect “living folklore,” including common sayings and songs, as well as “living memories,” such as personal accounts of the revolution and histories of specific enterprises.

Narkomos adjusted the complex system to meet its educational objectives in rural schools. Kraieznavstvo determined the content of complexes in rural schools just as it did in cities. However, rural students were to focus primarily on agricultural activity, as well as some folklore, local customs, and events. Although Haliun lauded the presence of expressions of the “victorious new” in the villages, he conceded that it is folklore derived from the past should form a large basis for the study of kraieznavstvo in the rural school. Material such as fairytales, fables (*baika*), legends, and customs had an effect on rural children at birth and could be used to inspire an interest in the everyday life of the village and its “productive forces.”¹⁰⁹ Haliun lamented the fate of children in rural schools, “now completely torn from city schools” and from the city in general. Rural schools must strengthen their ties to urban schools so that the student does not act like a “wild beast” when he encounters the city.

¹⁰⁸ Haliun, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Haliun, 57.

A common instructional emphasis on production would facilitate interaction between the urban and rural school. Narkomos plans obligated rural students to learn about cities. Thus, not only were a school's immediate surroundings important, but also wider Ukraine. Urban students studied Ukraine's rural resources as well, but the emphasis of broader Ukrainian studies was on the proletarian city and industrial production. The Narkomos program recommended that rural students make excursions to the cities and those who lived in isolated locations learn from illustrated journals. The program argued that "it is necessary to inculcate in children an awareness that a person can do everything when he is armed with knowledge and organization and that the culture of the village depends on the culture of the city."¹¹⁰ The most valued form of knowledge then was to be found in the cities. The oft-cited cultural union (*smychka*) between the village and the city was not entirely false, but it was unequal. Narkomos intended educated rural youth to either join the proletariat or contribute to the agricultural production necessary for its strength. The new Ukraine was unequivocally proletarian and Ukrainian studies in the schools reflected this aspiration.

Furthermore, for both urban and rural children lessons in kraieznavstvo work were not confined to the limits of the classroom. Children made trips in their region (and sometimes beyond) to visit farms, factories, architectural sites, and other points of interest. However, children were not to just passively observe the places they visited. I. Kopyl, a teacher from the Poltava region, described the experience of his sixth grade

¹¹⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 675, ark. 43.

group in *Radianska osvita*.¹¹¹ For this group's kraieznavstvo work, Kopyl assigned students the task of examining village soviets in the district. The students designed a form (*anketa*) in order to plan questions for their observation of the village and interviews with residents and members of the soviet. They included questions not only on the village's economy and production, but also on its social structure, party membership, civic activism, and cultural achievements (in particular literacy levels). One group went even so far as to judge the number of dogs and cats, information, Kopyl stressed, that was not easy to acquire. Kopyl noted that the students planned to compile the group's more important findings into a directory of the raion (district), together with maps, and send it to the raion executive committee and other local governmental and cultural institutions. The students also hoped to host a workshop with schools of the neighboring raion and collaborate on a comparative economic study of the larger area.

Such interactive excursions served a number of purposes, according to Kopyl. Firstly, they satisfied a public need. Although Kopyl conceded that the students' work may not have been entirely accurate, because of its comprehensive nature, the students helped inform the executive committee and "improve their parents' and neighbors' economic management."¹¹² Notwithstanding the students' inexperience, the report may well have been less biased than other official reports of the time because the children posed questions with few inhibitions. Secondly, Kopyl argues that the students' work in the region had the potential to increase the school's authority among the population, "an authority, by the way, that many schools do not have." Through their engagement of local

¹¹¹ I. Kopyl, "Sproba vuvchennia kraiu: zolotonosh'ska okruha na Poltavshchyni," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 5 (1925): 58-59.

¹¹² Kopyl, 59.

officials and residents, students demonstrated the utility of schooling to a rural society, that when confronted with the daily challenge of survival had historically valued it less. Lastly, because the students were required to conduct their research independently, they took greater pride in the realization of the project. This, in the end, was the chief merit of instruction by the complex method coupled with kraieznavstvo. Since the students were investigating something already familiar to them, they accomplished their tasks with greater alacrity and effect.

Narkomos did attempt to provide some institutional oversight to the kraieznavstvo movement. The All-Union Congress on Kraieznavstvo was the first comprehensive attempt to define an agenda for the entire country. In 1925 the Commission of Kraieznavstvo under the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv assumed responsibility for the coordination of work throughout the republic. There were two further regional centers, the commission's branch in Odesa (Odessa), and the Commission for Kraieznavstvo of Slobozhanshchyna, overseen by the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education. More regional bureaus were to be set up under the okruha planning commissions (Okrplan). Narkomos called upon all member of society, but particularly representatives of science, education, professional trade unions, and student organizations to attend periodical plenums on kraieznavstvo and coordinate their work.

Some standardization of instructional content in the classroom, Narkomos officials concluded, was also beneficial. Due to the nearly complete absence of appropriate school texts, teachers initially attempted to adapt more technical works to classroom needs. Matvii Iavorskyi's *Korotka istoriia Ukraini* (Short History of Ukraine)

and a Ukrainian translation of Miron Volfson's *Ocherki obshchestvovedeniia* (Essays on Social Studies) were the most widely used textbooks in Ukrainian schools in the latter half of the twenties.¹¹³ As one of Ukraine's leading Marxist historians, Iavorskyi played a significant part in the design of kraieznavstvo material. His *Korotka istoriia* represented the first attempt to provide a party-centered and class approach to Ukrainian history for the general public. Following the return to Ukraine of preeminent Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevskyy in 1924, both he and Iavorskyi worked on the promotion of kraieznavstvo. Hrushevskyy formed a commission under the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN) to encourage the development of regional histories.¹¹⁴ Iavorskyi and Stepan Rudnytskyi, the author of several geography textbooks, directed the work of the VUAN Main Committee for Kraieznavstvo. Both bodies relied on the work and participation of teachers at the local level for the success of their work.

Of course, in the end, it still was the responsibility of individual teachers to adapt technical works for the classroom. Publishers included illustrations in *Korotka istoriia* and Matvii Iavorskyi's 1925 publication, *Revoliutsiia na Ukraini* (Revolution in Ukraine), to make the books more accessible to children. Iavorskyi also incorporated material from Ukrainian history, essays on intervention in Ukraine, the constitution of the UkSSR, and Soviet nationalities policy in the Ukrainian translation of Volfson's *Ocherki obshchestvovedeniia* so that it might be more readily used in Ukrainian schools. Teachers used O. O. Sukhov's *Ekonomichna heohrafiia Ukrainy* (Economic Geography of Ukraine) due to the absence of any suitable textbooks on geography. However, it was

¹¹³ Sukhomlyn's'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 211.

¹¹⁴ Sukhomlyn's'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 214.

difficult for children to understand and teachers also employed Konstantin Voblyi's 1922 publication, *Ekonomichna heohrafiia Ukrainy* (Economic Geography of Ukraine) which included illustrations, tables, questions, and recommended further reading for students.¹¹⁵ In 1925 Sukhov published a revised version of his geography designed for use in the schools.

Although local educational sections were responsible for defining specific methodological plans for their schools, the annual *poradnyk* held that no other program was permissible for the design of curricular planning. In order to ensure reproduction of the *poradnyk*'s ideal principles, organized okruha sections issued supplementary guides and instructed raion trudshkoly to offer models for their implementation. Speakers at one meeting of Kyiv okruha school directors labeled the raion labor school a "laboratory."¹¹⁶ Located in the district seat, the raion labor school was often the only full seven-year school in the area and was the first institution to try out the okruha's variant for the *poradnyk* plan, collect and anticipate the concerns of other schools in the raion, and disseminate the plan further. The Narkomos division responsible for administering primary schooling in Ukraine, the Main Administration for Social Upbringing (*Holovne upravlinnia sotsialnoho vykhovannia - Holovsotsvykh*), also set up a number of experimental institutions and assumed direct budgetary and administrative control over these institutions, unlike local trudshkoly. For the 1925-26 academic year, there were at least five such schools in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odesa, Luhansk (Lugansk), and Katerynoslav

¹¹⁵ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstva*, 213.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

(Ekaterinoslav), enrolling nearly 1500 students.¹¹⁷ Similarly, these central schools were to give local schools “models of normal work,” so that these schools might “exactly carry out the directives of the center.”¹¹⁸ They were to lead by example, testing the new progressive methodology and disseminating a script for innovation.

To spread progressive methodology throughout the republic, Narkomos also advocated the publication and use of books that emphasized regional models of centrally defined themes . The Second All-Union Conference on Kraieznavstvo (1924) emphasized the need for textbooks with guides to local areas and statistical information. In Ukraine, several such textbooks were published for regions throughout the republic. Local (*okruzhni*) methodological committees of Narkomos further argued for kraieznavstvo textbooks which provided a detailed plan for localized programs.¹¹⁹ These methodological committees supported the publication of several municipal and regional textbooks. Student elaboration on themes articulated in the textbooks further broadened the type of material available for classroom use. Independent school work like that described by Kopyl was published in supplementary form alongside textbooks such as *Korotka istoriia Ukrainy* and disseminated to other schools.¹²⁰ Local educators and students also sought to fill the gaps left by a shortage in official printed guides themselves. A teacher-supervised student committee teacher in the Myronivka Raion Labor School, for example, put out its own journal entitled *Promin* (Ray of Light) and a

¹¹⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 7.

¹¹⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 81.

¹¹⁹ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 216.

¹²⁰ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 219.

wall newspaper *Chervonyi shkolar* (Red Scholar).¹²¹ The question of general textbook distribution will be explored further in Chapter 4.

Teachers also took a leading role in coordinating kraieznavstvo work beyond the school. These “directors and providers of culture,” Haliun argued, had to take a leading role and convince workers to consider the relationship between their way of life and all that surrounds them, even the remnants of the failed past.¹²² Under the teachers’ leadership, educators believed that schools could become the centers for kraieznavstvo work. Teachers sought to unite their own senior pupils and the “conscious young” of the surrounding population in such study circles. In rural locations, these school centers assumed even greater importance due to the lack of other institutional support. They provided the foundation for the public’s study of its environment and maintained ties to urban research establishments. Teachers were encouraged to establish kraieznavstvo museums under the schools or coordinate their activities with standalone museums in the raion centers. In urban and rural locations alike the school functioned as the springboard for kraieznavstvo study, but this study was to involve all public institutions and the broader elements of society.

Kraieznavstvo was to function as a catalyst for community activism. Educators called upon parents not only to support their children in their study of region, but also take an active role in its study. As Haliun writes, too many parents believed their “mission” was accomplished after they sent their children to school.¹²³ Narkomos and educators called upon parents to participate in the development of kraieznavstvo studies

¹²¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 468

¹²² Haliun, 52.

¹²³ Haliun, 58.

as part of their civic duty. The participation of all of society in this endeavor was declared to be of vital interest to the young Soviet Ukrainian state: “the resolution of a series of great problems regarding the economic and political rebuilding of the country is completely impossible without a study of the productive, historical, economic, and everyday particularities of everything that surrounds a modern person in his restless, great struggle for the establishment of a socialist foundation for the economy and civic life.”¹²⁴ Kraieznavstvo then was part of a wide-ranging pedagogical campaign to educate the public in the task of “socialist construction” and solicit its participation. Teachers, as “directors and providers of culture,” had to take a leading role and convince workers to consider the relationship between their way of life and all that surrounds them, even the remnants of the failed past.¹²⁵ Ultimately, the aim of the teachers’ efforts was to bridge the peasant-worker divide, to create a “new labor intelligentsia” drawn from both elements that would recognize that “for them kraieznavstvo will be life with the great, true school and furthermore, through the school, a tie between this life and the conscious life.”¹²⁶ Schools functioned as the foci of cultural activity at the local level and it was through schools that Narkomos hoped the Soviet Ukrainian public would be linked.

The Kobzar

Narkomos also allowed for the possibility of expanding kraieznavstvo to its broadest extent, the study of Ukraine. Narkomos formalized Ukrainian studies, *ukrainoznavstvo*, as a separate course in national minority schools and encouraged a

¹²⁴ Lazaris, 49.

¹²⁵ Haliun, 52.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

variety of Ukrainian-related subjects, even as it moved to instruction by the complex method. The shift to the complex method meant classes in separate traditional areas such as history, literature, and language had to give way to the complex. However, educational planners had begun to promote a generalized discipline of social studies (*suspilnoznavstvo*) as a mechanism for the creation of new complexes. The commissariat's promotion of social studies enabled schools to orient their curriculum around revolutionary themes, without having to formally emphasize any one "productive force" in the immediate region. Some Ukrainian-language schools sought to use Narkomos's promotion of social studies to make a link directly with *ukrainoznavstvo*. All knowledge began with a local experience, starting with a child's village or district, but then connecting to an awareness of the region and the republic. Accordingly, *kraieznavstvo* was vital prerequisite of Ukrainization and Ukrainian studies as Narkomos encouraged schools to privilege "Ukrainian" material.

Narkomos and Ukrainian educators drew on numerous aspects of Ukraine's past to develop social studies complexes, including the lives and works of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary heroes. The paradigmatic figure of Ukrainian Soviet values was the Ukrainian national poet and hero, Taras Shevchenko. Raised to an exalted level by Ukrainian national movement, the young Soviet state co-opted and re-worked the mythology surrounding him. Ukrainian literary specialist George Grabowicz places Shevchenko on the level of Pushkin or Mickiewicz: "he is Bard and Prophet, the inspired voice of the people, and the spiritual father of the reborn nation."¹²⁷ One school

¹²⁷ George G. Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Ševčenko* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1982), 1.

that responded to the Soviet authorities' promotion of the Shevchenko myth was a former tsarist gymnasium in Kyiv, renamed Shevchenko Labor School No. 1. Volodymyr Durdukivskyi, a well-known pedagogue, headed the school. Under his leadership, the school gained a reputation as a center of pedagogical innovation and Ukrainian cultural advancement.

Durdukivskyi emphasized his school's advancement of social studies to Soviet authorities. Ostensibly due to his school's largely middle class student body, Durdukivskyi maintained to Narkomos that an industrial or agricultural orientation was impossible.¹²⁸ In a 1924 article published in the Soviet pedagogical journal, *Radianska osvita*, Durdukivskyi further outlined his school's development and use of a "Shevchenko complex."¹²⁹ In designing the complex, the school did not seek to provide the conventional kraieznavstvo study in production, but rather sought to "light in children, with Shevchenko's fiery words, disgust of all despotism, tyranny, and exploitation and to educate in them a class proletarian consciousness, a revolutionary fuse and capacity for struggle." Lessons on Shevchenko therefore pertained to the larger *krai*, Ukraine. Durdukivskyi believed that by encouraging children to engage the life of Shevchenko, to learn his poetry and write works inspired by him, these children would spread Shevchenko's legacy and his message of "social truth." Although Durdukivskyi noted Shevchenko's importance as a figure for national liberation, Shevchenko was most importantly an "inflexible revolutionary" and "prophet for a joyous socialist future."¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 11.

¹²⁹ V. Durdukivs'kyi, "Shevchenkivs'ka shkola - Shevchenkovi," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 3-4 (1924): 37-47.

¹³⁰ Durdukivs'kyi., 37.

Durdukivskyi claimed that instructors placed primary significance on this role in their development of lessons for the complex.

Durdukivskyi also addressed another fundamental part of instruction by the complex method: exercises that encouraged independent study. In his school, children kept journals of their thoughts on Shevchenko's works and illustrated their favorite images described by the poet. Durdukivskyi suggests that because such assignments were attuned to a child's "psychology" they were more engaging. Independent, "non-mechanistic" study, he argues, stimulated a desire for greater learning and elaboration by the "young researchers." Progressive educators like Durdukivskyi believed instruction by the complex method to be a more effective means to train the young. The complex method, when properly applied, would encourage school children to readily participate in the design and goals of their education.

The Shevchenko complex also afforded an opportunity for civic training. One second grade teacher at Kyiv Labor School No.1, who published under the initials Iu. T. (probably the teacher Iurii Trezvynskyi, who like Durdukivskyi was tried for being a member of the SVU in 1930), describes how his students planned and agreed upon assignments for the complex.¹³¹ The process mimics the formulaic proceedings of a village or city soviet. The teacher convened a meeting at the school; the children proposed several projects that were then debated. The teacher reserved the right to support or reject proposals on the basis of their practicality. The results of the debate were drawn up in a plan, entitled protocol No. 10 that was voted on and approved by the

¹³¹ Iu. T., "Pered Shevchenkivskymy dniamy: z zhyttia II hrupy Kyivs'koi 1-oi trudovoi shkoly im. Shevchenka, za 1924 r.," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 3-4 (1924): 48-56.

class as a whole. Furthermore, even at this early age, the children were encouraged to perform a public function. The school arranged for the children to perform a skit on Shevchenko at the raion theater and participate in celebrations honoring Shevchenko's birth at a workers' theater and club.¹³² Even the children's journals and drawings were put on display at the school museum for the whole school and the public to see.

Information regarding Shevchenko was collected and retransmitted by these little *kobzary* (bards, a moniker usually applied Shevchenko), as Durdukivskyi calls them, to the Soviet public at large.

It should be stressed that because of the less formalistic nature of the complex approach, the kind and character of information acquired by children was not strictly regulated. Teachers, in fact, encouraged children to use all sources open to them to collect information on Shevchenko. The children of Kyiv Labor School No. 1 invited the school caretaker and the son of a contemporary of Taras Shevchenko, to tell them about his acquaintance with the famous poet. His story was subsequently published in the school newspaper. Furthermore, Iu. T. asked the children to compare their childhood and their "region of the world" to that Shevchenko's. They solicited material at home and retold their stories the next day. Iu. T. does not describe in detail what they related, but emphasizes that all work was done independently. The children were thus permitted to make their own judgment regarding the progress made in Ukraine since Shevchenko's time. These children, born in the midst of the civil war, adopt Shevchenko's words for their poster art: "struggle, overcome." In the poverty of 1925 Kyiv, it is the promise of the revolution, repeatedly cited by Iu. T., and not its immediate accomplishment that

¹³² Durdukivs'kyi, 46; T., 56.

must have had the greatest resonance. As Durdukivskyi concedes, “Shevchenko’s convictions are close, native to our contemporary life.”¹³³

The children would be taught about the history of the revolution in Ukraine in other complexes. It is perhaps significant, however, that this personage from the past, and not a contemporary figure, was chosen as the preeminent revolutionary for Ukraine. Durdukivskyi argued that “every year we must unite not only the children of our school but of all schools in Ukraine” in the study of Shevchenko. It was Shevchenko’s life which further provided material for the study of Ukraine in turn. Children learned of Ukraine outside Kyiv through Shevchenko’s works and by tracing Shevchenko’s life and journeys on a map. A study of Shevchenko then defined territorial Ukraine, told of the oppression of its people, and invoked its revolutionary spirit. Neither Durdukivskyi nor Iu. T. explicitly mentions the role of the Communist Party in this struggle and lessons in Marxism were conspicuously absent from the complex. They placed Shevchenko at the fore of contemporary revolutionary struggle and called upon the children to connect their own experiences to this movement. Iu. T. concludes that at the end of the complex his students sang with greater awareness: “oppressed and hungry workers of all countries rise up!” Shevchenko was in the lead.

The Ukrainian Commissariat of Education thus embraced and held up a progressive methodology for its promise of transformation. Borrowing from liberal educational theorists such as John Dewey, it advocated the complex method to rid the school of traditional teaching and supply students in its extended primary school with the proletarian mindset needed for future vocational training. Even when confronted with

¹³³ Durdukiv’kyi, 46.

resistance from teachers who were not able or not willing to teach with complexes, Narkomos and progressive educators insisted only on perfecting their use. Lessons based on the productive capacities of the student's immediate environment, Narkomos believed, would make the instruction that much more effective and had the added benefit of public outreach. Children, equipped with an understanding of the value of industry and agriculture, could readily embrace the physical task of "building socialism." An awareness of Ukraine's past suffering would provide some with the proper spirit.

Some exceptional instructors, like Kopyl, were able to implement instruction by complex system. Most likely, the majority of teachers did not. Because of the importance Narkomos attached to the complex method for its formative value in future vocational training, it did not abandon the technique until the height of the cultural revolution in 1930. Even at this time schools pursued progressive methods, such as the student involvement in collaborative projects, but now largely to demonstrate their participation in the first Five-Year Plan campaigns for collectivization and industrialization. Progressive advocates of Ukrainian studies, such as Durdukivskyi and Hryhorii Ivanytsia, a co-editor of *Radianska osvita* and secretary of the Academy of Science's historical-philological section, were implicated early on in the 1930 SVU public show trial. The DPU even arrested the party historian Iavorskyi in 1931, following the SVU trial. Progressive pedagogy, as a whole, fell widely out of disfavor. Ultimately, education by the complex method proved to be a dangerous proposition that provided too much freedom for non-party interpretations and too much opportunity for critics to claim academic failure.

2: A Mandate for Ukrainian Schooling

Setting the Timeline

If Narkomos and the circle of progressive educators who supported it were to be successful in their ambition to radically transform the educational system in Ukraine, and, as a consequence, the skills and mentality of its graduates, it would have to teach students in a language they understood. For nearly three-quarters of the juvenile population of Ukraine, this meant instruction in Ukrainian. Although this may have sounded like a simple proposition, it was not. Throughout the pre-revolutionary period, schools had educated Ukrainian children in Russian. Teachers, regardless of their ethnicity, were trained and accustomed to teaching in Russian. Pre-revolutionary publications, still widely used in Soviet schools, and even the early Soviet primers were overwhelmingly written in Russian. Ukrainian national leaders had made an attempt to set up a network of Ukrainian-language schools after the February Revolution, but their efforts were disrupted by the chaos of civil war and the fall of successive governments.

On August 1, 1923 the VUTsVK passed a decree ordering the linguistic Ukrainization of all levels of government and requiring Ukrainian-language instruction in primary and secondary schools according to the republic's proportion of ethnic Ukrainians. This decree was the culmination of a long battle within central and republican party organs over nationalities policy in Ukraine. Early party orders regarding the need for internal Ukrainization had done little. A February 1920 VUTsVK resolution establishing the equality of Ukrainian to Russian was similarly ineffectual.

Thus, immediately after the promulgation of the 1923 decree, KP(b)U first party secretary Emanuel Kviring released an editorial, confirming that the party leadership meant to do more than recognize a “formal equality of nations.” Narkomos set its own accelerated calendar plan for the proactive Ukrainization of its own apparatus on August 28.¹³⁴ In provincial sections, staffed almost entirely by Ukrainians, the switch to use of the Ukrainian language could begin immediately. Sections with a large proportion of Ukrainians were given three months to transfer and sections which employed a significant number of non-Ukrainians and serviced a high proportion of non-Ukrainians were allowed six months. Narkomos also set six months as a goal for the Ukrainization of its central apparatus.

Educational institutions that operated under the jurisdiction of these provincial sections were to follow a similar phased schedule of Ukrainization. Teachers who did not know Ukrainian but wished to continue working in primary school institutions designated for Ukrainization, were to learn Ukrainian also over the course of the next six months.¹³⁵ Holovsotsvykh, the Narkomos organ responsible for primary schooling, understood however that full institutional Ukrainization would come about slowly. Not only would many teachers have to learn Ukrainian, but Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian speaking teachers alike would have to learn how to teach in Ukrainian and local educational sections needed to translate their lessons plans, acquire Ukrainian literature, and group Ukrainian children in ethnically homogenous schools. In the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, where non-Ukrainians constituted a significant minority,

¹³⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, akr. 65-66.

¹³⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, ark. 12.

Narkomos recognized complete Ukrainization would necessarily proceed more slowly. Plans for Ukrainization of primary schools in the Kharkiv, Odesa, Katerynoslav (later Dnipropetrovsk) and Donetsk hubernii allotted a two-year time period for a complete transfer.¹³⁶ However, pedagogical courses in these regions were to be immediately Ukrainized in 1923 so that their graduates would be ready to teach in Ukrainian for the 1924-25 academic years. As will be discussed below, few teachers that Narkomos rushed through Ukrainian language courses were able to reliably teach in the language. While Holovsotsvykh initially recognized a measured pace for Ukrainization, teachers and prospective teachers immediately felt the effects of the new policy. It would take some time for a Ukrainian language environment to develop in the schools. In order for this to be accomplished, teachers had to teach in Ukrainian or quickly learn how to do so.

Rationale and Intent: Unifying a Rural Republic

The party provided a definitive rationale for Ukrainization. The Soviet republican government had to conduct its affairs in Ukrainian if it was to justly serve the interests of the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking population. Furthermore, the party regularly claimed it sought to correct a historical wrong. Tsarist authorities had forbidden the publication of Ukrainian literature and effectively stigmatized the language as a boorish dialect of the peasantry. While some in the party's central and even Ukrainian leadership held a similar disregard for the Ukrainian language, Lenin had succeeded early on in affirming a party line that recognized the equality of all languages, required republican

¹³⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 102.

and local governments to communicate in the language of the resident population, and strongly condemned Russian chauvinism.

The Ukrainian branch of the Communist Party, the KP(b)U, took its lead then from the all-Union party's position. However, in Ukraine, nationalities policy was inexorably linked to the Soviet strategy of *smychka*. Derived from the Russian word for "linking," it called for an alliance between the urban proletariat and the toiling peasantry. In most non-Russian areas, there was a deep divide between the largely Russian-speaking city and the countryside. In Ukraine's case, this separation was considerable. With the exception of an industrialized, mineral rich East, the republic was overwhelmingly rural and its rural population was overwhelmingly Ukrainian.

The Ukrainian peasantry remained deeply suspicious of urban-centered authority. It took the Red Army three tries to establish lasting control over this population. While a Ukrainian national movement was growing, it remained too weak to enlist the support needed to secure an independent state. The Greens, armies made up of peasants frustrated by the persistent demands of invading armies and their empty promises of land redistribution, proved to be a greater challenge to the Bolsheviks. Led by charismatic commanders such as Nestor Makhno, the Greens brokered a number of loose alliances with the Red Army only to break them when their interests diverged. While peasants may not have universally identified themselves as "Ukrainian," most viewed the largely Russian-speaking Bolsheviks as foreign.

The young Soviet Ukrainian government drew a number of lessons from the Civil War. Firstly, it recognized that the Ukrainian national movement had garnered

significant, if not sufficient, support. Secondly, it concluded that that the Ukrainian disenchantment might only grow stronger if the population continued to view Soviet power as something entirely alien. In a largely rural republic, such as Ukraine, peasant sentiment was critical. A campaign to “win over” the peasantry offered a solution to the dilemma. Ukrainization was a critical component of this approach.

The Soviet government saw Ukrainization of primary schooling as an effective means to both cultivate a new generation of loyal citizens and gain the support of a suspicious peasantry. In a 1923 document, entitled in Russian “Project: The *Smychka* of the City with the Village, According to the Social Upbringing Line,” the deputy head of Holovsotsvykh, Arnautov, argued that all local Narkomos sections had to reevaluate what children’s institutions should be Ukrainized according to the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians residing in a given location.¹³⁷ Arnautov insisted that Narkomos had to develop a network of Ukrainian schools not only in the countryside but throughout the republic. He stressed that the Donbas (Donbass), Kharkiv, Katerynoslav, and Odesa hubernii should give special attention to the question of setting up Ukrainian language schools and that all schools, regardless of the general language of instruction, should include courses in the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian studies.

This document represents one of the earliest formulations of a Ukrainization policy for education following the 1923 VUTsVK decree. Here Arnautov sees Ukrainization as part and parcel with a *smychka* (in Ukrainian, *zmychka*) strategy. Ukrainian-language schooling would function as a critical link between the city and the

¹³⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 1.

village. Urban schools and rural schools alike would offer instruction for ethnic Ukrainians in the same language, a language the majority of Ukrainian's peasant population could most readily understand.

Scholars have often looked upon *smychka* as an empty slogan. While it is true that the Communist Party viewed peasants with distrust and cared little about their self-articulated interests, the party needed the peasantry. The peasantry not only fed the proletarian cities, but also provided the workforce for industrialization. Until the party made its final decision for collectivization of the countryside, it alternated between coercion and persuasion in its relations with the peasantry. The Soviet Ukrainian government regarded Ukrainization as a means to not only to legitimize Soviet rule among the rural population but as a way to facilitate a peasant's interaction with and, perhaps, ultimate entry into the urban population

Nuts and Bolts: Appraisal and Implementation

Early Ukrainian Soviet officials, particularly those in Narkomos, often spoke of Ukrainization in reference to socialist construction. The party proclaimed that Ukrainization held the promise for cultural advancement, but this goal was not an end in itself. Instruction in and the promotion of the Ukrainian language would lead most effectively to the development of a literate and educated population in the republic. Ultimately, the party planned, this population would be a skilled and active participant in the Soviet political order and expansion of the republic's economic base.

The Soviet Ukrainian government viewed the Ukrainization of educational institutions and of the Narkomos apparatus as absolute priorities. A Radnarkom decree of July 27, 1923 to Narkomos and its local organs was in fact the first order to set definite requirements for Ukrainization, correlating a targeted number of Ukrainian-language schools with the proportion of local ethnic Ukrainian populations. The August VUTsVK decree essentially affirmed this policy and, most importantly, expanded its scope, to the Ukrainization of all government departments.

Ukrainization of schooling had already begun prior to these pronouncements. As noted above, a succession of short-lived independent Ukrainian governments had begun work on the establishment of a network of Ukrainian-language schools during the civil war period. These governments, however, could accomplish little while their very existence was threatened. If the nationalist governments were more motivated to ensure the protection and preservation of the Ukrainian language through schooling, their Soviet successors saw Ukrainian-language schooling as a key to the republic's cultural and future economic development. In early 1923, Holovsotsvykh drafted a plan for the expanded use of the Ukrainian language that foreshadowed the later governmental Ukrainization decrees by identifying the chief obstacles to expanded instruction in Ukrainian.

According to the plan, at the end of the 1922-23 school year, perhaps 60 percent of the republic's primary schools had transferred to Ukrainian-language instruction.¹³⁸ The ethnic Ukrainian population, however, then stood at 72.6%. This meant that

¹³⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 103.

significant numbers of Ukrainian children were studying in Russian. Holovsotsvykh blamed the gap on two chief causes: the absence of trained Ukrainian-language teachers and insufficient or non-existent Ukrainian instructional literature in some areas of study. It argued that some provincial educational sections had exaggerated their previous counts of Ukrainian language schools. For example, the Donbas had reported that it had fifty such schools in May 1923 when there were only ten and the Katerynoslav huberniia had made a similar overestimate.¹³⁹ Holovsotsvykh maintained that teachers in most villages knew Ukrainian, but that local inspectors needed to work with these teachers and the local population to encourage the transfer of school work to Ukrainian. Its plan viewed the expanded use of Ukrainian as a republic-wide strategy. Village schools in the Donbas and in the Katerynoslav, Kharkiv, and Odesa regions were desperate for Ukrainian-language teachers. The situation was even worse in the cities. One educational inspector cited in the report noted that children's buildings in the city of Katerynoslav often lacked a single teacher who understood Ukrainian, "the language of the children." While this is an overstatement (even exclusive Russian speakers can comprehend a little Ukrainian), some teachers in predominantly Russian-language environments, such as Katerynoslav, likely viewed the Ukrainian of peasant migrants as a coarse dialect of Russian and made little attempt to understand, and thereby sanction, the language of their Ukrainian students.

Training had to begin, Holovsotsvykh argued, with teachers who already had some practical knowledge of Ukrainian in order to meet the immediate needs of ethnic Ukrainian children. Some provincial educational sections recognized that some measure

¹³⁹ Ibid.

of pressure would need to be brought to bear on both teachers and its own employees if instruction in Ukrainian was to be expanded. The Podillia huberniia section ordered its employees to transfer to use of Ukrainian beginning July 6, some three weeks prior to the VUTsVK decree.¹⁴⁰ They were given two months to study Ukrainian and had to demonstrate their knowledge in a September 1, 1923 exam. The section allowed teachers under its jurisdiction six months to display their mastery of the language, but their challenge was greater. They had not only to prove their ability to converse and write, but demonstrate they could teach a variety of subjects in Ukrainian. The huberniia section's rationale for this early emphasis on Ukrainization is informative. Its employees needed to learn Ukrainian in order to communicate with both its peasant clients, but also its district sections, staffed primarily with civil servants of peasant origin. Children of Ukrainian peasants also comprised the majority of schoolchildren in the huberniia.¹⁴¹ Local officials therefore prioritized the task of Ukrainization and, on paper, accomplished it quickly.

Generally, however, the Holovsotsvykh plan set overly ambitious targets for Ukrainization over the course of the 1923-24 academic year. It designated specific numbers of Ukrainian teachers that its provincial sections needed to train, focusing specifically on the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine: 500 for the Donbas, 300 for Katerynoslav, 300 for Odesa, and 300 for Kharkiv.¹⁴² In keeping with its comprehensive strategy for Ukrainization of the republic, it also called for the preparation of Ukrainian

¹⁴⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 51-53.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 103.

language teachers for schools of non-Ukrainian instruction (Russian, Jewish, Polish, and German). All teachers were to demonstrate knowledge of the Ukrainian language, literature, geography, and history. Huberniia sections had to meet the basic numerical targets for Ukrainian-language teachers over the summer. Similarly, Holovsotsvykh insisted that the need for educational literature in Ukrainian be satisfied by the beginning of the 1923-24 year and called upon Radnarkom to set aside specific funds for publication. It maintained that each school be provided with 100 books out of this fund (an unrealistic, but laudatory goal) at a cost of 30 kopecks per book, a total of 331,710 gold rubles.¹⁴³

Although the Narkomos collegium issued both the initial marching orders for Ukrainization and stern reprimands for the cases of failure that inevitably followed, responsibility for the policy's implementation was localized. Narkomos ordered local sections either to set up short-term Ukrainian language courses or require employees themselves to form self-study groups.¹⁴⁴ Central organs, such as Holovsotsvykh, were permitted to organize classes with workers of other commissariats and optimistically estimated mobilizing up to 50 teachers in the huberniia of the then republican capital, Kharkiv, to lead study circles.¹⁴⁵ Other provincial branches did not have this option and the costs for such training were considerable, 120 rubles for two and half months training of a single group according to a Holovsotsvykh estimate.¹⁴⁶ Narkomos also entrusted the chief of the local section to form a Ukrainization commission to ensure that Narkomos

¹⁴³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 104.

¹⁴⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 65-66.

¹⁴⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 106.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

bodies and the educational institutions under their jurisdiction transferred to use of Ukrainian. The formal penalties for noncompliance were severe. Employees who did not study and master Ukrainian in the allotted time were to be dismissed or transferred. As will be discussed below, sections did initiate cases of dismissal, although bureaucratic obstacles often stood in their way.

The governmental decrees mandated that local educational sections tally the number of Ukrainian schools already operating in their areas and the number of Ukrainian-speaking teachers available to staff new groups. Once again, Narkomos's attention turned to the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. A May 1923 account had revealed a striking gap between the number of ethnic Ukrainian children in these regions and the number enrolled in Ukrainian language schools. In the Kharkiv huberniia there were some 1,916,000 ethnic Ukrainian children between ages 4-15 according to the 1920 census, but only 32,000 pupils enrolled in Ukrainian-language schools out of a total of 127,986 pupils overall in the huberniia for the 1922-23 school year.¹⁴⁷ Large numbers of Ukrainian children were not enrolling in school at all and the majority of those enrolled were attending Russian language schools or schools of mixed language instruction. Even these figures were inflated, as later counts corrected the number of Ukrainian-language schools reported for 1922 and placed the number slightly lower for Kharkiv (from 360 to 345) and substantially lower for Katerynoslav, Odesa, and Donetsk huberniia.¹⁴⁸ Data for

¹⁴⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 107-108.

¹⁴⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, ark. 104; *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 267.

the 1923-24 academic year varied so greatly that Holovsotsvykh ordered its provincial sections to compile a new report by January 15, 1924.¹⁴⁹

Strictly speaking, the government had legislated that children had the right to study in their native language. In practice, this often meant local educational sections correlated students' language of instruction with their nationality. Of course, Ukrainian students continued to attend Russian language schools. Ultimately, however, Narkomos expected students to be divided by nationality, with little planned regard to children's preference. The "forced" enrollment of Russified Ukrainian children in Ukrainian language schools became the subject of a bitter debate in 1926. In 1923, however, data regarding the nationality of students informed Narkomos educational policy and targets.

Local educational sections therefore set as their optimal goal the grouping of students according to national designation. Success in meeting this goal again varied by region. In the central regions an overwhelming majority of ethnically Ukrainian school children attended Ukrainian-language schools of instruction. In the Kyiv huberniia, 92.5% of all schools were Ukrainized to correspond to the proportion of ethnically Ukrainian children.¹⁵⁰ The Podillia and Volyn huberniia reported similarly that almost all Ukrainian children in the first concentration of primary school were being taught in Ukrainian and that the transfer of older concentrations of children to Ukrainian-language instruction was proceeding apace. By contrast, educational sections in the South and East pursued a piece-meal approach to Ukrainization. Many Ukrainian children in the Katerynoslav and Kharkiv huberniia continued to study in schools of mixed Ukrainian-

¹⁴⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, ark. 13.

¹⁵⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, 10.

Russian language instruction. In practice, teachers in these schools largely taught in Russian, although Narkomos's ultimate goal was the transfer of all lessons within a single school to Ukrainian. Odesa pleaded with Narkomos for patience, citing local "conditions."¹⁵¹ Local officials claimed these areas would need at least two more years before all Ukrainian children would enjoy instruction in their native language.

In reality, even this prognosis was overly optimistic. As Narkomos officials throughout Ukraine continued to stress, a successful transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction depended on the reliable staffing of schools by teachers trained to teach in Ukrainian. Narkomos's initial decrees provided a formula for the quantitative reporting of successes in Ukrainization, but the commissariat did not yet offer substantial help to improve the quality of instruction. Ukrainian teachers in the central regions taught according to their own dialectal inventory and teachers in more Russified regions switched regularly between Russian and a Ukrainian heavily reliant on Russian borrowings.

Ukrainization From the Bottom Up: The Hiring of Teachers

At this early stage, Narkomos central authorities saw their chief responsibility in the issuance of marching orders for Ukrainization, not the day-to-day administration of the policy. In fact, at the same time Holovsotsvykh was demanding rapid transfer to Ukrainian language instruction, it requested information from its huberniia sections about measures they had taken on their own and what resources they believed were needed for

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

the policy to be a success.¹⁵² Holovsotsvykh entrusted its huberniia sections with the formulation of their own plans rather than seeking to define and necessitate a universal arrangement. This delegation of authority is apparent in its query to the huberniia sections. Among the questions Holovsotsvykh asked was: “How many teachers are needed to carry out Ukrainization and teach Ukrainian and ukrainoznavstvo as a subject in non-Ukrainian schools?”¹⁵³ Holovsotsvykh was taking stock of progress achieved, but it refrained from setting an explicit teacher-pupil ratio for all Ukrainian schools.

Narkomos also recognized that Ukrainian-speaking teachers might have to move to more ethnically mixed huberniia to staff Ukrainian schools. However, again it largely left it to local authorities to recruit and hire these teachers. In the same Holovsotsvykh query, educational authorities asked the huberniia: how many Ukrainian-speaking teachers can be transferred to other institutions in the hubernii or beyond its borders?¹⁵⁴ A Narkomos report of early 1924 confirmed that Katerynoslav authorities had transferred teachers who volunteered for new posts, although it did not provide exact numbers. The practice, however, was not uncommon.

Occasionally, Narkomos intervened and facilitated the relocation of teachers, especially to the industrial East, where it viewed Ukrainization as an absolute political priority. In September 1923, Pavel Stodolia, a teacher in the city of Lokhvytsa (Poltava huberniia) petitioned Narkomos for a transfer to Kharkiv or the Donbas, where “a worker

¹⁵² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, ark. 13.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

is needed in connection with Ukrainization.”¹⁵⁵ In his letter, he emphasized his political credentials. According to his account, tsarist authorities had imprisoned him in 1903 for “revolutionary activities” and Denikin’s army had persecuted him during the civil war. However, Stodolia also stressed his educational and cultural experience, including a list of his own publications on Ukrainian ethnography and literature and a description of his work in language studies and in the fight against illiteracy. He maintained that he had received a fraction of his monthly salary of 20 rubles a month and could not afford bed linen, underwear, or even such a staple as milk. In the Donbas, if Narkomos supported him financially, he could put his talents to good use as an instructor, journal editor, book distributor, or cultural organizer. Apparently, Stodolia succeeded in convincing Narkomos that his skills were valuable enough to warrant its involvement.

Milvernytskyi, the acting head of Holovsotsvykh, replied that his agency had arranged for Stodolia’s appointment as an instructor at a NKO experimental children’s building near Kharkiv. Milvernytskyi stressed that the institution was supported by expenses from the center and the educators receive their wages on time.

More often Narkomos told teachers to seek employment by contacting local authorities directly. Stodolia’s ostensibly favorable political background and experience may have helped him obtain a position. Ivan Hrovozhnskyi, a former member of a pro-Soviet revolutionary committee in Galicia (western or Polish “occupied” Ukraine), who was now working as a laborer in the Podillia huberniia, made a similar request for a

¹⁵⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 114.

teaching job in July 1923.¹⁵⁶ He had less teaching experience, having only worked as a instructor for the huberniia agricultural cooperative office. However, he also underscored his Galician origins, suggesting to Narkomos, “ask any Galician about me; everyone knows me and can vouch for me.” Narkomos may not have held any overt bias against employing western Ukrainians as teachers at this time, but Hrovzhnskyi’s Galician background meant that authorities could find out less about him. Thus, he may have been viewed as less politically reliable. His professional fall might have also raised suspicions. By contrast, the Holovsotsvykh main educational inspectorate sanctioned the request of Stepan Hohol, a teacher of “proletarian” origin, originally from Bukovyna, but then living in Kharkiv.¹⁵⁷ After an initial query to Narkomos, he wrote directly to the Stalino okruha educational section, likely upon the advice of someone at Holovsotsvykh. Hohol gave Holovsotsvykh as his return address and a recommendation for him was attached to the bottom of his request, signed by a secretary of the main inspectorate section.¹⁵⁸ Proper professional and political qualifications may have aided his plea.

The need, of course, for Ukrainian-teachers was great in the East, especially after the issuance of the VUTsVK and Radnarkom decrees. Narkomos recognized this, even if it was unwilling to make specific arrangements for teachers. In September 1923, Holovsotsvykh had to reprimand its own Donetsk huberniia section for its failure to hire reliable Galician teachers, whom it listed by name, for vacancies for Ukrainian-language

¹⁵⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 121.

¹⁵⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 57, 77.

¹⁵⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 77.

instruction.¹⁵⁹ Arnautov, the deputy head of Holovsotsvykh, advised Hrovozhnskyi in September to turn directly to the Donetsk or Katerynoslav huberniia, noting that “in regards to the Ukrainization of schools in the specified hubernii, workers who know the Ukrainian language are needed.”¹⁶⁰ However, he refrained from issuing an order directly to these sections. When the sections erred, Narkomos might correct them, but they had the responsibility of making hires and filling the gaps in needed resources.

Ethnic Ukrainians living in the RSFSR also soon learned of Ukraine’s need for Ukrainian-language instructors. A preschool instructor from the Chernihiv (Chernigov) huberniia, Mykola Osmolovskyi who had claimed to have been arrested for anti-government propaganda in 1906, imprisoned for three years, and then fled to Siberia in fear of the nationalist Black Hundred, wrote to Narkomos requesting a teaching job in his “homeland” for him and his wife: “in my time, I knew theoretically and practically the Ukrainian language and I hope to be useful in my native Ukraine in a field of my specialty.”¹⁶¹ He emphasized his academic qualifications, including his publication of a children’s alphabet book published by the Siberian Educational Section. The public education of the Siberian executive committee issued a letter of introduction for him to Narkomos and announced that it did not oppose his transfer. There is no record of any action taken by Narkomos, but it informed another ethnic Ukrainian residing in Siberia who sought to obtain teacher training in Ukraine that it had no funds to facilitate his

¹⁵⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 122.

¹⁶⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 119.

¹⁶¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 305.

travel.¹⁶² This petitioner, a Galician named Kapko, also invoked a sense of duty to Ukraine, claiming it was his desire to train to work “amongst my beloved Ukrainian people.”

Clearly, Ukrainians abroad knew Ukrainian-language skills were in demand, but the localized nature of educational policy meant that they were rarely successful in landing a job. Narkomos may have wanted to employ them, but it lacked the funding and perhaps the daring to recruit teachers with ill-defined political baggage and uncertain professional abilities. The most Narkomos did for these applicants abroad was to direct them to local authorities, as it did for Zanozovskyi, a Ukrainian teacher who had taught in the Podillia huberniia but was now working outside of Krasnodar.¹⁶³ He too emphasized his high educational qualifications (completion of a teacher’s seminar and ten years experience in a Ukrainian *uchylyshche*) and fluency in Ukrainian, but to little avail. His own case may have been hampered by his insistence on a position in the city of Kyiv, where Ukrainian-language teachers were more plentiful.

Narkomos appears to have found it easier to intervene in the transfer of a teacher already in its employment. Furthermore, as Ukrainization picked up pace, it judged the need for teachers in the East to be more acute. In early 1924, the main educational inspector sent a memorandum to the central Ukrainian huberniia Sotsvykh sections asking for information regarding Ukrainian teachers willing to move to Donetsk.¹⁶⁴ A December 1924 report by the Donetsk huberniia inspector had pointed to a gap between

¹⁶² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 196-197.

¹⁶³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 116-119.

¹⁶⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 10.

the number of teachers needed for Ukrainization in the province (2,791 persons) and those who spoke Ukrainian (523). The Donetsk inspector allowed for the possibility of transferring teachers from elsewhere in Ukraine, but admitted he had little idea of how many would be available.¹⁶⁵ The main inspectorate undoubtedly viewed this disparity in Donetsk with concern.

Although Narkomos referred individual Ukrainian-speaking teachers to Donetsk, the number of its referrals appears to have been small and it left its provincial sections the task of investigating further details regarding the teachers' qualifications and eligibility for transfer. In fact, when the Podillia huberniia section responded that some of its teachers were interested in a transfer and wished to know the terms of employment, Narkomos simply forwarded its query on to Donetsk and recommended that Donetsk correspond directly with Podillia.¹⁶⁶ It is surprising that, given the desperate shortage of Ukrainian-language instructors, Narkomos did little to provide incentives for those willing to take up the arduous task of teaching, particularly in the changing industrial east.

Regardless, teachers from central Ukraine were clearly interested in being transferred. They hoped that reassignment to Donetsk would offer them the financial security that eluded most provincial teachers. The Podillia educational section's questions to Donetsk sought specific material guarantees: payment for the costs of a transfer, the monthly wage of a teacher by position, class loads, prices for foodstuffs,

¹⁶⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 12.

¹⁶⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 26-27.

lodging, and fuel.¹⁶⁷ The Donetsk huberniia section promised reimbursement of a train ticket and a monthly wage of 24 rubles for teachers in rural schools and 33 for teachers in “city schools organized by the proletariat.” However, educational authorities in each region [*okruhy*] were responsible for working out all other details. The Donetsk section noted that officials could only offer lodging to heads of schools and then only to those who worked in schools “which served the organized proletariat.” It asked interested teachers to travel to regional seats to receive their appointments.¹⁶⁸ Only the most desperate or the most enterprising would have accepted the risk associated with such a move and, even then, they would have had to pay for the initial cost of a ticket. The Donetsk section did not specify which regions may have been in the most need of Ukrainian-language teachers. The choice for point of arrival was left entirely to the teacher.

Identifying Opposition: Chauvinism and Pedagogical Conservatism

In addition to training existing teachers in Ukrainian and recruiting new ones, some local educational authorities moved early on to rid schools of teachers opposed to Ukrainization. In the case of T. Ivanov, a teacher in the Cherkassy region, officials sought to explicitly link resistance to teaching in Ukrainian with anti-Soviet, backward-looking pedagogical methodology.

Ivanov worked as a teacher in the Matusovskyi Sugar Refinery Labor School.

Local educators began to Ukrainize this school in early 1922, well in advance of the

¹⁶⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 27.

¹⁶⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 40.

VUTsVK decree on Ukrainization. According to a petition sent by Ivanov to Narkomos, the Cherkassky educational section removed him and four other teachers from their posts for “russification and other misdeeds.”¹⁶⁹ Ivanov immediately protested this action and sent a letter of complaint to Narkomos along with the minutes of a meeting of the school’s students and the factory’s cultural committee (composed of the students’ parents) held in support of the ousted teachers. Ivanov insisted on his right to teach in Russian and demanded his reinstatement. This complaint and a second petition to Radnarkom apparently went unanswered.

Holovsotsvykh ordered an inquiry into the dismissal after having received a third letter from Ivanov. As a result, Vovchenko, the Cherkassy okruha educational inspector, organized a commission to investigate the affair in August 1923. Vovchenko reported the commission found that Ivanov had refused to use Ukrainian in a school with Ukrainian children.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the commission judged that “Ivanov’s outlook is of a conservative type, unworthy of being a Soviet teacher and therefore concludes that it is impossible to allow Ivanov to work in sotsvykh institutions.” Furthermore, Vovchenko added that, on the basis of information he learned from Ivanov’s estranged wife, “Ivanov appears to be the type of teacher-bureaucrat of the olden days . . . self-confident and insolent, he ‘tolerantly’ regards Soviet power, but he cannot bear the Ukrainian language.”

Clearly, Vovchenko and the commission members were concerned that Ivanov and his compatriots were hostile to the teaching of Ukrainian. He noted that other

¹⁶⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 150.

¹⁷⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, apr. 862, ark. 140.

Russian teachers, outside of those who were dismissed, held similar views, but continued to work in Ukrainian schools. However, Vovchenko did not use the accepted language of chauvinism to describe the antagonism of these teachers, but rather terms their attitude anti-Soviet. For him, they were “foreigners [*chuzdi*], regardless of nationality, to Soviet power and education.”¹⁷¹ The commission allowed that Ivanov might be permitted to teach in a Russian-language secondary school. But Vovchenko believed Ivanov and others like him could not be employed in primary schools, where Narkomos sought to begin the fashioning of a new Soviet generation. He criticized the huberniia educational section for lack of guidance in managing this affair. Implicit in his firm defense of the okruha’s actions was a belief that instruction in Ukrainian was the most effective way for the Soviet state to meet its educational goals among the Ukrainian population.

Ukrainization as Key to Academic Success

Although Narkomos authorities did not intervene in Ivanov’s case, they generally shared the opinion that only instruction in the Ukrainian language could ensure academic success for ethnically Ukrainian children. Consequently, they sought to link progress in Ukrainization with educational accomplishment. In May 1924, Holovsotsvykh demanded that the Donetsk huberniia immediately implement measures to fully Ukrainize and “raise the cultural achievement” of children’s institutions in the Luhansk okruha.¹⁷² Rudova, the senior Donetsk primary school inspector, proposed “to separate the remaining [children’s buildings] into individual groups, having created for

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 36.

them more satisfactory conditions for work, and during the summer to bring the cultural level of the children's buildings up to the level of schoolchildren."¹⁷³ His inclusion of information on the slow pace of Ukrainization suggests that this grouping of children was to be done according to ethnicity. The huberniia was set to begin a campaign for full Ukrainization according to a plan worked out by the head of the huberniia Narkomos section.¹⁷⁴ It would reorganize schools under the terms of this mandate.

Donetsk authorities then placed hope for educational success on the rapid expansion of the Ukrainian language. However, realities on the ground level frustrated this hope. The Luhansk okruha inspector argued to the Donetsk huberniia sotsvykh that while schools were being Ukrainized, they lacked textbooks to truly conduct instruction in Ukrainian.¹⁷⁵ He claimed that an early credit of 5,000 rubles for books had already been used up and further Ukrainization would depend on the extension of another credit. Even where authorities accomplished Ukrainization on paper, the language of the classroom changed little without substantive support from the center. Most students, if they learned anything, had to acquire knowledge from Russian-language texts. Those in rural schools, who had little exposure to a Russian-speaking environment, would have found this prospect particularly challenging.

Some indication of educational shortcomings in Ukrainized schools is provided by the head of Luhansk Children's Building No. 3 in an account to the Donetsk huberniia section of the visit of the VUTsVK representative Petrovskiyi. The children's building

¹⁷³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 37.

¹⁷⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 100.

¹⁷⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 119.

was one of 18 schools Ukrainized in the okruha. The second grade children of this school were unable to correctly answer the question posed to them by Petrovskyi: who is Trotsky.¹⁷⁶ Petrovskyi stressed they had to know the details of the life of Lenin and the revolutionary leaders of Ukraine. The Luhansk okruha inspector warned the huberniia section not to generalize on the basis of this one school, but it passed on this information to Holovsotsvykh anyhow together with its plan for Ukrainization.

Although the huberniia had not blamed the transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction on the shortcomings of this one children's building, Holovsotsvykh responded by coupling the two problems of Ukrainization and academic failings together and tasked the huberniia with finding a solution to both concurrently. Similarly, the Kharkiv huberniia inspectorate found that low levels of expenditure had led to a qualitative decline in sotsvykh education and teacher training in the Akhtyr okruha and demanded the subordinate okruha organ include a detailed proposal for the completion of Ukrainization in its operative plan for academic improvement.¹⁷⁷ For education authorities at various levels, Ukrainian-language schooling was a necessary part of any proposal for progress.

The push towards Ukrainization placed pressure on teachers to use Ukrainian even when they were not prepared to do so. Narkomos viewed the improper use of Ukrainian as equal to the failure to use Ukrainian at all. A report by the Kharkiv huberniia educational section noted that although some teachers knew Ukrainian, they

¹⁷⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 111.

¹⁷⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 888, ark. 13.

lacked scholarly training and could be teaching flawed grammar.¹⁷⁸ The Russian-language environment inevitably had an effect on the quality of instruction in Ukrainian. It pointed to a shortage of Ukrainian-language schools in the city of Kharkiv and demanded the full Ukrainization of two schools that had kept the instruction of their older grades in Russian. Teachers had other problems with which to contend. In the cities of the Kharkiv huberniia, the constant transfer of students had led to overcrowding. In rural areas, teachers lacked books, guidance, and even minimum pay.¹⁷⁹ Both urban and rural teachers then saw little incentive to shift their methods of instruction, let alone their language of instruction. When they did use Ukrainian, those who did not know it well, did so half-heartedly.

For true believers in Ukrainization, no other task took higher priority than the perfection of Ukrainian-language instruction. P. Sapukhin, one Ukrainization advocate writing in the teachers' newspaper *Narodnii uchytel*, claimed that retraining teachers to use the Ukrainian language correctly was more important than preparation of new instructional systems, such as the complex method, because "language is 'our primary tool' for school work."¹⁸⁰ In an article entitled "Ukrainization: 'Ichthyosaurs' of the Modern School," Sapukhin cited the reminder RSFSR Commissar of Education Lunacharskii gave to the All-Union Congress of Teachers in 1925: pedagogues must not ignore simple literacy when developing complexes. In Sapukhin's estimation, such misplaced attention posed an even greater danger to Ukrainian than Russian. He pointed

¹⁷⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 888, ark. 18.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ P. Sapukhin, "Ukrainizatsiia. 'Ikhtiozavry' suchasnoi shkoly," *Narodnii uchytel*, 10 February 1925, 4.

to the deleterious “cross influence” bilingual culture had on Ukrainian and claimed that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian teachers were functionally illiterate in the language. Even so-called experts failed to understand the most elementary and popular rules of Ukrainian. Teachers were “crippled at both knees” and needed real training. Otherwise, Sapukhin insisted, “there will be no complex, no formal training, no respect or faith in the school and teachers.”

O. Polubotko, an educator writing in the pedagogical journal *Radianska osvita*, insisted that improvements in language-training would facilitate the promotion of a progressive pedagogy. Narkomos had to confront those teachers who sought to place language in the “second tier of subjects studied.”¹⁸¹ Polubotko argued that language was both a means for deepening knowledge, but also “a tool, our weapon in the class struggle.” Therefore, its study must be at the center of any school’s curriculum. Because so many disciplines required students to write, Polubotko insisted that language study was particularly well-suited to the complex system’s approach of uniting subjects of study and must form its foundation. Language teachers should examine all essays composed in the school, so that students would understand the need to always write well, not just for “language class.” As discussed in Chapter 1, the demands of the “new school” meant that students would study on the basis of real life experience. The Dalton Plan, touted widely by progressive pedagogues of the time, recommended that teachers take their students on excursions so they could both make direct observations and present their conclusions in written form. Teachers could link these observations to formal

¹⁸¹ O. Polubotko, "Plan ukrains'koi movy za kompleksovoiu systemoiu," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 4 (1925): 39.

subjects of study (such as mathematics, natural sciences, etc.), but writing would be the basis for all future work.

Under the complex system, the teacher was to be a supplementary guide, with students performing mostly independent work. Parents and some teachers worried that the promotion of this method might lead to the neglect of instruction in formal knowledge. Polubotko argued, to the contrary, that complexes could and should be designed so that children would know all they needed to know when they left school: they would understand “working life.”¹⁸² However, with properly designed complexes, students could obtain formal skills, such as reading and writing, largely on their own. Self-motivated study might be a necessity for language preparation anyhow. Due to a shortage of books, Polubotko recommended that children copy excerpts of Ukrainian literature and compile a collection of works they like.

The orientation of complex work was varied, but the goal of all work, explicitly or implicitly expressed, was the development of future, responsible Soviet citizens. Supporters of Ukrainization like Polubotko believed native language instruction, and in particular native language literacy, had to form the core of the complexes. Written work offered students very concrete knowledge, coupled with lessons in civic obligation. For example, a common complex recommended by Narkomos concerned preventative health care. Polubotko proposed integrating language instruction even here, encouraging to students to write their own works on the subject or repeat poetry with passages such as

¹⁸² Polubotko, 44.

“Dirty boy- wash up quickly. Shake out your clothes girl. Untidiness is the enemy. Be afraid. Do not bring us an epidemic [*poshest*].”¹⁸³

Similarly, language was a fundamental part of a school’s transfer of political ideology. Complexes dedicated to the October Revolution, Lenin Days, Shevchenko Days, May 1 were not to be simply opportunities for celebration, but “culminating points of struggle and life” expressed in written form. Polubotko gave a number of examples of such work. The complex on the October Revolution might include an essay comparing differences in form and ideology of works written before and after the revolution. A complex for a rural school could include a reading of Arkhyp Teslenko’s *Shkolia* in which the main character, a peasant boy dies from hunger in pre-revolutionary Ukraine. Polubotko proposed asking students why this happened and why such “capable children of proletarians” will not needlessly die in today’s Ukraine. In short, complexes offered teachers a chance to have children shape their own civic education: “they obtain that which they still have to obtain, that which they need to know for life and not for a diploma certification.”¹⁸⁴

The KP(b)U official line saw the complex system and Ukrainian studies as complementary parts of its campaign to educate Ukrainian children and retool Ukrainian national culture. In a February 1925 memorandum to Narkomos, Radnarkom, and the Komsomol, the Politburo secretary Emmanuil Kviring repeated a party directive for broadening the network of the republic’s primary schools. For this to happen, however, Kviring emphasized that teachers needed to continue their re-qualification: “it is

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

necessary to concentrate all efforts on the development of methodological approaches of school work, while remaining oriented to the new complex programs and children's Communist movement."¹⁸⁵ New methodology meant both the promotion of a civic education through progressive pedagogy in the classroom and its continuation in Pioneer groups once the school day was over. Kvirning emphasized, that in order for teachers to have any chance of successfully implementing this program more native-language literature would need to be published and supplied to the schools for Ukrainians and non-Russian national minorities. He further ordered the Narkomos academic committee to define specific textbooks for city and rural schools. This distinction will be examined later. But for now, it is enough to say that Ukrainian textbooks would not conform to an all-Union norm. They would reflect the particularities of the republic and individual localities. In considering innovation in education, the larger agenda of Ukrainization informed the tactics pursued. Ukrainian language literacy and study in Ukrainian area studies were essential parts of the new pedagogy.

¹⁸⁵ *Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy (TsDAHOU)*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2009, ark. 58.

3: Obstacles and Practical Demands

Taking Stock

If Ukrainization was necessary to the success of Narkomos's educational agenda, practical problems slowed down the policy's implementation. A report published in the newspaper *Visti* regarding school affairs in the Katerynoslav huberniia alarmed Holovsotsvykh so much that it demanded an investigation by the huberniia section.¹⁸⁶ The report claimed that the teachers' standard of living in the Pavlohrad (Pavlograd) okruha was nearly desperate. According to one teacher, the majority of schools in the area were not working. Where they remained open, students were using old textbooks, the buildings were in disrepair, and teachers received minimum rations and their salaries a half year late, if at all.¹⁸⁷ Okruha authorities had claimed they would fully support teachers beginning in September 1923, but in November announced that they could only fund ten percent of the teachers' salaries and encouraged them to seek direct contracts with the local population. Out of desperation, some teachers were leaving the okruha. Officials had threatened to invoke an emergency court (*troika*) to try those leaving their posts or refusing to work. Teachers faced the dilemma of "whether to hope or scatter."¹⁸⁸

Although teachers did not confront such dire circumstances everywhere, most eked out a bare existence. Lack of proper funding inevitably affected the quality of

¹⁸⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 312.

¹⁸⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 313.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

education.¹⁸⁹ On the rare occasions when things worked, grateful residents sometimes let central authorities know. In September 1923, some 21 residents of the village of Tarnoruda wrote VUTsVK, thanking “the powers of the UkSSR” for appointing a new educational inspector, a man named Halii.¹⁹⁰ According to them, the Halii had put “school affairs on a higher pedestal all over the world.” Until his arrival, they had not known “the truth” of education. Clearly, in the opinion of these villagers, this inspector was an exception to the norm. As will be discussed below, most educational inspectors were poorly trained and unwilling or incapable of mustering the resources necessary to make a qualitative change in the level of schooling.

Even those schools that had teachers who knew Ukrainian well and were dedicated to their profession could only Ukrainize cautiously due to the simple lack of literature available. A Holovsotsvykh plan for Ukrainization cited the insufficient amount or complete absence of academic language in Ukrainian as one of the main reasons for the slow development of Ukrainian-language institutions.¹⁹¹ It called upon VUTsVK and Radnarkom to allot funds to create school libraries with a specific number of children’s books and demanded the publication of new children’s textbooks, fiction, and popular scientific works, as well as methodological literature for teachers. It insisted that the state publishing house fully satisfy the need for children’s textbooks in Ukrainian by the beginning of the 1923-24 school year. It estimated that giving every school its first one hundred books would entail the publication of 1,105,700 books at a cost of

¹⁸⁹ Holmes underscores underfunding was a problem in Russia also. The budgetary constraints of NEP forced both commissariats to reintroduce school fees in the early 1920s. See Holmes, 28.

¹⁹⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 175.

¹⁹¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 103-104.

331,710 gold rubles. Provincial plans for the eastern and southern hubernii also committed Narkomos to completely furnishing schools with Ukrainian-language textbooks and literature, but allowed that parents might have to contribute to the cost of supplying books. If this was the case, then they determined that Vseuzdat and Seloknyh must organize collective purchases.¹⁹²

As early as May, Holovsotsykh had drawn up a list of Ukrainian-language books to be distributed for the 1923-24 school year.¹⁹³ Although at first glance the list seems ambitious, the number of copies it prescribed for textbooks and teachers' aids was clearly insufficient. The greatest number of copies Holovsotsykh planned for any new textbook was 30,000. Given that at the end of the 1922-23 year there were some 779,500 children enrolled in Ukrainian-language schools alone, these target numbers for textbooks fell well short of a full supply.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, the state publishing house needed to reprint many of the books Holovsotsykh had designated as essential and national minority schools would require copies of Ukrainian-language books as well.

Teachers made do with what they had, reading and translating from Russian language texts, and relying on in-class oral assignments. The children of the Pohozhe-Krenytska labor school in the Poltava huberniia chose to appeal to the Soviet public in a letter they wished to be published: "We have an unshakable hope that the editors of the children's journal *Chervoni kvity* will stand with the head of our school and aid us with valuable advice and give the children of this village the possibility of obtaining a magical

¹⁹² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 102.

¹⁹³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 115-116.

¹⁹⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 108.

and valuable book.”¹⁹⁵ The children pleaded to all “sympathetic institutions and human persons” to provide them with the literature they desperately needed. The school’s director likely aided in the drafting of this letter, given its reference to him. Nevertheless, the motivation of children’s appeal seems genuine. It was impossible to truly transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction without the massive publication and distribution of new material.

In a 1924 assessment entitled “The Year of Ukrainization in School Affairs,” the deputy Narkomos commissar, Riappo, underscored the importance of a transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction to the party as a whole. He wrote that “the complete task [of Ukrainization] of the leading organs of education is such that all this process is directed towards the building of a worker-peasant state and the future Communist society.”¹⁹⁶ However, he confirmed many of the problems raised in earlier correspondence to Holovsotsvykh and conceded that this immense task was only in the planning stages: “it is not easy to overturn the inertia of centuries.”¹⁹⁷ He believed the greatest problem is that the republic’s schools were “extremely weakly equipped with Ukrainian cultural forces” and demanded renewed attention to the training of current teachers and the preparation of new ones. Pedagogical technicums conducted barely more than half of their instruction in Ukrainian.¹⁹⁸ Although the budget for education had

¹⁹⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 345.

¹⁹⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 621, ark. 63.

¹⁹⁷ Riappo’s emphasis suggests an early example of the hard-line rhetoric of Ukrainization to follow two years later. For Narkomos, Ukrainization was always a revolutionary task.

¹⁹⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 621, ark. 70; Ukraine had two types of post-secondary pedagogical institutions: a three to four-year technicum and a four to five-year institute. By 1929, 35 out of 43 pedagogical technicums and 6 out of 13 pedagogical institutes in the republic conducted coursework exclusively in Ukrainian. Siropolko, 205.

risen over the past two years, it was still well below pre-revolutionary levels and schools struggled to meet the most basic costs.

Riappo saw the greatest problems to progress in Ukrainization in hubernii with significant Russian-speaking populations: Kharkiv, Odesa, Chernihiv, Katerynoslav, and Donetsk. In all of Ukraine, 67% of the schools taught in Ukrainian or in mixed Ukrainian and Russian instruction. However, the proportion of ethnic Ukrainian children attending school was approximately 75%. Thus, some eight percent of the children were not going to school in their native-language.¹⁹⁹ He claimed that there was no entirely Ukrainized school in Donetsk. The number of Ukrainian teachers in the rural communities he believed was extremely small. Furthermore, in Ukraine as a whole, only half of primary level schools had been supplied with Ukrainian textbooks. Still, he claimed that, with the exception of the Donbas, Ukrainization could be largely completed within a year.

This conclusion was overly optimistic. A Chernihiv huberniia report from early 1924 suggested that schools in the province still confronted significant challenges in implementing the program. Rural schools lagged behind their urban counterparts. In the city of Chernihiv, six out seven schools were Ukrainized, but in the Chernihiv okruha only 49 out of 197 schools had completed this process.²⁰⁰ Schools of mixed Ukrainian-Russian instruction continued to operate in this okruha and others. Ukrainization of these schools would proceed gradually, starting with the youngest groups. The shortage of teachers undoubtedly contributed to this gradual approach. Even in the central hubernii, where ethnic Ukrainians formed an overwhelming majority of the population,

¹⁹⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 621, ark. 65.

²⁰⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 860, ark. 4.

Ukrainization did not always advance smoothly. The central inspectorate pointed to problems in the Kyiv huberniia in December 1923: “the question of Ukrainization in the city of Kyiv, which has a special significance as the center of cultural-national life, has not been sufficiently impressed upon the Kyiv gubsotsvos [huberniia sotsvykh section].”²⁰¹ It blamed shortcomings on lack of initiative by the huberniia and lack of funds for children’s literature. While the inspectorate may have seen these problems as understandable elsewhere, it placed special significance on the program’s success in Ukraine’s cultural and ethnic heartland.

A 1925 article in *Narodnii uchytel* emphasized a greater problem for Ukrainization: the policy’s lack of authority in the schools. Kh. Nevira, the author of the article, noted that because of the lack of Ukrainian-language books, sometimes work in the school was reduced to nothing.²⁰² This standstill naturally created “ambivalence” towards Ukrainization, both among those teachers who relied on books to teach and students who were instructed to privilege published texts. Even worse, according to Nevira, children’s activities in the classroom were conducted largely in Russian. In schools just beginning to Ukrainize, like Kharkiv Labor School No. 32, almost all work of the Young Pioneers, the Communist organization for young children, was done in Russian. Nevira attributed this failure to use Ukrainian on poor leadership by the Komsomol: “Very often registered Komsomol do not know the Ukrainian language and Leninist children following after them are ousting the Ukrainian language from their

²⁰¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 858, ark. 4.

²⁰² Kh. Nevira, "Sheho shche hal'muie ukrainizatsiiu shkoly," *Narodnii uchytel*, 5 May 1925, 2.

rounds and practical work.”²⁰³ Nevira noted that sadly children go from the home, where often parents do not speak “pure Ukrainian,” to nominally Ukrainian schools where work is done in Russian.

The situation was little better in fully Ukrainized schools. Nevira reported that the schools’ extracurricular use of Ukrainian was limited: “teachers and children (for example during the weeding of the garden, digging of a vegetable plot, game of soccer etc.) employ Ukrainian, but once the Young Leninist exercises, parade practice, meetings, and assemblies begin everything switches to Russian.”²⁰⁴ Schools also published children’s newspapers almost exclusively in Russian, even in more ethnically Ukrainian rural areas. This privileged use of Russian set a dangerous precedent. Children would continue to internalize a hierarchy of languages, accepting Ukrainian as a language for cultural expression, but unsuitable for political leadership. Furthermore, the constant use of Russian outside the classroom affected events in the classroom: “The Young Leninist collective is a model and other students operate according to its example. Here it especially necessary to prioritize this concern so not to negate the time consuming and far from easy work of the pedagogical collective.”²⁰⁵ In other words, Komsomol’s refusal to use Ukrainian was having a negative effect on Ukrainization in the classroom. Here Nevira suggests that Narkomos’s demand for teachers to quickly switch to Ukrainian was unrealistic unless the party and its own subsidiary organizations did so.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

For true believers in Ukrainization, however, the policy was about much more than changing one's language use. Kaliuzhnyi, another contributor to *Narodnii uchytel*, argued that Ukrainization was fundamentally about an adjustment of the way of life [*buttia*]: "it is not just about the formal use of the Ukrainian language or an external re-painting for a Ukrainian appearance."²⁰⁶ Ukrainization was a comprehensive study of all things that "provide an understanding of 'Ukraine'," the history, regional cultural growth and traditions, and social economic life of a population. Kaliuzhnyi and others who embraced the promise of Ukrainization believed that only this sort of study would provide state leaders with the skills necessary for economic and cultural management and enable union between the proletarian city and the village.

Kaliuzhnyi conceded that the formal Ukrainization of schools had occurred relatively quickly, with some problems in Donetsk and elsewhere. However, teachers would continue to take on great responsibility in Ukrainization, because the schools would supply "workers for the lower state apparatus." Thus, while a transfer of the language of instruction had begun, teachers still needed to teach students all things Ukrainian. Ukrainization was not simply de-russification. Teachers had to deepen their knowledge of the Ukrainian language, aid in orthographic and terminological standardization, and promote broad Ukrainian studies. This was a bold agenda for most rank and file teachers.

²⁰⁶ N. Kaliuzhnyi, "Ukrainizatsiia i narodnii uchytel'," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 14 July 1925, 1.

Teachers' Inadequate Ukrainian Skills Explained

As the example of the Kharkiv schools suggests, all was not right even in fully Ukrainized schools. Teachers illiterate or semi-literate in Ukrainian were doing more harm than good. The pedagogical press is replete with examples. One *Narodnii uchytel* contributor from Pavlohrad in the Katerynoslav huberniia wrote that there were still cases in 1925 of teachers who did not know Ukrainian teaching in Ukrainian schools. Children, he said, were speaking with a hard “G,” a phoneme foreign to Ukrainian but commonly used in Russian.²⁰⁷ “Why?” he asked in a poem he composed on the subject and then provided the answer: “Those from the instructional personnel, they cannot ‘break the tongue.’” Such persons, he insisted, had no place teaching in a Ukrainian school: “When you do not know, do not direct speech. Do not attempt to cripple children too!”

Advocates of Ukrainization were in effect making the argument that teachers had a solemn responsibility to ensure the policy was properly implemented. M. Makerevych, another writer in *Narodnii uchytel*, elaborated on this theme. Also invoking the image of lasting physical harm, he insisted that the poor use or disregard of Ukrainian could impair the development of ethnic Ukrainian youth: “children must not be crippled [*ne pokalicheni*] by a foreign language. This is critical to the pedagogue.”²⁰⁸ Competent Ukrainian-speaking teachers were rare in Ukrainian schools, he insisted. The majority were Russians, Russified Ukrainians, or “changelings” [*perevertnia*] who used three

²⁰⁷ I. Pevnyi, "Perevodymo ukrainizatsiiu," *Narodnii uchytel*, 14 April 1925, 3.

²⁰⁸ M. Makerevych, "Ukrainizatsiia ta vchytel': ukrainizatsiia vchytel'stva - nevidkladne zavdannia," *Narodnii uchytel*, 13 October 1925, 2.

Russian words for every two Ukrainian words in a sentence. For example, according to Makerevych's assessment, of some 500 teachers working for schools along the Donetsk railroad line, only 126 knew Ukrainian and only half of them could teach in it properly. Although teachers could enroll in three-month courses for government employees, this was not enough time to learn much. Since the state was too poor to offer longer courses, Makerevych insisted that all teachers had to take responsibility for their own training. Of greatest importance was their participation in re-qualification seminars in the Ukrainian language: "Each person will understand this, when he accepts that language knowledge in the hands of the pedagogue is a powerful tool of influence on the children's collective." The teachers' own sense of professional and civic duty would motivate them.

Republican Soviet organs saw the cost of Ukrainization as high. In an assessment of the funds necessary for the Ukrainization of its employees, Holovsotsvykh placed the cost of training one group of fifteen to twenty people for two and half months at 120 rubles. It recommended coordination with other commissariats in the capital of Kharkiv and mobilization of fifty teachers to economize.²⁰⁹ Still, teachers would earn no more than one ruble per hour of instruction. On paper, local authorities gave precedence to the Ukrainization of governmental institutions over schools. The Podillia huberniia allowed teachers six months to receive Ukrainian-language training and local education officials only two.²¹⁰ Officials needed to learn Ukrainians so they could speak with "peasants in daily conversation and written correspondence." The level of knowledge the government

²⁰⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 106.

²¹⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 53

expected of teachers was, however, considerably greater. They had to not only use Ukrainian properly, but teach children how to as well. The best among them would train bureaucrats of today in Ukrainian. Their common task was to prepare those of tomorrow.

Many teachers, in fact, worried about a formal appraisal of their abilities in Ukrainian. An announcement of an upcoming *perevirka* (examination) in the Ukrainian language appearing in *Narodnii uchytel* reportedly created widespread panic. According to P. Sapukhin, one of the newspaper's correspondents, teachers burdened with the already arduous task of switching their lesson plans to Ukrainian resented having their knowledge questioned. The faculty from one school composed a song describing their frustration: "A cloud is approaching again, a *perevirka* awaits us."²¹¹ Teachers could no longer simply claim to speak Ukrainian and teach in the classroom according to their own innate understanding of the language. State authorities would now hold them more accountable. Sapukhin writes that this led to a crisis of self-confidence among teachers. What he labels "Ukrainian arrogance" had led many teachers to assume that they would improve naturally, as if by "impulse." On the contrary, Sapukhin insists, teachers had to work hard to perfect their language ability.

While the announcement of the 1926 *perevirka* signaled a call for a broader use of Ukrainian, it also warned those proficient in the language against reliance on historical, romantic notions. Sapukhin singled out teachers who lived according to what he labels Kobzar "purity[*chystochka*]." By this he meant those teachers who saw the language of the national poet Taras Shevchenko as the most correct form and were too enamored with

²¹¹ P. Sapukhin, "Spravy ukrainizatsii. Oblik ukrainizatsiia vchytel'stva," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 15 December 1925, 3.

“primitive” Ukrainian studies. Sapukhin argued that a reworking of Ukrainian was needed in order to respond to current needs. Ukrainian was a tool for class struggle and communism: “Through the national word of Ukrainian workers and peasants we must tell them of the idea of the international unity and brotherhood of laborers, to raise them from the form of a national primitiveness to the international heights of contemporary culture.”²¹² The schools, and through them the party, would teach lessons about the tasks of socialism to the children of these workers and peasants in Ukrainian. But, returning to an essentialized language was impossible and politically dangerous. A Ukrainian rooted in the past risked marginalization and obsolescence.

The *perevirka* would also test a teachers’ knowledge of Ukrainian studies, what Sapukhin labeled “the geographic, economic, and historical elements of our country [*nashoho kraiu*], to promote the Marxist-dialectical approach to helpful, practical work, directed at the building of socialism in our country.” Failure to learn Ukrainian debilitated the teacher, but language study alone was not enough. Furthermore, Ukrainian speakers had to reject a fixation with Ukrainian lore and study the history of the revolutionary struggle in Ukraine and the republic’s potential for economic growth. Sapukhin argued that a *perevirka* of Ukrainian studies was absolutely necessary: “without this accounting, we cannot march ahead.” If teachers were not held accountable for this sort of knowledge, they could not instruct their students and not participate in development of a Ukrainian socialist culture.

²¹² Ibid.

Careful Path Forward: Limiting Priorities, Building Support

In spite of these concerns regarding teachers' low level of Ukrainian knowledge and the slow pace of Ukrainization in some areas due to the lack of teachers who knew Ukrainian at all, insufficient local funding, or shortages in textbooks and other educational aids, Narkomos remained committed to Ukrainization and the policy did enjoy some early, if qualified success. The party had implemented Ukrainization in part because it believed that native-language instruction would educate a new generation quickly and effectively. Furthermore, the Soviet government was building in part on a network of Ukrainian language schools established by Ukraine's short-lived independent governments and championed by a portion of the population. Ukrainian-language schooling was already a reality. The Soviet government broadened and transformed its scope.

An early request by Ukrainian parents and teachers in the Kyiv huberniia to open a new Ukrainian school soon after the Soviet ousting of Ukrainian national forces in 1919 gives some indication of how popular pressure prompted authorities to act where it was easiest to do so. In August, at an assembly of local officials, teachers, union leaders, and workers' club members, a representative of the huberniia's Podil district party committee introduced a measure to create a Ukrainian gymnasium.²¹³ He was supported in his proposal by Shmyhovskyy, an official from the teachers' municipal union. Shmyhovskyy claimed that there were three Ukrainian schools for early grades in the Podil district, but none for the older grades. Those wishing to continue their studies had to do so in Russian

²¹³ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kyivs'koi oblasti (DAKO)*, f. 142, op. 1, spr. 66, ark. 86.

schools. Most families did not have the means to relocate from this lower portion of the city or send their children to the central quarter of Old Kyiv where Ukrainian schools were concentrated. Furthermore, Ukrainian families with children were regularly moving into Podil from the countryside surrounding the city. Thus, the demand for Ukrainian-language schooling would only increase. Lastly, Shmyhovskiy added, a religious school in the district was set for dissolution and the students had nowhere to continue their education. If a boarding house was established under the new school, there would be a ready supply of students.

Here, as it would elsewhere, Narkomos insisted upon changing the orientation of the school. Although parents and teachers in the Podil had called for a gymnasium, the representative of the huberniia educational section, Nahurnyi, required the school to be organized as a labor school for the upper grades. He submitted a plan for the opening of this school, suggesting in time that there might be more than one: “The Podil, which was a greenhouse [*rozsadnykom*] of culture not only in Ukraine, but in Russia [*Moskivshchyna*], should have its own secondary Ukrainian school and not just one.”²¹⁴ Because of the socio-economic composition of the Podil, he claimed students attending school in the district would largely come from the laboring population, including unpropertied peasants living in villages across the Dnipro river and near the city. His plan mandated that the school occupy the building of the dissolved religious school, enroll both boys and girls, and maintain a dormitory for village children who had completed the the first four years of schooling and showed promise.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Here then Narkomos acted not only to satisfy the demands of ethnic Ukrainians, but also to extend its educational mission to as wide a population as possible. This Ukrainian-language school would cater to previously underserved children and replace religious instruction with the progressive pedagogy of the new Soviet school in a language they could understand. The school's formation was the direct result of a popular petition and its task was made easier because it did not have to assume the location and student body of an existing Russian-language school.

As has been discussed above, when VUTsVK ordered Narkomos to undertake a more concerted plan of Ukrainization in 1923, local sections had to outline a program for rapid achievement. They were, however, selective regarding where they actually promoted Ukrainization most aggressively. The Odesa huberniia educational section compiled a two-tiered program for Ukrainization, dividing schools between those it expected to fully Ukrainize and those which would begin Ukrainization only with the first two grades.²¹⁵ In the end, it planned for 53% of primary schools to be ultimately Ukrainized, a proportion correspondent to the size of the ethnically Ukrainian population in the huberniia. By the end of the 1923-24 school year, the section reported that it expected the plan to be accelerated. This meant that school heads or okruha officials had to pursue full Ukrainization in some schools originally designated for a partial approach (gradually increasing the number of Ukrainian-language groups). There was clear enthusiasm among some in the huberniia section for the program. It did not rely on Narkomos for a curricular plan, but audaciously worked out its own program for

²¹⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 129, ark. 104.

instruction in the Ukrainian language with explanatory notes. It also published 10,000 copies of an alphabet book entitled *Chervona zirka* (Red Star) for use in Ukrainian-language schools.

Nevertheless, the section chose to push Ukrainization the hardest where it would reap initial rewards. It reported that in its Kherson okruha there were several districts where 80-85% of the schools could transfer their instruction “painlessly” [*bezbolezno*] to Ukrainian.²¹⁶ It recognized it would have a tougher campaign in the other districts and granted that weekly okruha courses in Ukrainian for teachers and Soviet employees were a necessity. In the Odesa okruha, officials pursued a plan of full Ukrainization in schools where ethnic Ukrainian children formed a majority and teachers had sufficient knowledge. Elsewhere, only the first two grades would be Ukrainized and instruction in the remaining groups would be in the language “which is most possible given current conditions.” Likewise, although Ukrainian studies was a mandatory subject in all schools beginning in the fourth grade, national minority schools could choose to study either Russian or Ukrainian as a second language. It was among both Russians and the national minority populations that local authorities had to tread carefully, although their determined, but gradual, approach in ethnically mixed areas foretold a campaign for the separation and Ukrainization of Russified Ukrainians.

In the Katerynoslav huberniia, Ukrainization also proceeded according to a targeted approach. During the 1922-23 school year, 55.2% of schools were Ukrainized. This figure increased to 69.3% of schools and, in contrast to the Odesa huberniia,

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Katerynoslav authorities introduced the Ukrainian language as a mandatory subject for all non-Ukrainian children as early as the third grade and did not offer Russian as an alternative subject of study for national minority students.²¹⁷ They did, however, prioritize the appointment of the Ukrainian-language to rural areas, where the ethnically Ukrainian population was concentrated. This meant the postponement of comprehensive Ukrainization in the predominantly Russian-speaking cities. Similarly, the huberniia cited a lack of funds for its slow Ukrainian-language work among party employees. The same rationale undoubtedly applied to urban schools. Money for teacher training and literature acquisition would be spent first in those areas where the need was most immediate. In these locales then Ukrainization was successful. However, this selective approach lent the policy as a whole little authority. Ukrainization of the party was delayed and the Russian-speaking Ukrainian parents saw little prestige or incentive in switching the language of instruction for their children.

Sometimes, however, Soviet government employees demonstrated greater acceptance of Ukrainization than teachers themselves. Donets, a teacher in the small city Kremenchuh (Poltava huberniia), wrote a brief account in *Narodnii uchytel* of how city residents viewed Ukrainization. At the post office, a worker did not yet recognize the Ukrainian word for stamp when Donets asked for one, but vented his frustration in capable Ukrainian when the stamp stuck to his finger.²¹⁸ One employee of the municipal budget office translated the Ukrainian word “*sùmma*” (cost) into Russian as “bag,” by

²¹⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 129, ark. 105.

²¹⁸ Donets', "Niiak ne ukrainizuiut'sia," *Narodnii uchytel*', 10 February 1925, 4.

mistakenly picking the definition of the word “*sumà*” out his dictionary.²¹⁹ Her error led everyone in the section to laugh, but Donets downplays the slip-up, writing that errors are understandable for anyone intent on learning a language. By contrast, at a meeting of Robos (the Ukrainian branch of the Union of Educational Workers), members complained when one teacher made a proposal in Ukrainian and demanded he switch to Russian so they could understand it. According to Donets, they whispered to one another, “who are these barbarians who wear out all our nerves.” Educators, the very people who were largely responsible for using Ukrainian everyday and teaching it to others, displayed the greatest hostility to the policy in Kremenchuh. It could not always be assumed, therefore, that a selective emphasis on Ukrainization in provincial schools would yield favorable results.

If local authorities sought to limit the scope of Ukrainization in their specific hubernii, Narkomos broadened its reach generally. An underlying justification for Ukrainization was that it legitimized the UkSSR as a protector and advocate for laboring Ukrainians within the Soviet Union and beyond. Thus, Narkomos sought to include Ukrainians from abroad in its work. Western Ukrainian scholars in the Academy of Sciences laid much of the groundwork integral to the policy of Ukrainization: the development of Ukrainian studies disciplines, research into new terminology, and sponsorship of new literature. Furthermore, they were closely involved in the standardization of Ukrainian-language orthography to come in 1928.

²¹⁹ Today’s orthography increases the confusion by rendering both words as “*suma*.”

A remarkable aspect of this policy of inclusion was the schooling of ethnic Ukrainian children from Czechoslovakia and Poland in the UkSSR. In December 1924, Kaliuzhnyi, an officer at the Soviet embassy in Czechoslovakia, requested that Narkomos support the education of a child of Bondar, a prominent Communist senator from Carpathian Rus, in Czechoslovakia.²²⁰ Kaliuzhnyi claimed that this child could not gain admittance to schools in Czechoslovakia due to his father's political background and that, "as for language, it would be easier to teach the boy in Ukraine and, from a political standpoint, [such an education] would give him the best impressions." Kaliuzhnyi argued that Narkomos should give the boy one of the fifty stipends it had reserved for children of workers and poor peasants in western Ukraine and even offered to take him with him when he returned to the UkSSR.

In matters of such political sensitivity, the party itself asserted its leadership role. Kviring set the parameters of what could be done for this child in a resolution forwarded to Commissar of Education Shumskyi. He resolved that the child be admitted to a profshkola or technikum, but not a party school.²²¹ The UkSSR would assume responsibility for the cultural enlightenment of children such as Bondar's, but not, at least at this stage, offer them prestigious leadership training. Bondar's case was not isolated. Kaliuzhnyi notes that some twenty students had already gathered in Czechoslovakia to await transfer and boarding at educational institutions in the UkSSR. In July 1925, Lozovii, the head of Profosvita, the Narkomos section of secondary professional education, requested permission from the KP(b)U agitprop to enroll students from the

²²⁰ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2009, ark. 4.

²²¹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, apr. 2009, ark. 3.

western Ukrainian regions of Galicia, Bukovyna, and Prykarpattia (in Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia respectively) to schools in the UkSSR. Lozovii requested thirty spaces in workers' schools (*robfały*) and 80 in higher educational institutions.²²² The demand for spaces indicates that at least some Ukrainians abroad viewed the Soviet educational system positively and felt that it offered an opportunity for their advancement.

There is no evidence of Narkomos seeking to enroll younger children in the UkSSR's primary schools, the principal subject of this study. However, its continuing efforts to provide instruction to western Ukrainian youth does demonstrate a wish to claim a principal role as educator for the Ukrainian nation as a whole. Most likely, only the children of the most pro-Soviet and stalwart Communists were admitted to these schools (or even sought admittance). Even so, the state's guardianship of these children was politically important. The Soviet Ukrainian state would take over where families of western Ukrainian laborers had left off and provide these children proper proletarian training.

Expanding Objectives: De-Russification and Cultural Aid

While Ukrainization was fundamentally about the promotion of the Ukrainian language, a campaign to eliminate Russian-language predominance in the republic was central component of the policy. Narkomos strove to make Ukrainian the universal republican language, but it also recognized that the protection and promotion of national

²²² *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2009, ark. 161.

minority languages could act as a counterbalance to the influence of Russian. It hoped to break the historical authority assigned to Russian in urban centers and thereby offer Ukrainian as a secondary, “official” language for national minorities.

Of particular concern was the assimilation of many Ukrainian Jews to Russian. This tendency was particularly common in the cities, where middle class Jews believed Russian-language schooling would ensure advancement for their children. A Kyiv huberniia meeting for sotsvykh workers in March 1925 noted that in the Bilotserkva okruha up to 90-95% of children, “whose native language is Jewish [Yiddish]” go to Russian schools.²²³ The huberniia meeting recommended that educational authorities reexamine the need for all Russian-language schools and consider their transfer to “native language instruction” for the 1925/26 school year. In the absence of clear evidence of a strictly ethnic Russian population, huberniia educators saw little reason for Russian schools.

Although Narkomos authorities repeatedly stated they would respect the parents’ right to choose the language of instruction for their children; in fact they regularly worked to convince parents that children learned best in their “native” language. Narkomos directly correlated children’s ethnicity with their native language and frowned upon parents who pressed to have their children enroll in non-native schools. In a 1925 report on Ukrainization, dedicated in part to educational institutions for national minorities, Narkomos condemned the “ignorance” [*nesoznatel'nost*] of some sections of

²²³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 492.

the population that refuse attend to “their” (native) schools.²²⁴ The report specifically emphasized the refusal of Jews to attend Yiddish-language schools, commenting that these schools only serve 14.6% of the Jewish population. Assimilated non-Russians, especially urban Jews, were overwhelmingly enrolling their children in Russian-language schools, a fact that Narkomos noted with displeasure: “often schools with instruction in Russian are used in these instances by petty-bourgeois groups, who ignorantly oppose the implementation of nationalities policies in the schools.” Here Narkomos linked parents’ refusal to send their children to the appropriate school to anti-Soviet behavior, instigated by classes hostile to proletarian rule. Narkomos held that the privileging of the Russian-language by national minorities (together with Russified Ukrainians) constituted a sort of confused chauvinism. The success of Soviet nationalities policy in Ukraine and specifically Ukrainization demanded correction of this behavior.

Narkomos attempted to remove any rationale for children refusing to attend their “native” school of instruction. It recognized that schools had failed to open due to a lack of national minority teachers and that the generally low level of education among some of those who were teaching reinforced the perception that Russian-language schools were superior. It also blamed poor enrollment on book shortages or, in the case of Bulgarian, Moldovan, or Tatar schools, the near complete absence in the republic of suitable native language literature. Although the literature for German, Jewish, and Polish schools was somewhat better, publication of national minority textbooks even as late as 1924 was still far below what was needed (only twenty-six titles in national minority languages as a

²²⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 181.

whole).²²⁵ Those that were published began as translations of Russian or Ukrainian texts. While Narkomos focused on an increase in production, officials in the teachers' union demanded a campaign to retrain national minority teachers in courses designed to improve both their general knowledge and political training.²²⁶ Like their Ukrainian counterparts in the village, these teachers were the basic representatives of Soviet power and extensions of the party's ideal for the building of socialism in Ukraine. In the mind of Narkomos officials, it was essential that these teachers receive proper training if the Soviet government was to retain authority and the school to earn the community's trust.

By attempting to minimize the use of Russian, Narkomos sought to affirm Ukrainian as the primary language of communication between all nationalities in the republic and grant it increased authority. Narkomos would use the Ukrainian language to recast a new republican identity: supra-ethnic, but universally Ukrainian-speaking. However, it also assumed the role of protector of ethnic Ukrainians abroad, including a large Ukrainian population in the RSFSR (the Russian republic). Language remained a critical identifier of ethnicity. The Ukrainian language connected ethnic Ukrainians abroad to the UkSSR. Within the republic, national minorities would be linked to their Ukrainian counterparts through their republican identity, expressed by their children's secondary study of Ukrainian. Neither aspect of this policy sat easy with all members of the party.

Narkomos support of Ukrainian-language schools in the RSFSR would increase throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. As early as 1925, the Narkomos collegium

²²⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 179

²²⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 680, ark. 60.

passed a resolution detailing its backing of these schools. This resolution called for Ukrainian schools in the RSFSR, “where a concentrated Ukrainian population lives.”²²⁷ Narkomos stressed this mandate primarily regarded Ukrainians in villages, although it granted that it was possible to organize Ukrainian skills in the “majority of cultural centers,” such as Moscow and Leningrad. Narkomos would help in the establishment of these schools by sending qualified teachers from the UkSSR, organizing courses in Kyiv and Kharkiv to train teachers from Russia, and supplying Ukrainian-language literature. It recognized that ultimately educators would have to draft Ukrainian-language textbooks according to the specific demands of the RSFSR educational system (it did not specify how, noting only that Ukrainian textbooks were heavily localized), but for the time being these Ukrainian schools abroad could use books published in the UkSSR. While the Russian Commissariat of Education administered these schools and dictated their curriculum, the schools’ tie to Ukraine remained. Narkomos insisted that it was not enough for teachers in the RSFSR Ukrainian schools to know Ukrainian. They had to be experts in Ukrainian literature, history and geography. This knowledge of a specifically “Ukrainian” republic would be transferred to the children. Just as the UkSSR offered refuge to radical western Ukrainians, it assumed guardianship over Ukrainians throughout the broader proletarian homeland of the USSR.

Narkomos’s defense of the rights of Ukrainian-schooling abroad paralleled its promotion of these schools at home. It argued similarly that Ukrainian schools outside the UkSSR were justified on pedagogical grounds, to provide for the “the rational

²²⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 54.

ordering of work with children who speak Ukrainian.”²²⁸ However, Narkomos also touted these schools on purely political grounds. In particular, it stressed that Ukrainians abroad might engage in “anti-Soviet agitation on national grounds” if their children were denied the opportunity to study in Ukrainian. It acknowledged that local educational authorities might need to explain the importance of native-language instruction to some parents in the RSFSR, citing teacher-led protests against Ukrainian-language schooling in the UkSSR as cause for caution. However, it clearly believed that sentiment among ethnic Ukrainians abroad was in favor of Ukrainian-language schooling and that, especially in rural areas, such instruction would enable teachers to best provide for their students’ success. If local authorities chose to force Russian-language instruction on ethnic Ukrainians, they would only continue the oppression of their tsarist predecessors and encourage dissent and instability.

Mechanisms for Oversight

Beyond issuing orders for the transfer of schooling to the Ukrainian language, Narkomos required some measure of bureaucratic oversight to ensure that this policy was accomplished. Radnarkom had initially entrusted the Workers-Peasant Inspectorate with enforcement of its 1920 decree on the equality of languages and development of a network of Ukrainian-language educational institutions.²²⁹ However, it also gave Narkomos the responsibility both to establish Ukrainian-language schools (and introduce Ukrainian as an obligatory subject in national minority schools), as well as to set up

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ *DAKO*, f. 294, op. 2, spr. 108, ark. 68.

courses in Ukrainian studies for all soviet employees, a category which included teachers and local civic servants. In 1923, when Radnarkom issued formal orders for a concerted campaign of Ukrainization, it had already positioned Narkomos as the primary soviet organ in charge.

As has already been demonstrated, it was often local educational inspectors who monitored the progress of Ukrainization in the schools. They also took a leading role outside the classroom. For example, the Kyiv okruha executive committee ordered the local educational inspector to coordinate an assessment of the region's Ukrainian-language courses for government employees.²³⁰ However, not all inspectors knew Ukrainian well. A 1924 report from the Kyiv huberniia educational section notes that a portion of its inspectors had to enroll in Ukrainian language courses, of the very sort that the okruha executive committee had ordered its inspectors to inspect.²³¹ Although it fell to the educational inspector to report on the progress of Ukrainian-language schools as well, clearly all were not equipped to do so.

Ultimately, Ukrainization's success depended on teachers. Inspectors held individual educators responsible for failure, but they did not design plans for transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction. In Poltava, for example, the huberniia educational section entrusted the realization of Ukrainization to its senior inspectors, but it gave its methodological committee the task of working out a program of Ukrainian studies for the schools according to a realistic assessment of the number of teachers it had available.²³²

²³⁰ *DAKO*, f. 632, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 25.

²³¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 858, ark. 5.

²³² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 129, ark. 115.

Inspectors monitored Ukrainization's implementation, but local educational sections had to provide training or recruit more teachers if they wanted to remedy the gaps even poorly qualified inspectors inevitably found. Without Ukrainian-speaking teachers, this program meant little.

It was also teachers who headed the courses in Ukrainian studies for state employees. So, although educational inspectors reported on the level of language knowledge among civil servants in the city of Kyiv, it was a representative of the *okruha liknep* (committee to liquidate illiteracy) that conducted the testing.²³³ Teachers were widely expected to perform this role in addition to their teaching duties. In this case, it was work that went uncompensated. The municipal executive committee claimed it had no money to pay the *liknep* worker. Progress in Ukrainization, both inside and outside the school, depended on the dedication of individual cultural workers and educators. Unfortunately, as will be discussed, the skill level of even those who volunteered or sought employment as "Ukrainizers" varied.

Central authorities at Narkomos set the broad guidelines for the implementation of Ukrainization and remained interested in the steps taken by local educational inspectors, sections, and teachers. It published and disseminated questionnaires (*ankety*) on Ukrainian language usage. In particular, it asked education authorities whether "obstacles" had occurred in the Ukrainization of their work. The Odesa *huberniia* educational section noted in its account of measures taken specifically in the schools that

²³³ *DAKO*, f. 632, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 1.

the situation in outlying regions had not been studied enough.²³⁴ It expressed concern that, although authorities had planned to Ukrainize 158 schools in the Mykolaiv okruha, as of January 1, 1924 only 61 had been Ukrainized and 79 were in the process of being Ukrainized. It ordered raion cultural sections and okruha inspectors to determine what had been accomplished and what still needed to be done.²³⁵ In its report on the Ukrainization of state institutions, the Kyiv okruha inspectorate responded that “hostile” employees had avoided Ukrainian language courses and threatened them with dismissal after “a certain time.”²³⁶ Narkomos therefore clearly had information that its ambitious plans were not being fulfilled. It would, in time, look upon reports of quantitative successes by some sections with increasing suspicion.

Although Narkomos remained an important organ with oversight of Ukrainization and the principal agency for its implementation in the schools, the party did not relinquish control. In 1925 the KP(b)U Politburo formed a Central Committee on Ukrainization that would take a more direct role in the Ukrainization of its rank and file and the government. Before the formation of this committee, Narkomos reported its findings on Ukrainization to agitprop, the Central Committee’s propaganda wing. agitprop’s operational plan for December to March 1924 included the following dictate: “along with this basic task of mass party enlightenment work, before agitprop the task rises of accounting for achievement of resolutions of the XII Congress regarding the nationality question in party education of the soviet apparatus, cultural work of unions of

²³⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 129, ark. 106.

²³⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 129, ark. 106.

²³⁶ *DAKO*, f. 632, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 1.

Narkompros.”²³⁷ Its task was to investigate the degree of Ukrainization at the various levels of education, evaluate all coursework in Ukrainian studies, and determine the extent of party and union involvement in Ukrainian-language study. The plan foresaw the creation of a Central Scientific Methodological Committee under Narkomos to oversee the creation of local committees and confirm a program in Ukrainian studies. It mandated the drafting of Soviet primary school textbooks adjusted to Ukrainian conditions and the specific development of an agricultural program for rural schools. Furthermore, it mandated support for the organization of Pioneer groups, among Ukrainians and among national minorities, where political and methodological work was scant.

In January 1924, in response to instruction from Narkomos Deputy Commissar Riappo, the commissariat’s administrative section forwarded excerpts of an account on Ukrainization by the Odesa huberniia educational section to agitprop.²³⁸ The dispatch is evidence of the Narkomos leadership’s continuing concern about the pace of Ukrainization in the South, a concern it communicated to and shared in common with agitprop. In another memorandum, Riappo himself replied to a direct query from agitprop regarding Ukrainization. He conceded that Narkomos was still investigating the achievements of the policy and thus he was forced to send incomplete information, much of which had been compiled a year earlier.²³⁹ The text of the agitprop inquiry, incongruously written in Russian, asked specifically for information on the Ukrainization

²³⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 39, ark. 5-18.

²³⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 39, ark. 23.

²³⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 39, ark. 44, 61.

of business affairs by government institutions, but Narkomos replied with additional information on the Ukrainization of all its “subsidiary” organizations, including the schools. Although there are gaps in the Narkomos information (the material Riappo provided did not go beyond figures collected at the huberniia level), its successes were notable in comparison with that of other commissariats and must have been known to agitprop. Riappo’s anticipated audience may have been the wider party leadership, to whom he sought to convey a sense of the work accomplished but also the problems that remained. True Ukrainization would require greater support.

4: Learning the New Language of Pedagogy

Restoring Order to the New School

As discussed in Chapter 1, Narkomos saw the use of a progressive system of instruction as essential to the building of socialism in Soviet Ukraine. Narkomos planners envisioned the development of a new generation, trained in essential labor skills, but above all else aware of a system of production. Citizens would acquire this knowledge in the schools, achieving high literacy, and beginning their study with an investigation of local economic resources and activity in the immediate surrounding area. Narkomos believed that instruction by the complex method was the best means for teachers to accomplish this goal, to break down the traditional subject areas of the old school, and provide an interdisciplinary education organized around set themes. In the absence of direct state control over the upbringing of children, a goal of Commissar of Education Hrynko, study of “living” material, coupled with political training in the young Pioneer movement, would continue to provide the state and the party a role in shaping children’s early world outlook. No longer bound by disciplinary strictures, the next Soviet generation would see how the knowledge they had gained in schools might be applied, as well as the integrative nature of this knowledge. They would, in short, be Soviet citizens committed to “building socialism,” but also capable of understanding the complexity of challenges involved in this task. If this was the vision, the reality was that teachers were overwhelmed by all that was expected of them. They confronted the dual

imperative of altering their language and method of instruction. The most dedicated were content to teach basic skills and leave campaigns for social transformation to others.

Instruction by the complex method represented a fundamental break from the past. Given the difficulty that educational theorists had in neatly defining the new methodology and the teachers' scant training in it, it is not surprising that there was considerable misunderstanding among teachers about how to apply it in the classroom. Further, the new methodology was beset by a number of other problems including a lack of funding, insufficient materials, and parental complaints. Ultimately, and perhaps most critically, a perceived contradiction emerged between the goals of the complex system and the application of Ukrainian language instruction. This chapter explores the "mechanics of implementation": the tension that emerged between the ideals of this new pedagogical approach, their introduction, and Ukrainization.

The problems inherent in the practical application of the progressive pedagogy were apparent at the First All-Ukrainian Congress of Sotsvykh Workers held in January 1925. The congress underscored the importance of breaking with traditional pedagogy to achieve this end in a resolution it passed on the basis of a report given by Commissar Shumskyi. It applauded the revolution's destruction of an old system of education based on privileges and the establishment of schools centered "on the principles of national self-determination and labor content."²⁴⁰ The congress recognized that the civil war led to massive devastation, destroying the economy and any hope of financing its ambitious plans for a complete reworking of education. While it orphaned thousands of children

²⁴⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 26.

and fractured families, this social dislocation had a positive consequence in the eyes of Narkomos. It created a blank slate for the promotion of *sotsialne vykhovannia* (*sotsvykh*), the theory of “social upbringing.” Defined by the congress as “the state protection and state embrace of all children,” the belief motivated Narkomos to create children’s buildings as “universal social-pedagogical centers,” in which the state would assume the role of guardian. As Chapter 1 argued, the end of the civil war and the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) brought some normalization in educational affairs, but it also meant a decline in the number of children’s buildings and what the congress lamented as a reduction in the influence of the state and strengthening of a negative role of the family.

The congress made clear, however, that Narkomos had not given up on its impulse for guided child rearing. It sought to orient schools to the task of social upbringing. They would not be mere places of learning, but places of citizenship training. Ultimately, the congress advised that this task would be accomplished by youth communist organizations. However, the number of Komsomol organizations was still small and the number of its subsidiary Pioneer troops even smaller. In the city of Myronivka (Kyiv okruha), for example, the Pioneer detachment suffered from weak support from its sponsor, a local sugar refinery. Its activities remained entirely detached from the school.²⁴¹ Recognizing shortcomings such as this, the congress urged instructors to place primary emphasis on school curriculum. It directed them to continue the struggle “for the complete rebuilding of a revolutionary pedagogy on a material

²⁴¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 468.

basis.”²⁴² The essential vehicle for this new pedagogy was instruction by the complex method in the Ukrainian language. The congress envisioned the tying of the complexes to Pioneer group activity, where they existed, but more generally, to issues of production. In the absence of a children’s movement, the school would take on its mission: to foster ties with surrounding activity, “with the proletarian and landless peasant society and its productive interests.” The congress called upon teachers to innovate, experiment, and make use of hands-on methods associated with productive activities.

This issue of curricular transformation was at the heart of all discussion among pedagogical circles in the 1920s. Ukrainization was a means towards this end. However, a number of practical problems confronted the would-be reformers. The congress detailed several: overburdened teachers, an almost complete absence of funds for instructional training in the schools, shortages of literature, teachers’ inability to adapt to the new prescribed methods and low relative enrollment in rural areas.²⁴³ Funding also remained a problem. Schools relied on local governments for budgetary allotments and although the congress reported that amount of money assigned to schools had increase from 19 to 32 million rubles in the 1924-25 school year, more funding was needed for teacher training and the purchase of books and schools supplies.

A Holovsotsvykh report on the main tasks for the 1925-26 school year also added to the list of deficiencies that the Sotvykh workers congress had raised. For its pedagogical mission to succeed, Narkomos desired universal enrollment of children from eight to eleven years old. For the time being, it concentrated on the enrollment of early

²⁴² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 28.

²⁴³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 27.

school age children. At the beginning of the 1925-26 school year, Holovsotsvykh estimated that 457,000 eight-year and 300,000 nine-year old children in the republic were not attending school. To enroll them, schools would have to open 5,000 more groups (classes).²⁴⁴ This objective required local educational sections to build new schools, hire teachers, and procure textbooks. Furthermore, while Holovsotsvykh was primarily concerned with an expansion of the first four years of schooling, ultimately it needed to increase the number of full seven-year schools. In 1925-26 there were approximately 30 groups for every seven-year school. To keep this proportion constant, Narkomos would have to increase the number of these schools too.

The existing state of school affairs was less than ideal. Authorities often housed schools in buildings not meant for instruction, in dilapidated structures or peasant homes. Local educational sections were responsible for submitting their own orders to the state publishing house for textbooks, but had little money to pay for new literature.²⁴⁵ General publication of children's literature was still negligible and school libraries poorly stocked. Schools lacked even the most basic supplies: tables, benches, and desks, to say nothing of "extras" like maps, charts, and writing implements. Holovsotsvykh demanded an account of okruha spending to ensure that its sections were providing funds for supply of these items as best as they could. Within the classroom, Holovsotsvykh dictated that teachers instruct no more than forty students. If it was necessary to burden teachers with large numbers of students (as it often was), it was better that they take on one large group rather than two groups that together surpassed this forty student limit.

²⁴⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 78.

²⁴⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 79.

Holovsotsvykh also set up auxiliary schools for children who were falling behind. It resolved that Narkomos must provide enough of these remedial schools to meet the needs of approximately three percent of the school age children. Without them, it maintained, the work of “normal” children would falter. Holovsotsvykh assumed budgetary responsibility for these schools, as well as schools for juvenile offenders and the blind and the deaf.²⁴⁶ Holovsotsvykh’s primary slogan was the “normalization of work” and, therefore, its operating rationale was to limit distractions away from the schools’ chief task: the use of a new, revolutionary pedagogy.

Were schools able to set curricular and methodological affairs in order?

Educational inspectors’ lack of preparation for evaluating Ukrainization has already been discussed in Chapter 4. Few were equipped to investigate a school’s general activities as well. At a meeting of Kyiv huberniia sotsvykh workers in March 1925 one attendee, Slutskiyi, argued that the inspectors rarely did their job, even if they had the skills to do so.²⁴⁷ He maintained that some huberniia inspectors did not tour village schools or even give instructions to their okruha counterparts to do so, but only attended meetings of the inspectorate. Furthermore, many were new graduates of pedagogical schools or occupied positions as heads of schools but had no teaching experience or political training. He suggested that a huberniia section employ only former teachers as inspectors and provide them with a readily available form of transportation. Although Holovsotsvykh mandated implementation of its program, it relied upon the initiative of local inspectors to ensure that schools were carrying out its orders. Due to their inexperience, even those

²⁴⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 5.

²⁴⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 106.

who did regularly carry out inspections may have been unable to appreciate the particular challenge of teaching by the new progressive methodology involved or, more importantly, unable to suggest remedies.

Local authorities also balked at formulating their own applications of the methodology Holovsotsvykh prescribed. Holovsotsvykh intended all teachers to undergo training by the complex method and work out curriculum for their schools. Lypovytskyi, another delegate to the Kyiv huberniia meeting, reported that directors of the training programs remained dissatisfied with the program for retraining and want more detailed and specific plans to pass on to the teachers.²⁴⁸ Therefore, they waited for instruction from the huberniia educational section in Kyiv and the complexes that educators did organize became muddled: “we see from [local teachers’] conferences that while some complexes are organized for the future, others will be stuck in the past. In some raiony there may be a complex on the ‘February Revolution’, but they will work out something completely different in addition to it.”²⁴⁹ Lypovytskyi suggested that it was up to raion and school administrators to use the program to “independently revolutionize” their activities. It was, however, this very sort of independence that ironically both unnerved teachers and school directors and yet allowed them to resist prescriptions for a progressive pedagogy. Educators requested a neatly defined program, not descriptive directives. They worked out complexes as they understood them, but ones largely bereft of the transformative spirit Holovsotsvykh envisioned.

²⁴⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 92.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Notwithstanding the anxiety expressed at these conferences, some exceptional schools did seek to implement a progressive pedagogy. A report on the state of education in the Bilotserkva okruha found that in the Fastovska Raion Labor School teachers had instituted a progressive curriculum, but had taken an incremental approach similar to their gradual introduction of Ukrainian-language instruction. They set up an entirely new program in the younger grades, but conceded only partial instruction in the laboratory method.²⁵⁰ Similarly, the teachers began full Ukrainian-language instruction only in the first grades. The two aspects of the Narkomos program were supposed to work in concert with one another. Although teachers at these schools demonstrated their commitment to both, they advocated a measured transition given the difficulty involved in achieving both immediately.

Educators also pushed progressive pedagogy the most in the younger grades of the Skvyrska Raion Labor School. It was reported that during a complex on Shevchenko and the February Revolution for the fourth grade, “the group of 64 children was so completely delighted with the work and so thoroughly engaged with the material that, in general, it was evident the leader had skillfully carried out the correct plan.” Here too the link between Ukrainization and the complex system is apparent in the successful application of a complex on Shevchenko. This school, like the central experimental schools, served as a model for other schools in the raion. At the meeting of the raion pedagogical council, it reported on its work and sought to guide that of more rural schools. If progressive pedagogy was going to succeed, schools in the raion centers

²⁵⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 485.

would have to embrace it first and promote its spread. However, it is again noteworthy that even these model schools saw the dual implementation of this pedagogy and Ukrainian centered instruction as a significant challenge.

Raising Teachers' Qualifications

Building socialism required Narkomos and its subsidiary organs to equip its schools appropriately. A call for pedagogical innovation meant little if teachers were unprepared to accomplish it. They needed to modify the way they taught and did so only reluctantly. It was not until the summer of 1923 that systematic work on the raising of pedagogical qualifications began in earnest, mostly in the form of conferences and study circles.²⁵¹ In 1924, courses on methodology and self-study were held throughout Ukraine. Partly in response to teachers' demands for publication of pedagogical literature and the establishment of pedagogical libraries, Narkomos began to publish the journal *Radianska osvita* and the teachers' union released the newspaper *Narodnii uchytel*. However, only teachers working in the major cities were able to read these publications with any regularity.

1925 witnessed heightened activity in the drive for teacher preparation. Riappo, the deputy Narkomos commissar, issued orders in April for all huberniia sections to oversee more comprehensive summer courses for sotsvykh teachers.²⁵² Okruha sections assumed direct responsibility for the administration of the courses. Additionally, Narkomos ordered that the courses take place in the "national language" of the teachers

²⁵¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 180.

²⁵² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 680, ark. 117.

and that okruha sections pay for the travel of national minority teachers to larger, consolidated classes in urban centers.

A local educational section's ability to meet Narkomos's mandate depended on a variety of practical considerations. The Chernihiv huberniia educational section formed a bureau for teacher retraining, but its okruha sections did not have the money to support regular courses at the lower level.²⁵³ Furthermore, raion libraries in the huberniia had almost no pedagogical books for teachers seeking material on their own. Individual initiative counted, of course. Nizhyn (Nezhin) okruha officials found a way to organize several pedagogical courses, hold conferences, and support the work of teacher study circles. According to the huberniia administration, some 286 study circles were active in the whole huberniia with 18-20 participants in each circle. Participants were supposed to read recommended literature, evaluate each others' pedagogical work, and familiarize themselves with local economic questions and agricultural data. However, the Chernihiv report concluded that few had engaged in "planned, systematic, and deep work" and most took the opportunity to complain about with their own overwork and poorly supplied libraries. Teachers found little time to significantly engage in these study circles and few resources to help them in their efforts.

Nevertheless, huberniia sections continued to design courses that emphasized self-study. The Volyn huberniia organized a congress bringing together raion organizers of study groups and teachers undergoing retraining. The plan for the congress's work stressed that it would not hold courses specifically for retraining but would seek to

²⁵³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 680, ark. 36.

instruct participants in skills necessary for “self-training.” Most of the activity of the congress would take place in work groups, with only three summary reports given to the whole congress. Although teachers had some input on the congress’s agenda, it would work generally according to a huberniia strategy devised by the Zhytomyr educational section that gave a central role to “production regional studies” (*vyrobnychne kraieznavstvo*). In the case of the Volyn huberniia this approach meant an orientation towards agriculture. The congress planners proposed that teachers take part in excursions to observe agricultural work.²⁵⁴ They believed that schoolchildren should not just study production abstractly, but had to learn about it firsthand. They intended the teachers’ trips to the countryside to function as lessons in how to conduct this sort of instruction.

Narkomos officials emphasized *kraieznavstvo* as the foundation of new instruction. It was, the Volyn huberniia congress planners believed, the “the most important task in education” and one which they saw at the heart of teacher training. However, their instruction in this critical methodology was decidedly non-specific. They did not mean for the congress to spell out exactly how this instruction would take place, but rather sought to provide teachers with the fundamentals of such an approach. The congress proposed that teachers employ a “shock program,” according to which they would adapt the general program to local needs and rapidly transform their work in the schools. For example, in order to teach agriculture, they would draw from their experience in the congress’s excursion to oversee their students’ cultivation of garden plots and to lead tours in the immediate countryside. The congress also included

²⁵⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 680, ark. 128.

information on integrating the communist children's movement into school life and kraieznavstvo. Tying schoolwork to Young Leninist activity would strengthen and broaden the new progressive pedagogy and the push towards the study of "socially productive labor."

Budnov, a speaker at the Kyiv huberniia sotsvykh conference, cited comments by Krupskaiia (Lenin's widow and a key figure in the field of education) at the First All-Union Conference on Retraining that all teachers must become experts in regional studies (Russian - *kraevedy*, Ukrainian- *kraieznavtsi*). The Holovsotsvykh program emphasized the need to localize educational material, but it was up to the teachers themselves to be promoters of kraieznavstvo: "the new program functions as only a skeleton which needs to be given living flesh of regional studies material."²⁵⁵ Teachers needed to connect all complexes to local life. Budnov also cautioned against the study of history and folk customs and lauded an investigation of labor activity. The Holovsotsvykh program demanded this study of labor. The teachers' task was to apply this directive to their own locale. Budnov recommended broadening their study to the whole raion, but not beyond. By limiting the study this way, they and their students would focus their observations on what was familiar. Educators had to privilege direct examination above all else. When the students advanced, they would ask them to draw connections to the region and the republic beyond.

There was a danger that educators' emphasis on teacher self-training and independent activity in the schools might have negative consequences. Muzychenko,

²⁵⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 206.

also a speaker at the Kyiv huberniia conference, warned that educational sections had to ensure that teachers did not turn kraieznavsto to ethnography, geography, and the study of olden times.²⁵⁶ Another participant, Kamynskyi, argued that Narkomos must supply teachers with concrete and specific kraieznavstvo material so that teachers would not pick their own disparate materials. He recommended that teachers undergo a full year of instruction in correspondence courses if Narkomos had any hope of setting up instruction in kraieznavsto complexes. Muzychenko and others added that the number of kraieznavstvo experts outside the city of Kyiv was still small and the success of the program would depend on the cooperation between teachers, ties between central and provincial institutions and, perhaps most importantly, a revamping of pedagogical training. They insisted that the rationale of all study, whether self-motivated or organized by Narkomos, should be “Soviet building” through kraieznavstvo, not the ethnographic romanticism of the past.

Social Upbringing Through Kraieznavstvo

Educators such as Budnov favored kraieznavstvo so greatly because they claimed it offered a means to ensure that Soviet Ukraine’s young citizens participated in the building of socialism. In a remarkable statement that contrasts sharply with the accepted understanding of the command-and-control Stalinism to come, Budnov insisted that kraieznavsto was “not accidental, not a temporary passion, not a fashion, but rather a natural consequence of the entire internal policy of Soviet power, a policy based and built

²⁵⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 224.

on decentralization.”²⁵⁷ Teachers, children, and the general public would assume responsibility for surveying the challenges that faced their locality and using the information they gained to suggest solutions to Soviet authorities. Teachers would instruct children in how to conduct kraieznavstvo studies by themselves and form their own circles to coordinate and promote kraieznavstvo.

As has been argued above, advocates of kraieznavstvo believed that the construction of a socialist society and economy required that citizens be fully aware of the republic’s revolutionary political history and productive potential. Ukrainian area studies provided the rationale for a transfer to the complex system. Ukrainization exams for civil servants, trade union members, and party officials not only tested literacy in the Ukrainian language, but also proficiency in Ukrainian studies (knowledge of Ukrainian literature, history of revolutionary movements, geography, economy, etc.). In the schools, Narkomos planned for children to acquire this knowledge at an early age. It firmly linked language study to the study of a school’s region and to that of wider Ukraine.

Social studies, as an aspect of kraieznavstvo, constituted the principal discipline involved in this task of training the next generation for the building of socialism. Progressive educators assigned language study a critical, but supporting role. In an assessment of the state of Ukrainization in the Vasylykivska Raion Labor School, the school head, Chavdarov, argued that “language is not a goal in itself and therefore the tie

²⁵⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 206.

with social studies is primary.”²⁵⁸ Children were to study, as much as possible, the “living language.” By this, educators meant a language close to that spoken by contemporary Ukrainians, purged of archaisms and artificial constructions.

As has been argued above, teachers had to learn how to teach *kraieznavstvo* properly. A Kyiv *okruha* report on teacher training argued that teachers, aware of Narkomos’s emphasis on the complex system, were increasingly interested in retraining. However, the report insisted it was not enough for *hubernia* sections to introduce teachers to models of the new approach. *Kraieznavstvo* material was necessary for the development of complexes that “children must know about production in our Republic and especially in their own raion.”²⁵⁹ It recommended that raion educational sections, through their methodological bureaus, oversee the creation of small groups of teachers to collect *kraieznavstvo* material. Known as *kushchy* (bushes), these small groups were to evaluate “territorial specifics” through direct observation, to consider how they might be integrated into complexes and what sort of “verbal or illustrative” work could be developed. While the raion methodological bureau would compile a catalog of the general characteristics of the raion with the help of local intelligentsia, each school’s faculty would decide what details and sub-themes might be used in a given complex.²⁶⁰ The establishment of the complex system, the new Soviet school in general, depended on the success of Ukrainian studies, localized in the first instance and then broadened to the republican level.

²⁵⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 7.

²⁵⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 16.

²⁶⁰ The Kyiv *okruha* inspector specifically noted that it was not necessary for schools to use raion plans, but they had to adjust complexes to local needs. See *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 6.

While the Pioneer organization offered straightforward political training outside the schools, Narkomos argued that the complex system, infused with local material, would fulfill its vision of “social upbringing” inside the school. Forced to abandon its plans to assume a direct role in parenting through the establishment of children’s buildings, the Administration for Social Upbringing (*Upravlinnia sotsialnoho vykhovannia- Uprsoetsykh*, Narkomos’s new abbreviation for its division of primary schooling) held that a school curriculum based on experience, an awareness of local labor and production, and Ukrainian studies would provide children with the civic education necessary for participation in the “building of socialism.” For example, complexes on Shevchenko and the February revolution offered teachers an opportunity to give children political lessons. Firstly, Uprsoetsykh explicitly linked the two subjects. In its interpretation, the February Revolution fulfilled the vision of Shevchenko’s early nineteenth century struggle against tsarism and the aristocracy. Regarding the February Revolution, Uprsoetsykh recommended that teachers discuss events in Ukraine, including the Central Rada, the revolt against the Hetman, banditry under the Directory, Petliurism, and the relationship between the USSR and UkSSR.²⁶¹ The Uprsoetsykh guide saw the objective of this joint complex as the cultivation of “disgust for social and national subjugation, disgust for national enmities, and a consciousness of the class essence of Shevchenko’s works.” It suggested that children read Shevchenko’s works and biography, as well as works on serfdom, and memoirs and interviews of those who participated in war and the February revolution. Of course, according to the complex

²⁶¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 675, ark. 25.

system methodology, work could not just be confined to the classroom. Children were to take excursions to pre-revolutionary landlord estates to witness the history of serfdom firsthand and publish declamations and wall newspapers recounting the events of the revolution in Ukraine and its promise. Above all, Uprsovsykh emphasized the “emotional moment” should predominate in all class exercises. Inspiration was primary.

Further instructions for the 1927-28 school year sought to make the connection between school work and activity even more explicit. Another program on Shevchenko and the February revolution directed children to collect stories from their parents about their participation in the war, determine for whom they fought, and for what reason. The purpose of this technique was “to emphasize that the participation of peasants and workers in the war was for the tsar their final subjugation and spoil.”²⁶² Of course, the interviews may have well turned up disquieting material about parents who fought in the tsarist army only to then join Ukrainian nationalist forces or peasant bands opposed to Bolshevik rule. The Uprsovsykh program gives no advice to school administrators or teachers on how to handle such dangers. Narkomos viewed such political lessons as absolutely necessary, but the very latitude of the complex system presented a dilemma. For the present, educators’ trust in the potential of progressive pedagogy displaced these concerns.

A complex on the October Revolution sought to tie instruction to the goals of the revolution. Its prescribed exercises, however, also carried risks. The significance of the complex was obvious. The 1927-28 Uprsovsykh program insisted that teachers’ had to

²⁶² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 675, ark. 60.

use the complex to explain the political meaning of “power in the hands of the workers and peasants” and the role of revolutionary organizations. It also emphasized the importance of the “emotional experience” to instruction, recommending that material for the complex be drawn from local life.²⁶³ Elsewhere it suggested that rural students needed to understand how the October Revolution benefited landless and middle-class peasants. It proposed having children ask their parents how much land they had prior to the October Revolution and how much they had after. It assumed that, “after having thought about this information in groups, children will very easily understand what the October Revolution gave the peasants and that V. I. Lenin led it.”²⁶⁴ Presumably, formerly prosperous parents would have realized the jeopardy involved in answering their children’s questions honestly or teachers would have intervened to limit their children’s contribution to class. The boldness of the complex system is, however, striking. Educational planners apparently trusted that benefits of the October Revolution would be apparent to most and that those who disagreed would take heed.

Local educational inspectorates were responsible for monitoring the schools’ success in making use of locally drafted variants of Uprshotsvykh’s guide for complex instruction. The Kyiv okruha inspectorate attempted to clarify what complex instruction meant in a 1926 circular it sent out to the heads of all *trudshkoly* under its jurisdiction. Fundamentally, complex instruction meant “study of living items with the assistance of [book] knowledge.”²⁶⁵ The best way to provide this sort of training, the inspectorate

²⁶³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, apr. 675, ark. 85.

²⁶⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 675, ark. 52.

²⁶⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 26.

maintained, was to have children research the environment around them, to do “less talking, more research.” Its institution was absolutely necessary because, “in the conditions of class war” children had to be equipped with a “class-organizational reflex” to force a change in social relations. The inspectorate, and its more active counterparts across the republic, meant for children to be the activists of the future, to continue the revolution by reordering society. Advocates of the complex system viewed its embrace of applied know-how (*uminnia*) as more beneficial than strict knowledge (*znavstvo*). Equipped with this training, children would quickly move to their roles as rational organizers of a socialist society. The young researchers of labor would become conscious laborers and managers of labor themselves.

Ideally, the incorporation of local material would orient the school towards the principal fields of production in a given area: for example, wheat cultivation, lumbering, coal mining. It was more difficult for schools located in residential and commercial city centers to claim such an orientation than those in industrial or rural areas. The director of Kyiv Labor School No. 1, Durdukivskyi, maintained in 1925 that in the absence of appropriate “conditions,” his school embraced a generalized “social studies” direction.²⁶⁶ Durdukivskyi concedes that the school had not yet set up a complex system, but insisted that teachers were being trained to do so and were leading students on excursions to nearby factories. For the time being, students would study the other disciplines separately (not in complexes), but social studies, however diluted of its “active” nature, still dominated the school curriculum and guided its direction. Durdukivskyi insisted that

²⁶⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 7.

the proletarianization of the school was underway and that the *poradnyk* was “only a guide, not a dogmatic tool.”

Apart from class exercises, Narkomos expected teachers to ensure children’s participation in Ukrainian Soviet society. Again the emphasis of activities supervised by the school was local. The Kharkiv educational section reported that in 1926-27 school year the most successful area of public work was schools’ maintenance of ties with community enterprises.²⁶⁷ Urban schools also retained direct affiliation with rural schools, simultaneously preserving the *zmychka* and their own cultural leadership. However, beyond the celebration of political holidays, the schools did little. The Kharkiv report evaluated the association of okruha schools with a number public activities, among them participation in Soviet elections, sowing campaign, and the struggle against saboteurs. Schools had met their “goals” in all by less than 25%.²⁶⁸ Overall, the report concluded the schools’ work in public activity was sporadic and “isolated from Soviet society and leadership.” It pointed to the weakness of the complex system and underscored a need to further localize material. The implicit judgment was that an effective complex system, grounded in local study, would encourage political work and political work in turn would support the complex system.

Reform At the Expense of Formal Knowledge?

The procedure for establishing a complex system of instruction remained vague and purposefully so. What may have appeared to be a fanciful product of Narkomos

²⁶⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 396, ark. 14.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

ruminations, in fact had a firm grounding in Western progressive pedagogical theory. However, it had never been applied on the sort of mass scale that Narkomos educators envisioned for Ukraine and, ambiguous or not, it was a task left to local officials to work out the new methodology and cast it in a Soviet mold. In the confusion that followed, parents and individual officials began to point to the system's failure to meet basic educational goals.

Although Narkomos was pushing through a fundamental reform of education, the expectations of parents remained essentially the same. Schools had to provide fundamental knowledge. According to the report of one school director, Pasika, parents were afraid that the overcrowded Narkomos schools were not teaching their children the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. As a result, they were hiring private teachers and forming independent study groups.²⁶⁹ Pasika warned his audience at a 1925-26 meeting of Kyiv raion labor school heads that this practice threatened Narkomos control and hoped that salvation would ultimately be found in the complex system. However, in spite of some discussion of the methodology in teacher conferences, plans did not yet exist for a new curricular schedule. Pasika conceded that the complex system was mostly a matter of "idle chatter." Even worse, the "ability and knowledge of children in the third and fourth grades in particular do not correspond with the state minimum." According to this report, teachers were providing neither *uminnia* nor *znavstvo*.

²⁶⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 2.

While Pasika maintained that only the full transfer to complex system would increase the Soviet school's authority among the population, his account reveals that teachers had very little idea how to accomplish this. They simply knew that the old methodology was bad. When they tried to implement the complex system, some simply worked from the generalized Uprsoetsykh guide or with entirely abstract material. For example, students studied literature on tropical rain forests rather than observe the lumbering industry in their own raiony.²⁷⁰ Other teachers abandoned methodology altogether or worked only with those students who showed promise. The result was a collapse of discipline and an increase in truancy.

Concerns about children's acquisition of basic skills persisted well into the late 1920s. A 1928 report by the Kharkiv okruha educational section continued to stress the poor tie between "formal knowledge" and the complexes.²⁷¹ Although it found reading in native language classes (Ukrainian for the majority of schools in the okruha) to be satisfactory, it concluded that writing was much worse. Very rarely did students, even in the oldest groups, write grammatically. Furthermore, although students did study literature under the complex system, teachers rarely planned work or set defined themes. In any event, students' knowledge of both grammar and analysis of literature did not conform to the minimum set by the Uprsoetsykh guide. On a general level, the Kharkiv authorities estimated, village schools were carrying out only 60% of the official program of study.

²⁷⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 4.

²⁷¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 396, ark. 12.

In such an environment, parents naturally grew angry. Vasylenko, another raion labor school director at the 1925-26 Kyiv okruha meeting, cautioned that “the school is not a place for idle talk. When parents are emphasizing that children are not gaining knowledge, then it is necessary to listen.”²⁷² The shortcomings presented by Pasika had to be addressed immediately or schools risked losing the authority they had. Vasylenko similarly did not suggest abandoning the complex method, but rather argued for its acceleration through a re-emphasis on kraieznavstvo study and public work. Again, the children’s best education would come through interaction with their surrounding environment and the wider Ukrainian republic.

Even in the area broadly considered kraieznavstvo there were significant disappointments. In the Kharkiv schools children demonstrated some knowledge of general physical geography, but knew very little about the village, raion, and okruha.²⁷³ Their knowledge of the political economy was devoid of historical perspective and context. A report by the Kyiv okruha educational inspector concluded that in the Ivankivskyi raion the four-year school had given little place to the study of the local environment and children were generally not engaged in contemporary life.²⁷⁴ In another school, students could not name any local bodies of water. When pressed, one student named the Black Sea, but placed it in Japan. They knew about the October holiday, but had no idea that it was to commemorate a revolution and thought Mikhail Frunze, the Soviet Commissar of War, was a former tsar. The inspector concluded that students

²⁷² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 5.

²⁷³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 396, ark. 12.

²⁷⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 6.

needed to spend much more time studying the school's surroundings and, at the very least, they should be aware of prominent features of the republic, such as the Black Sea and the Dnipro.²⁷⁵

A 1927 inspector's report on the Baryshpilskyi raion in the Kyiv okruha criticized one school for expanding kraieznavstvo too greatly: Students were studying geographic features of the world, "but they do not know about 'near Ukraine.' Local material, the agricultural surroundings, are not studied."²⁷⁶ In another school, students were studying a geography primer on Ukraine, but understood it poorly. Students' familiarity with their immediate environment shaped their understanding of Ukraine. Each region was a part of a larger, wholly integral Ukrainian territory.

Another report by the Kyiv okruha inspectorate of the Vasylkivskyi raion concluded that the plans for transfer to the complex system were too imprecise and that it was only in the raion trudshkoly that teachers incorporated concrete material in their lesson plans for the complexes.²⁷⁷ A six-day seminar in the raion had apparently refined the okruha plan, but the okruha inspectorate required that schools individualize their own plans, specifically including local material for kraieznavstvo work. According to a 1925 Kyiv huberniia report, the Myronivka Raion Labor School implemented the complex method in the younger groups, but during the course of the first trimester, teachers of this advanced school switched to instruction by subject area because of large size of classes

²⁷⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 10-11.

²⁷⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 63.

²⁷⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 92.

and shifts in faculty personnel.²⁷⁸ School leaders pledged to return to the Dalton plan in the coming trimester. Other schools observed by the educational inspectors in the raion used some hybrid of complex and traditional methodology. The Myronivka seven-year school's ambition was exceptional.

It is difficult to see how teachers had time to collect material for a task that already appeared to them ill-defined. One raion labor school director complained that the okruha inspectorate's expectations were too high, arguing that, at the very least, school directors should be excused from their teaching duties so that they might concentrate on administration of methodology in their schools.²⁷⁹ Some teachers openly suggested a return to the old school; others made do as best they could. The inspectorate's report on the Vasylkivskyi raion suggests as much. Schools continued to divide class time by subject area, giving minimal attention to the creation of complexes organized by theme.²⁸⁰ When they did use complexes, they often retained old methods. Thus, one rural teacher in a rural school in the raion proposed a complex on local agriculture, but the lesson simply consisted of her reading out loud a passage on the cultivation of hemp.²⁸¹ The teacher made no provision for the children to observe agricultural activities in the village and did not apparently include possible exercises in writing, arithmetic, and social studies. It was a complex in name alone, void of pedagogical innovation, and perhaps of greater concern, one that did not allow students to work on basic skills.

²⁷⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 468.

²⁷⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 2.

²⁸⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 92.

²⁸¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 6.

Aside from professional conferences, teachers had little opportunity to study the new methodology. At an April 1925 meeting of the teachers' union Robos, speakers emphasized that teachers were unable to buy the pedagogical press and that concerns for retraining had to be narrowed if teachers were expected to cope.²⁸² Teachers in the Myronivka Raion Labor School participated in group training during breaks, but they had to pass around personal copies of new literature to review or borrow publications from the chief employer in the city, the sugar refinery.²⁸³ The amount of new literature in the school library was so small that "really one must speak of 'creating' a library, a teacher and student library."

Therefore, even if schools had well-trained teachers, they needed to equip them properly to succeed. Schools had trouble procuring not only pedagogical press, but also the textbooks necessary for instruction in class. During 1920-22 there were almost no new publications released in Ukraine and teachers worked largely with old textbooks. In 1923-24 eighty-two textbooks were released (seventy-nine in the Ukrainian language), but they were primarily adapted old textbooks and "only slightly sovietized."²⁸⁴ It was only for the 1924-25 school the year that Narkomos reworked and partly adjusted textbooks for the complex program of instruction. The DVU, the state publishing house, released one hundred five textbook titles (sixty-two in Ukrainian) and thirty-seven titles for teacher training. However, the DVU printed a relatively small number of runs

²⁸² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 680, ark. 60.

²⁸³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 468.

²⁸⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 179.

for these titles and, as the Myronivka case illustrates, schools outside large urban centers had difficulty acquiring them.

It fell to teachers and school administrators to perfect the complex system. Narkomos principally blamed teachers for the methodology's failures. The director of the Ivankivska Raion Labor School, Kryvenko, maintained at the Kyiv okruha meeting of school heads that "the teacher does not have a sense of responsibility for his work, no one controls it and [the work] remains dependent upon the unsupervised consciousness of this very worker."²⁸⁵ He further notes that teachers' work was hampered by an alarming shortage of books and laments the fact students were forced to buy their own. Ironically, it was the very latitude of the complex system that seems to have troubled him most. Without any direct guidance and unable to use sanctioned literature, teachers were bound to err. Kryvenko's school is included in a 1926 report of the Kyiv okruha inspector. His assessment is generally positive, but it also cites cases where teachers did not allow students to participate in the presentation of material, "thus paralyzing in part the initiative of the children and their self-activity."²⁸⁶ It is unknown whether this strict style of classroom management was due to Kryvenko's intervention. Regardless, there was little chance of schools realizing the complex system if teachers kept such an arrangement.

²⁸⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 2.

²⁸⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 6.

Good Teachers in Short Supply

Finding a teacher well-trained in Ukrainian was important, but for most schools, not as important as one with acceptable pedagogical qualifications. Okruha inspectors regularly reported on teachers' poor skills, improper behavior, and public drunkenness, as well as more political concerns, such as their religiosity or affiliation with village kulaks. The Kyiv okruha inspector labeled one kraieznavstvo teacher's scolding of students and general laziness in the classroom "anti-pedagogical behavior."²⁸⁷ Such charges carried a definite connotation of something more sinister than just bad teaching. Narkomos considered a poor pedagogue as fundamentally un-Soviet, a de facto adversary to its campaign to transform culture. As noted in Chapter 1, Narkomos still worried about teachers' political commitment to a socialism anyhow due to their allegiance to counterrevolutionary parties during the Civil War. Shumskyi had contended that teachers had reformed themselves, yet advised evaluations of their political training and Komsomol oversight of their activities.

Of particular concern to educational officials was the situation when a teacher acquired authority in a community and then abused it. An anonymous letter reportedly published in a rural newspaper came to the attention of Uprsootsvykh in 1926. It claimed that peasants in a village in the Ivankivskiy raion (Kyiv okruha) had recognized the labor school director, Bondarenko, as a community leader. They expected him to uncover "all kinds of lies and evil" in the village, instead he committed them himself.²⁸⁸ He allegedly propositioned a widow, drank heavily, and beat and expelled students from the liknep.

²⁸⁷ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 203.

²⁸⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1961, ark. 2.

The letter concluded “it is necessary to say that there is no place for this comrade in the village leadership and teachers ranks, people who always stand on the side of the victors of October.” The then deputy head of Upratsvykh Arnautov ordered the Kyiv okruha inspectorate to investigate the matter. Teachers were important representatives of Soviet power in rural Ukraine. Narkomos could not afford to have them further alienate the population.

It was problematic then, outside of prominent urban and experimental schools, for any teacher to meet the dual challenge of instruction in the Ukrainian language and the institution of the complex system. Even if teachers were not grossly irresponsible, those with a strong commitment to Ukrainization and pedagogical training high enough to realize an ambiguously defined progressive methodology were rare. Indeed, there were few teachers willing to serve in rural Ukraine altogether. The Kyiv okruha inspector reported in May 1926 that it took a month longer than planned to appoint a new head for the Durdakivska labor school because of an absence of candidates. Furthermore, it could not find a substitute for a second teacher it wished to fire. Prospective teachers in Kyiv simply had no interest in working in a village for an indefinite period of time.²⁸⁹

Arnautov also recognized in a letter he wrote to the editors of the newspaper *Radianske selo* that: “the number of qualified teachers among us is insufficient and that they do not hurry very much to the village, to work in conditions [that are] generally more difficult than in the city.”²⁹⁰ Schools simply had to often make do with incomplete staffs.

²⁸⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1961, ark. 4.

²⁹⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 8.

When communities that believed in the necessity of schooling had good teachers, they tried to hang on to them. In September 1927 parents at Kyiv Labor School No. 47 petitioned Narkomos to keep the head of their school, Ostromenskyi. The okruha educational inspector had designated Ostromenskyi for transfer to the Kyiv Pedagogical Institute two weeks prior to the beginning of the academic year. In the parents' letter, they praised the school head for his considerable skill in grappling with new demands of the Soviet school: "he had displayed a talent in the sotsvykh system . . . while carrying out individual, difficult responsibilities in the formulation of a program, development and perfection of methods of work, and drafting and publication of textbooks."²⁹¹ They pointed, as evidence of his success, to the fact that in the previous year 80% of the graduates of the labor school were accepted into professional schools (*profshkoly*). Not only had Ostromenskyi reformed the school curriculum, but also ensured that the children still acquired the basic skills necessary for advancement. This, of course, was ostensibly the objective of the complex system, but few teachers understood it enough to make it work properly. Apparently, Narkomos recognized this deficiency because the parents' petition was denied. Ostromenskyi was needed to train the next generation of teachers.

Conversely, some communities did not appreciate attempts at a reorganization of education. A local party committee in the Chernkhiivskiyi raion (Volyn okruha) attempted to transfer the rest day for the school children from Sunday to another day in the week. General attendance at the school quickly dropped 40-50% after the shift.²⁹² Okruha party officials intervened and issued orders to suspend the change until the beginning of the

²⁹¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 19.

²⁹² *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, apr. 3009, ark. 79.

next school year. It did not disagree with premise of the raion decision, but rather claimed that raion officials needed to undertake proper “agitation and explanatory work.” Clearly, a significant portion of the raion population, whether out of religiosity or tradition, valued the Sabbath (or its violation) enough to boycott schools. The KP(b)U intended to use the new Soviet school as a vehicle to change such long held, popular sentiments by beginning the restructuring of society with this institution.

Personal animosities and jealousies sometimes came into play in a community’s dealings with teachers. Lower level officials acted to suppress teachers who became too bold. In the Rinkynskyi raion (Chernihiv okruha), the raion educational inspector and head of the raion executive committee presidium issued orders for the dismissal and transfer of a total of seven teachers. According to the okruha party committee which investigated the affair the inspector and presidium head held “unpleasant, bureaucratic, and callous views” towards these teachers.²⁹³ They apparently found the drive of these teachers unsettling, because their orders were “especially directed against teachers who worked for the economic and legal defense of the interests of teachers.” Other members of the teachers’ union reportedly supported the decision for dismissal of the teachers, hoping to gain something for themselves. The okruha party alleged that they made false charges, while at the same time demanding increased apartment space. As a result, the okruha party apparatus ordered the dismissal of the raion inspector and presidium head and reappointment of the teachers.²⁹⁴ It ultimately judged that activist teachers were

²⁹³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 103.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

needed within limits and that, at least in this instance, personal rancor should not play a part in the dismissal of teachers who were needed so desperately.

Incomplete Ukrainization as an Impediment to Pedagogical Reform

The switch to Ukrainian-language instruction was supposed to make all this easier. Narkomos administrators maintained that if schools instructed children in their native language, they would produce a more skilled and conscious agricultural or industrial worker capable of entering intermediate leadership positions after secondary professional schooling or acquiring further training and education. It also held that the new pedagogy would benefit Ukrainian language study, breaking the boredom of study by rote and allowing children to understand the importance of language expression through a demonstration of its relationship with other disciplines.

In any given complex, language study assumed an important and fundamentally integrating role. In the complex on Shevchenko and the February Revolution discussed above, the Upratsvykh program asked students to read original works of Shevchenko, the champion of literary Ukrainian, and to draft their own interpretations of his work for publication in the school's wall newspaper. Furthermore, the teachers were to write sentences and words drawn from the children's interviews with their parents on the school blackboard for discussion.²⁹⁵ Upratsvykh intended activity to function as the basis for language analysis and grammar exercises, as well as lessons in social studies, mathematics and the natural sciences.

²⁹⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 675, ark. 60.

Of course, as has already been demonstrated, conventional forms of pedagogy often persisted. Teachers continued to look to textbooks for classroom drills and blamed the lack of Ukrainian-language literature for the failure of “complexes.” The head of the Vasylykivska Raion Labor School complained that among the school library’s collection of 2,000 books, there were only 200 Ukrainian lesson books.²⁹⁶ This shortage, he suggests, significantly complicated the school’s work, then confined to introducing one complex per semester. Books were less necessary for the complex method, but they still functioned as vital references for active study. Without books, Shevchenko had little significance.

The push to train teachers in complex methodology also coincided with the drive for Ukrainization. The majority of teachers in Ukraine were to teach in the Ukrainian language. Language would be their tool to disseminate new knowledge through complexes to Ukrainian-speaking children, persuade the local population of the school’s worth, and involve society as a whole in the lofty task of building socialism. According to the theory propounded by Narkomos officials, knowledge of Ukrainian was one element that would allow teachers to most effectively perform all that was asked of them. It therefore was a source of great frustration to planners of the Volyn huberniia congress for teacher retraining that there was almost no material on the study of language by the complex method.²⁹⁷ They recommended the congress seek ways to detail and add to the program. How could Ukrainian children be taught by the complex program if teachers had no instructions on how to refine their language skills under this program? What

²⁹⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 7, spr. 1960, ark. 7.

²⁹⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, apr. 680, ark. 133.

would new kraieznavstvo knowledge mean, for example, if children could not correctly repeat and articulate it in their native language? Instruction by the complex system demanded the integration of all subject areas into thematic wholes. Language had to be a part of this equation.

Some of the many teachers who actively or passively resisted use of the new pedagogy also resisted teaching in Ukrainian. Both instruction in the complex system and in the Ukrainian language meant a fundamental shift in the way they had taught. Prodded by education officials to study and train themselves and threatened with dismissal for failure, these teachers reacted negatively. Their authority had been premised on their strict maintenance of classroom discipline and assignment of high prestige to the fluent use of Russian. The new requirements fundamentally undermined these practices.

Lukashenko, the senior Kyiv provincial inspector, reported at the March 1925 huberniia teachers' meeting that in Bilotserkva, near Kyiv, local authorities had retained the head of a Russian school and a former gymnasium. Lukashenko maintained this failure to remove him was a serious mistake: indeed, the director was both a supporter of monarchism and an opponent of pedagogical reform.²⁹⁸ Lukashenko recommended that complexes be introduced into the school without delay and further suggested it might not be necessary to keep Russian as the school's language of instruction. While Lukashenko insisted the huberniia section would not follow a policy of forcible Ukrainization, he questioned whether there was in fact a true Russian population in Bilotserkva, arguing

²⁹⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 113.

that he had evidence only of a Russified Ukrainian and Russified Jewish population.

Lukashenko implied that this school director therefore had no place on three grounds: his political orientation, resistance to the complex system, and patronage of Russian language instruction in an okruha where there was no sizable Russian population.

In fact, it was unclear to Narkomos planners and local educational officials just how much Ukrainization of teachers was needed. It was difficult to accurately gauge their knowledge of Ukrainian or willingness to learn it. Lukashenko criticized the large number of teachers who did not know Ukrainian in Bilotserkva and maintained that it was difficult to speak of a true Ukrainization of the village school in the okruha. Another participant at the Kyiv huberniia conference, Lypovetskyi, conceded that “there are truly workers who do not know Ukrainian perfectly. This we know and we are giving them attention.”²⁹⁹ It was not the case, he argued, that over half of the teachers in the Bilotserkva okruha only speak Russian. However, even if they all knew Ukrainian, that was not enough: “We say to our workers that you converse in Ukrainian, but you are still not Ukrainized because the majority of you is unfamiliar with the history and economic-geography along with customs [*pobut*] and these are necessary to know.” Teachers not only had to employ Ukrainian, but also master enough Ukrainian studies to create new complexes, integrate new material, and transform their way of teaching. Ukrainization was as much about redefining what was externally Ukrainian and debunking engrained prejudices against Ukrainian culture.

²⁹⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 120.

Some teachers viewed Ukrainization as an unnecessary distraction to the difficult task of teaching according to the new methodology. In 1927, the Mykolaiv experimental Labor School No.28 was in the midst of Ukrainization. At the very same time teachers were attempting to modify the school's curriculum according to the complex system, the okruha inspectorate ordered the school to Ukrainize all groups in the school. Although the director complied, he maintained that "such Ukrainization . . . reflected harmfully in the work and vividly demonstrated that it is possible to Ukrainize the school only gradually, beginning with the first group when children do not use the Ukrainian language in the family."³⁰⁰

A series of reports from individual teachers at the Mykolaiv school support the director's general conclusion. At issue, but never fully defined, was the ethnic make-up of the school. The teachers' material only contained data on the ethnic composition of school by group. According to the estimates available, the highest proportion of Ukrainians was in the fourth group - 31.7%, the lowest in the second group - 9.2%.³⁰¹ It is unclear how the teachers were determining ethnicity. The first group teacher identified speaking ability alone, claiming that it was difficult to use Ukrainian in the classroom because "only 20% of the pupils speak the language."³⁰² It is uncertain whether the remainder were Russified Ukrainians or ethnic Russians (or indeed whether 20% were in fact ethnically Ukrainian) and his comments cast some doubt on the data by ethnicity

³⁰⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 65.

³⁰¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 69, 71.

³⁰² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 66.

cited by his colleagues. They may have well taken the children's spoken language as a marker of their ethnicity.

The overall concentration of ethnic Ukrainians in Mykolaiv Labor School No. 28, regardless of whether they used Ukrainian, in fact, could have been greater than that of most other schools in the city. The inspectorate may have selected it for Ukrainization for this reason or possibly because of its "experimental" status, hoping that it would quickly transfer to Ukrainian instruction and then attract and serve the Ukrainian population of the city. The uncertainty surrounding this case is indicative of the confusion involved in taking the first steps towards Ukrainization, especially in the largely Russian-speaking environment of the cities. This school, to a greater degree than others, had to meet the added challenge of rapidly switching to the complex system at the very same time.

Regardless of the true ethnic make-up of the school, the teachers clearly state that a majority of students did not speak Ukrainian as their first language. Even with the youngest students this presented a dilemma for use of Ukrainian in the classroom. The first group teacher, Lyshenko, wrote that the children had to regularly learn new words, translating first those they did not know into Russian before they could continue their readings: "[a]s a result, energy and time was lost. If instruction was done in the Russian language, the pace would have been much better."³⁰³ The fourth group teacher maintained that work in native language instruction should theoretically lend itself easily to instruction by the complex method. However, Ukrainization frustrated application of

³⁰³ Ibid.

complexes because students were unable to express their thoughts in Ukrainian. He and the second group teacher describe a gradual shift to Ukrainian instruction beginning with reading and conversation and progressing to writing and lastly to mathematics.

The consensus among all teachers was that Ukrainization contributed to poor student performance. The oldest students perhaps had the greatest trouble, according to their instructor, Fish, having already studied four years in Russian only to switch to Ukrainian in 1927: “it must be said in general that this Ukrainization bore us much trouble. Our poor children had to make mistakes a lot.”³⁰⁴ The second group lost eight of thirty-five students by year’s end and the fourth group teacher kept back four of eighteen student, blaming their poor performance partly on Ukrainization. Children had to wait for the Lyshenko, the school’s methodology specialist, to translate Russian-language texts. Ukrainian texts were in short supply and the teachers generally considered them to be of poor quality.

Although the school pushed instruction by the complex system in each grade, it also retained classes organized by subject area, supplementing them with “complex material to strengthen work.” Here, too, most of the teachers at Mykolaiv School No. 28 believed that Ukrainization complicated work and limited pedagogical innovation. The social studies teacher Fish claimed that because there were few Ukrainian textbooks in the field, “it was necessary to introduce a heuristic form of instruction, and to tell the truth, even the lecture form sometimes.”³⁰⁵ He used complexes, but could not do so in the “active” way Narkomos prescribed. Fish needed to explain material often, lamenting

³⁰⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 80.

³⁰⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 82.

that it was difficult for the children “due to the fact that they had to write exclusively in Ukrainian and became a little mixed up.”³⁰⁶ When he permitted the students to use Russian-language material, they performed better. Similarly, in the natural studies class, the instructor had to teach the children Ukrainian terminology and, consequently, had less time to ensure they met Narkomos requirements.

Even when the school dedicated separate class time to Ukrainian-language study, it found it difficult to meet Narkomos guidelines and expectations. The Ukrainian-language teacher for the fifth group, Buhatska, reported that she spent much of the year introducing the students to basic grammar. She omitted more difficult work from the language program recommended by Uprsotsvykh, divided the class into review groups, and regularly evaluated their progress. Although she formed complexes to incorporate literature into her curriculum, she often excluded material recommended by Narkomos because it was either unavailable or, she believed, too difficult.³⁰⁷ Buhatska concluded that only students who had studied in Ukrainian since the first grade could follow the Uprsotsvykh program in grammar. This judgment would hold true not only for Russian-speaking students, but Ukrainian-speaking students who had never been schooled in the language. Some children may well have found the introduction of Ukrainian in the classroom odd, especially in the form it was presented, but the language itself was not entirely unfamiliar.

Indeed, students appeared to have adjusted relatively quickly to the new language of instruction. This was especially true for the younger groups. After commenting on

³⁰⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 81.

³⁰⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 84.

the difficulties of Ukrainization, the third group teacher, Martynova, reported that in one trimester her group's work had entirely transferred to Ukrainian and that even during break hardly any students continued to speak Russian. Furthermore, as children learned Ukrainian, teachers reported a decline in the negative methodological problems associated with Ukrainization. The fourth group teacher commented: "From the beginning, Ukrainization introduced horrible disorder, incomprehension on the part of the children . . . but as the children mastered the language later, the pace and discipline improved."³⁰⁸

Teachers also learned to cope with the lack of literature, supplies, or motivated students. Fish's problematic social studies students had difficulty mastering the terminology of the October Revolution, but responded to his instruction in the history of technology. Improvements in student written and oral work reportedly demonstrated the effectiveness of Buhatska's improved grammar course. The geography teacher similarly cobbled together a course focused on regional and Ukrainian studies without proper school maps. For the theme "Our District" he found a small map included in the brochure "Mykolaivshchyna" and for "UkSSR and the USSR" he used a map of Europe and Asia. He reported that the geographic material neatly tied into complexes recommended by Uprsovsykh and that a majority of the students exhibited favorable progress at the end of each semester. In short, although teachers may have believed Ukrainization hindered education, it did not greatly harm it.

³⁰⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 75.

Some schools, in fact, embraced Ukrainization too greatly for the taste of one inspector. Chavdarov, the labor school inspector of the Kyiv okruha, noted that one village school in the Baryshpilskyi raion obligatory lessons in Russian were actually conducted in Ukrainian. An article was read in Russian and then worked on in Ukrainian. He further criticized the raion labor school for giving insufficient attention to the increased number of children who understood Russian.³⁰⁹ Even here teachers substituted a Ukrainian lecture for Russian material. The schools could have been overeager to fulfill Narkomos orders on Ukrainization. Alternatively, they may have been deferring to the children's language strengths, believing that a full program in the Ukrainian language would bring the greatest benefit and least confusion. Schools primarily serving ethnic Ukrainians felt pressure to Ukrainize quickly. Narkomos stressed protection for the Russian ethnic minority, but outside major urban and industrial centers local educational authorities issued little guidance on Russian instruction.

Even when teachers and students were ostensibly Ukrainian-speaking, it did not follow that Ukrainization proceeded without incident. Narkomos obligated teachers to use a literary Ukrainian that many teachers did not fully understand and their students did not recognize. According to the inspector, poor writing was endemic among children, especially girls, in the Vasilkivskyi raion, but teachers did little to correct their work.³¹⁰ The teachers simply did not know how. The writing of children in the Vyshenska labor school reflected the phonetics of local pronunciation, not standard Ukrainian, and teachers in the Baryspilka Raion Labor School incorrectly marked the spelling of

³⁰⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 63.

³¹⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1960, ark. 92.

students, having little awareness of proper writing themselves.³¹¹ Local educational authorities recognized that little could be accomplished under such conditions and resolutions for at least four schools in the raion set the elimination of teachers' illiteracy in Ukrainian as an integral objective of their Ukrainization campaigns.

The existence of large numbers of Russified Ukrainian children in the eastern and southern regions of the republic raised further questions about the pace of Ukrainization. Holovsotsvykh reported that, by the end of the 1924-25 school year, on the republican level there had been substantial achievement in the Ukrainization of schools. Out of the 15,209 schools then operating in the UkSSR, 77.8% were fully Ukrainized, 4.4% were half-Ukrainized (some classes within these schools continued to use Russian), 10.4% were Russian and the remainder dedicated to serving national minorities.³¹²

Holovsotsvykh granted that the 10.4% of schools that operated in Russian should keep relatively constant in order to adequately serve "children of Russians." However, Holovsotsvykh demanded that the half-Ukrainized schools transfer immediately to Ukrainian, with Russian kept only as a subject of study.

The drive to enroll all school-age students in heavily Russified areas had led to the creation of linguistically mixed schools and children's buildings. Holovsotsvykh noted that in Odesa, Katerynoslav, Chernhiv and Donetsk hubernii the percentage of half-Ukrainized schools was much larger than the republican average. Children's institutions may have aspired to gradual Ukrainian-language instruction, but the mixing of language-

³¹¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1985, ark. 63.

³¹² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 117.

speakers often led to the “unacknowledged conquering of one or the other language.”³¹³ More often than not, this victorious language was Russian in the so-called half-Ukrainized school. Holovsotsvykh lamented that among younger children, in pre-school institutions, Ukrainization was proceeding very slowly because these younger children “overwhelmingly speak Russian, which appears to them to be native.” Given that most schools began Ukrainization with their younger groups, this observation is telling. Although the underlying assumption of Narkomos's policy was that schools should teach all ethnic Ukrainian children in Ukrainian, the history of russification in the East frustrated this goal in actual fact. Holovsotsvykh recommended a more realistic grouping of children by native language, but it held that a child's native language was defined by ethnicity not competency.

Even elsewhere in Ukraine, where the population was more homogeneously Ukrainian-speaking, the Russian-language exercised a heavy influence. Another report on schooling in Bilotserkva concluded that Russian-schools continued to operate in the okruha in spite of what it viewed as the absence of any need and that “it is necessary to transfer their language of instruction in future years, depending on the native language of the children,” presumably Ukrainian or Yiddish.³¹⁴ A republic-wide account by Holovsotsvykh noted that although the percentage of Ukrainian-language schools (77.8%) was higher than the ethnically Ukrainian percentage of the UkSSR population (75.1%), Ukrainian-language schools enrolled a proportionately low percentage of the

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 485.

student population: 62.9% in 1924.³¹⁵ According to the report, the phenomenon was explained by the fact that local authorities had Ukrainized schools in the cities much less than in the villages and, similarly, seven-year schools much less than four-year schools. The addition of half-Ukrainized schools would increase the proportion of students significantly (to approximately 73.2%), just slightly lower than the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians. Proponents of Ukrainization used evidence such as this to argue that Ukrainization was incomplete. Narkomos's aim was to provide Ukrainian-language instruction for all ethnic, school-age Ukrainians first and foremost. It gave only secondary, ad hoc consideration to a student's actual spoken language.

In spite of the experience of Mykolaiv Labor School No. 28 then, Narkomos hoped that by expanding Ukrainian-language schooling in industrial centers and by improving the quality of language instruction throughout the republic, it would fundamentally strengthen the school's chances for pedagogical success. If the number of students attending Ukrainian-language schools were to increase, it would need to employ more, and better, teachers. Narkomos blamed the slow pace of Ukrainization in the Odesa, Katerynoslav, Chernihiv, and Donetsk hubernii on the Russian-language education of most teachers.³¹⁶ Donetsk further suffered from the almost complete absence of teachers with the most basic skills in Ukrainian.³¹⁷ Narkomos recommended that all local organs use the 1925 summer to campaign for the retraining of teachers, not only in the Ukrainian language, but also in the history, geography, and literature of

³¹⁵ The report does not include the percentage for 1925.

³¹⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 119.

³¹⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 666, ark. 118.

Ukraine. It viewed the supply of Ukrainian pedagogical literature and the newspaper *Narodnii uchytel* as a necessary part of this retraining. The Chernihiv huberniia educational section reported to Narkomos that it had included work on the Ukrainian language in its operative plan for general pedagogical training. Teachers had organized circles for the study of orthography and literature and were examining other detailed questions individually.³¹⁸ However, the Chernihiv section complained, teachers still lacked needed literature for their study. Especially in these more Russified areas of Ukraine, teachers willing to take on the challenge of Ukrainian-language instruction would need much greater institutional support.

³¹⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 680, ark. 36.

5: The Paradox of Urgent, Yet Limited Ukrainization

Raising the Bar: Evaluating Teachers' Failures

Teachers in Ukraine faced a daunting task. They had to transfer their instruction to the Ukrainian language, implement a poorly articulated, but essentially new methodology, and struggle to achieve authority for themselves and for the school among parents and the wider community. Narkomos considered the first of these tasks, use of the Ukrainian language, to be the principal means for achieving the latter two. However, three years after Ukrainization began in earnest, Ukrainian teachers' knowledge of the language remained poor. Many schools had been Ukrainized in name alone. Narkomos ordered its local sections to make an accurate evaluation (*perevirka*) of Ukrainization in early 1927 and plan for improvement.

Prior to the beginning of this campaign, regular reports in the teachers' press warned of the poor state of Ukrainization. A January 1927 article in *Narodnii uchytel* argued that claims that schools had been nearly completely Ukrainized were simply false. In fact, "Ukrainian schools are truly much too few and we are very, very far away from 100%. In the majority of cases, our schools are hotbeds of Ukrainian semi-literacy."³¹⁹ According to the article insisted the problem was not limited to orthographic mistakes or dialectal variation. Teachers lacked elementary knowledge of the Ukrainian language. Another report maintained that often Ukrainization was doing more harm than good, than schools and other Soviet institutions were sponsoring a distorted form of Ukrainian:

³¹⁹ V. Sihovykh, "Het' profakatsiu," *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

“little by little, but constantly, a so-called ‘Ukrainized language’ is being pushed into general usage and it is a language that the peasant (that peasant for whom most of the work on Ukrainization is being undertaken) does not want to hear and does not understand.”³²⁰ It is difficult then to speak of Ukrainization when authorities and teachers alike were using a language that bore little resemblance to the Ukrainian the population recognized and employed.

The pedagogical press spoke often of the “maiming” of the Ukrainian language by teachers. Nuzhnyi, a correspondent for *Narodnii uchytel*, reproduced an excerpt of an official letter by the head of a Dnipropetrovsk railroad school detailing the results of Ukrainian-language study in his school. The excerpt contains numerous borrowings from Russian or slightly Ukrainized forms of Russian words. Nuzhnyi concludes: “When you read the letter, you ask what language this is in. Language mixing exists among those heads responsible for Ukrainization at the railway.”³²¹ The letter was a lesson in precisely how not to Ukrainize.

Local educational sections then were desperate not only for qualified teachers, who enjoyed the favor and the support of the communities in which they taught and lived, but ones fully proficient in Ukrainian. Remarkably, just as it was easier to find highly trained teachers in urban areas, the pedagogical press and local educational sections reported that educators capable of and willing to teach in Ukrainian were concentrated in the republic’s largely Russified cities. *Narodnii uchytel* maintained that, in regards to

³²⁰ V. S, "Spravy ukrainizatsii. Za pidvyshchennia ukrains'koi hramotnosti," *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

³²¹ Z. Nuzhnyi, "Iak ne slid ukrainizuvatysia! (Na Dnipropetrovs'kii zaliznytsi)," *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

Ukrainization of the Dnipropetrovsk railroad, there was an overabundance of Ukrainian instructors in the large, junction stations but that the lack of teachers at small stations severely limited progress.³²² The Odesa educational section similarly reported in 1926 that a greater proportion of village teachers had no knowledge of Ukrainian compared to city teachers (33% compared to 14% according to an early *perevirka*).³²³

Urban areas had greater resources to hire good teachers, as well as to train those they had. However, even this training was limited in scope. The Southwest Railroad administration organized short-term courses in Ukrainian for its various employees, including educators employed in schools along its line. However, the courses were oriented towards the writing of simple letters and business correspondence and offered no job-specific training for teaching. *Narodnii uchytel* lamented this practice, claiming that for teachers “language is everything, a tool of work.”³²⁴ It allowed that teachers of the earliest grades might be able to get by, but not others. They lacked knowledge of orthography, terminology, and the basic literature required to do their job. The books they needed for further study were generally not available in the library, certainly not in outlying areas, and teachers could not afford to buy them themselves. Dnipropetrovsk railway employees and teachers who enrolled in Ukrainian-language in courses held in 1924-25 were said to have forgotten what they had learned by the end of 1926.³²⁵

³²² Z. Nuzhnyi, "De-shcho pro ukrainizatsiiu Dnipropetrovs'koi zaliznytsi," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 3 November 1926, 3.

³²³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 4-9.

³²⁴ M. Mashkivs'kyi, "Do spravy ukrainizatsii vchytel'stva na Pivd.-zakh. zaliznytsiakh," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 6 October 1926, 2.

³²⁵ Z. Nuzhnyi, "De-shcho pro ukrainizatsiiu Dnipropetrovs'koi zaliznytsi," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 3 November 1926, 3.

Instruction in the classroom or business in the office might have been in Ukrainian, but conversation was in Russian.

In November 1926 Narkomos announced local educational sections would hold a series of formal *perevirky* of Ukrainian knowledge, to begin in January. This announcement caused near instant anxiety among teachers. According to one account published in *Narodnii uchytel*, a representative of the Bilotserkva okruha educational inspectorate announced the upcoming examination at the end of a raion teachers' conference. At first, the teachers simply tried to refuse to undergo the *perevirka*, but the inspectorate representative insisted he would enforce it and dismiss those who failed to demonstrate adequate knowledge.³²⁶ The newspaper detailed how individual schools then formed small self-study groups (*hurtky*), ostensibly to raise teachers' qualification in Ukrainian. In fact they drew up formal complaints about the lack of Ukrainian literature and the absence of a standard Ukrainian orthography. In response, the okruha inspectorate prepared a circular, recommending that teachers actually study, rather than issue protests.

Such sort of passive resistance to the *perevirka* appears to have been common. The teachers' press acknowledged that although an outline for a preparatory review was widely available, the necessary books and literature were not.³²⁷ Teachers delayed, pleaded for more time and support, or simply claimed that they did not have to study for the exam. *Narodnii uchytel* relates a comical story of a Ukrainian teacher who avoided

³²⁶ N. I. K. "Ukrainizatsiia. Syl'n'a dram z zhyttia Bilotserkivs'koi okruhy na bahato dii z prolohom ta epilohom." *Narodnii uchytel*, 30 March 1927, 3.

³²⁷ S. Khomenko, "Pro perevirku," *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

preparing for the *perevirka* because he was “fully” Ukrainian, with “ancestors stretching back to the Zaporizhian Cossacks.”³²⁸ He soon learned that the *perevirka* tested much more than the ability simply to converse or write in Ukrainian. He could not answer any basic pedagogical questions about orthography and pronunciation. The *perevirka* commission placed him in the lowest category (third) and threatened him with dismissal if he did not raise his qualifications. The next night, Petro Semenovych was haunted by dreams of a demonic representation of the pre-1917 orthography, “in pince-nez eyeglasses with a black beard and black, greasy fleas covering its body.” He awoke committed to learning how to pronounce correctly and “not write like a Russian.” The newspaper’s message was clear. New Ukrainian teachers had to cast away their servile mimicry of Russian and its tsarist era standards. The *perevirka* would test their understanding and embrace of a Ukrainian language defined distinctly by Soviet linguists and reflected in the new revolutionary literature.

Teachers also sought to avoid evaluation by *perevirka* commissions by demonstrating proficiency through other documentation. A *Narodnii uchytel* reader asked the newspapers’ editors if teachers might be exempt from the *perevirka* if they submitted proof (*dosvidka*) they had taken a test in Ukrainian literature previously as part of a short-term pedagogical course. The editors replied that local commissions for Ukrainization could make this determination, but that Narkomos instructions provided for general exemptions.³²⁹ Officially, the following categories of teachers were not required to undergo a *perevirka*: 1) graduates of Ukrainian-language institutes, *pedtechnikumy*, or

³²⁸ Mymra, "Pidmet," *Narodnii uchytel*, 15 December 1926, 3.

³²⁹ "Na vsi zapitannia vidpovidni dovidkovo-konsul'tytsionnoho biura," *Narodnii uchytel*, 4 May 1928, 4.

secondary schools, 2) those who placed in the first (highest) category in earlier government employee Ukrainization exams, and 3) those who had taught in the Ukrainian language in older groups for at least two years and in younger groups for at least five years. In fact, according to the head of Kyiv okruha inspectorate, Lukashenko, an overwhelming majority of teachers in the okruha belonged to one of these three groups.³³⁰ Thus, the reality was that only a small proportion of teachers actually underwent an examination. The *Narodnii uchytel* reader's question was an attempt to diminish this number even more.

Such exemptions weakened the authority of the *perevirka* before it even began. Lukashenko expressed frustration to Narkomos that his inspectorate could not test many of its teachers even when it had evidence that "rural school workers are extraordinarily distorting the language, that in 1927 the graduates of pedagogical higher educational institutes still do not know the language well and those that graduated from 1920-24 absolutely did know the language."³³¹ It could do little to force these teachers to increase their qualifications if they did not have to undergo the *perevirka*. Boikov, an assistant inspector, argued in an October 1927 report to Lukashenko that no exemption should be given to graduates of pedagogical higher institutions (*pedvysly*) because these institutes had generally given too little attention to writing in Ukrainian. Boikov recommended that Narkomos create a state exam in the Ukrainian language for a *pedvysly* graduates. He argued that not establishing absolute requirements for Ukrainian-language qualifications was reckless, comparable to allowing a teacher to teach mathematics

³³⁰ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 109.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

without knowledge of percentages: “the time has already come to take care of the culture of the native word, to teach the young generation to love it and develop it, but only a person who knows and understands this word can teach it.”³³² Inspectors like Boikov and Lukashenko believed strongly in the task of Ukrainization. They saw little point in holding a *perevirka* if it could not effect change.

Even in its limited form, it was a difficult matter to accomplish a *perevirka*. A Ukrainization commission in Budaivskiyi raion (Kyiv okruha) had earlier chosen not to determine the language level of teachers along with other state employees in 1926 “due to the absence of directives and funds.”³³³ In Dnipropetrovsk, authorities did not investigate Ukrainization among half of the teachers of the railroad as part of a general *perevirka* of employees. The teachers’ union, Robos, had reportedly negotiated an exemption for those teachers attending Ukrainian-language courses.³³⁴ Local officials were undoubtedly financially strapped, but also wary about how to accurately gauge what should be required Ukrainian-language knowledge for a teacher. It was no wonder then that local officials approached a republic-wide *perevirka* of the schools with some trepidation. Teachers had resisted earlier attempts and Narkomos instructions on how to proceed had been ambiguous.

While some inspectors were worried about the true level of Ukrainian knowledge among teachers, they did not know how to staff the *perevirka* commissions. One article in *Narodnii uchytel* questioned whether any commission could examine the knowledge of

³³² DAKO, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 110.

³³³ DAKO, f. 1212, op. 1, spr. 25, ark. 59.

³³⁴ Z. Nuzhnyi, "De-shcho pro ukrainizatsiiu Dnipropetrovskoi zaliznytsi," *Narodnii uchytel*, 3 November 1926, 3.

teachers accurately. Inspectorates had to rely on teachers to fill the commissions. These teachers might act to protect their colleagues. Or worse, “it is no secret that even now there are persons concluding *perevirka* of institutions who themselves should be evaluated.”³³⁵ The observer recommended that central Narkomos authorities appoint each okruha commission with responsible experts. The pool of qualified Ukrainian teachers was too small in the localities. However, it was equally unlikely that Narkomos could have dispatched experts throughout the republic. Nor were there a great number of so-called experts at its disposal, even in Kyiv. Noting the weak Ukrainization in the city, Boikov asked Lukashenko: “why demand from a province that does not have the ability to use the cultural fruits and achievements of the Ukrainian word that are easy to use in Kyiv.”³³⁶ The provinces would, nevertheless, have to find a way.

A delay in the *perevirka* was perhaps inevitable then, given the challenges involved. In response to the teachers’ demand that they have an additional two months to prepare for the examination, one *Narodnii uchytel* correspondent cautioned: “almost all teachers believe this and it is necessary to listen to their thoughts.”³³⁷ Lukashenko reported that the *perevirka* in the Kyiv okruha would take up to two years to complete. As it was, he did not report his concerns about implementation of the *perevirka* to Narkomos until April 1927, three months after the anticipated date for commencement of the campaign.³³⁸ Faced with the fact that teachers were ill-prepared to undergo a *perevirka* and it would likely yield poor and, consequently, demoralizing results,

³³⁵ "De-shcho pro vykladachiv ta komisii po perevirtsti," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 June 1927, 3.

³³⁶ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 110.

³³⁷ S. Khomenko, "Pro perevirku," *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

³³⁸ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 110.

Narkomos allowed individual okruha inspectorates to postpone. This suspension reportedly greatly relieved teachers, but *Narodnii uchytel* reminded them that the delay was not intended to remove a “burden,” but rather to allow teachers to undertake in-depth study: “the campaign for a *perevirka* of the Ukrainian language therefore involves systematic study. Short preparation will not bring the anticipated results.”³³⁹ It reminded them that the Ukrainian language was “the most essential thing” in their work. Preparation for the *perevirka* did not mean preparation for a test by rote but engagement in a cultural struggle.

It is important to stress that assurance of a high level of Ukrainian knowledge among teachers was also essential to the success of the Ukrainization campaign generally. Teachers not only evaluated other teachers, but also assessed and trained state employees whose knowledge in Ukrainian language studies was poor. In 1926 the Odesa okruha Ukrainization commission prepared and re-qualified some sixty teachers to instruct civil servants in the city: 25 for Ukrainian language, 20 for literature, and 15 for the history of revolutionary movements in Ukraine.³⁴⁰ According to the head of the commission, the okruha administration regularly monitored these instructors to ensure their Ukrainian knowledge was good and instruction effective.

³³⁹ V. S., "Spravy ukrainizatsii. Za pidvyschennia ukrains'koi hramotnosti," *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

³⁴⁰ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 1-6.

The Proletariat's Role Debated

The KP(b)U, of course, initiated and determined the course and ultimate future of the Ukrainization campaign. Above all, it was concerned with the development of Ukrainian speakers in the party ranks and state institutions. Two further worries also drove party direct intervention: fear that party was losing control over Ukrainization work and anxiety about how to deal with the Russified and Russian portion of the population, chiefly the “proletariat,” the term the party applied to the industrial worker population (although most were recent arrivals to the factories).

The question of Ukrainization of the proletariat had troubled the party since its first debates on nationalities policy. In 1923, Dmitri Lebed, a high-ranking member of the KP(b)U, argued in an article in *Kommunist* that in Soviet Ukraine a battle between Russian and Ukrainian cultures was inevitable. The line between two cultures was clear: “In Ukraine, due to historical conditions, the culture of the city is Russian culture and the culture of the village is Ukrainian.”³⁴¹ Russian, as the “higher,” urban culture would win. Lebed conceded that Ukrainian might be used for “cultural enlightenment” in the villages, maintaining in a separate report on the nationality question that “it is sometimes necessary for peasants to educate their children in Ukrainian, sometimes necessary to go to the village and answer questions in a language they understand.”³⁴² The party absolutely could not promote Ukrainian in the city. The proletariat had no business learning the language of the “backward” peasantry. Lebed strongly opposed the current

³⁴¹ D. Lebed, “Podgotovka partiinogo s”ezda. Nekotorye voprosy partiinogo s”ezda,” *Kommunist*, no. 59 (1923): 1.

³⁴² *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2255, ark. 11-12.

trend in the Ukrainization, because it promised increased use of Ukrainian in the city among the party and the proletariat, emboldened reactionary elements in favor of further nation-building (“nationalization”), and ultimately was a waste of time. In the end, the peasantry would have to accede to use of Russian. As long as the party remained neutral, the victory of Russian culture was assured.

Most leading members of the party distanced themselves from the theory of a “battle between two cultures,” but Lebed himself escaped personal censure. However, his contention that Russian culture in Ukraine had become intrinsically urban remained seductive argument for the party’s rank and file. It influenced the party’s continued caution regarding the city and prohibition against the forced Ukrainization of the proletariat. Yet, a policy of Ukrainization confined to the party and organs of government serving the peasantry had little value in a proletarian state. Commissar of Education Shumskyi and other strong advocates of an expansion of Ukrainization argued that the proletariat was not, by definition, Russian. In response to Lebed’s *Kommunist* article, Shumskyi claimed that there was no reason that a battle between cultures should take place. Suggesting that the proletariat in the republic was in fact of Ukrainian origin and therefore would not permit a struggle against Ukrainian culture, he asked: “From where is the proletariat recruited for industry? Is a battle to take place within the proletariat itself?”³⁴³ The real battle, he suggested, should be about development of the proper language environment for a “single essential culture of worker-peasant industry.” He clearly believed that Ukrainian should dominate this setting in the UkSSR, because it

³⁴³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2255, ark. 13-18.

could best secure a union among laborers in Ukraine. For Ukrainization advocates, this union, touted by party propaganda but often ignored in practice, was essential.

Shumskyi was unwilling to concede that the proletariat was wholly Russian or even Russified, although he did not deny that the Ukrainian-speakers were concentrated among the peasantry. He argued that the proletariat was already growing because of Ukrainian membership. The future of industry in the UkSSR would depend on the productive capacity of these and other workers drawn from the peasantry. Shumskyi, in agreement with party doctrine, maintained that the proletariat must lead the peasantry. However, he and other Ukrainizers believed that this could not mean neglect of the national question or peasant concerns. The proletariat would guide, not combat the peasantry.

Ukrainizers maintained that Ukrainization was the key for the merger of a single Ukrainian, but distinctly socialist nation of laborers. Opponents of Soviet power existed: the bourgeois intelligentsia and kulaks. It was these forces that the proletariat must oppose, by robbing them of any opportunity to stir up national dissent. Shumskyi insisted that the bourgeois intelligentsia, both Russian and Ukrainian, were in essence battling for their “daily bread” (*khleb nasushniii*), vying to attract segments of the population to their cause. Proletarian neutrality in the national question would only increase their chances of success. In the village, if the proletariat permitted a struggle over language, it would “give a reason for the peasants to unite under the kulaks, serve kulak interests of an open battle with the proletariat (not just a cultural one).”³⁴⁴ Shumskyi thus acknowledged the

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

potential of a cultural divide and the peasantry's susceptibility to nationalist influence. The solution, however, he saw was in engagement. The proletariat needed to assume leadership of the development of national culture precisely because of its "great meaning" to the peasantry.

What divided Lebed and Shumskyi therefore was not a difference in belief about the possibility of a struggle between national cultures, but divergent views about its inevitability and the proletariat's relationship with the peasantry. Although Lebed spoke about the need to unite the peasantry with the proletariat, the party would accomplish this alliance through the former's submission. The party, he wrote in response to Shumskyi's criticism, had to do away with its previous policy of concessions to the peasantry, "who lead the *petliurivshchina*."³⁴⁵ The coming fight over Ukrainization would remain colored by this judgment. Those who opposed it insisted that there was no need for the proletariat to yield to a language predominantly spoken by a backward and politically suspect population, the peasantry. Those who argued forcefully in favor of it maintained that proletarian mastery of Ukrainian would simultaneously fuse the laboring populations, legitimize and strengthen proletarian leadership, and alter the direction of Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian culture would become fundamentally modern, proletarian, and socialist.

In 1925, the new first secretary of the KP(b)U, Lazar Kaganovich established a Ukrainization commission under the Politburo in an attempt to reassert the party's authority over the campaign. Kaganovich had grown up in a Jewish family in a

³⁴⁵ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2255, ark. 19.

Ukrainian village. Upon assuming leadership of the KP(b)U, he polished up his Ukrainian language skills and demanded that party members learn Ukrainian, use it in official functions, and thereby take on greater leadership of the Ukrainian population. His arrival marked a new campaign for the vigorous Ukrainization of officialdom, yet there was still a limit to the measures he proposed. In March 1926 he suggested that the party reassert its disavowal of the forced Ukrainization of the proletariat in its new theses on nationalities policy. This proposal did not find support by all in the KP(b)U. Shumskyi raised strong objections to Kaganovich's management of Ukrainization in a private meeting with Stalin.

According to a letter Stalin wrote to the KP(b)U, Shumskyi argued that although the intelligentsia was Ukrainizing fast and Ukrainian culture growing, the party and proletariat risked losing influence over the process.³⁴⁶ In Shumskyi's view, one of the greatest "sins" of the party and trade unions was that they had not recruited communists who had "immediate ties with Ukrainian culture" to leadership positions. Furthermore, the party had permitted incomplete Ukrainization, especially among the proletariat. He criticized Kaganovich's leadership and urged that the party appoint ethnic Ukrainians to prominent positions in the government and party, recommending, specifically, former commissar of education Hrynko as head of Radnarkom.

Stalin turned Shumskyi's criticisms on their head, agreeing with some of Shumskyi's basic contentions but sharply condemning his proposed remedies. Stalin conceded that the party could not allow Ukrainization to fall into foreign hands and that

³⁴⁶ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, 1.

the party needed cadres who both knew Ukrainian culture and understood the importance of the policy. However, he argued that Shumskyi's call for greater Ukrainization among the proletariat suggested a policy of forced Ukrainization of Russian-speaking workers. While Stalin allowed that "the population will become nationalized (Ukrainized)" over the long-term, he firmly rejected any coercive interference in this "spontaneous" process.³⁴⁷ Secondly, he maintained that Shumskyi's insistence on Ukrainian leadership of Ukrainization had blinded him to the "shady side of this process." Due to the still weak Ukrainian roots of the party, non-Communist intelligentsia might lead the policy and take on "the character of a struggle against 'Moscow' in general, against Russians in general, against Russian culture and its high achievement - Leninism." He argued that the writings of Ukrainian essayist Mykola Khvylovyi demonstrated the real potential of this tendency. Khvylovyi's case for the derussification for the proletariat and integration of Ukrainian culture with European tradition represented a "run away from Moscow."³⁴⁸ The party had to struggle against this danger. The development of Ukrainian national culture had to be accomplished within the framework of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of the All-Union Communist Party, the VKP(b).

Even if taken at face value, Stalin's letter to the KP(b)U reveals something about the limits of proposed Ukrainization. The central party leadership intended for the campaign to primarily serve the needs of ethnic Ukrainians. It would not permit any Ukrainization of the Russian population. Furthermore, it would not aggressively Ukrainize the Russified proletariat and rejected any measure that set the urgent

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

transformation of this group as its target. Secondly, Stalin regarded the Ukrainian ethnic elite, non-party or not, with great suspicion. He would not sanction any promotion of Hrynko because of his lower “revolutionary and party status.” Although Stalin lists other Ukrainians already prominent in party leadership, their numbers are comparatively few. The dilemma the party faced then was how to Ukrainize if the Ukrainian element in the party was admittedly weak. The party had to rely on non-party intelligentsia to lead Ukrainization in education, but also, as has been suggested, in the training and evaluation of civil servants and party members. In time, it would grow anxious about the intelligentsia’s management of this campaign, even as agents of Soviet power.

The KP(b)U Politburo’s reply to Stalin conceded some difficulties in Ukrainization, but emphasized that the party had made considerable gains and, under Kaganovich’s leadership, was headed in the right direction. For example, from 1924-26, Ukrainian membership in the party had risen from 33 to 44 percent and in the Komsomol from 50 to 63 percent. Furthermore, it insisted that others in the party had “just as much right to be called Ukrainians as Shumskii [Shumskyi]” and that “we think it is not necessary that 100 percent of the higher leadership be Ukrainian by blood.”³⁴⁹ This latter statement suggests the notion of a supra-ethnic Ukrainian identity. The Politburo did not further define this identity in its letter, but ethnically Ukrainian or not, the party leadership could not claim to have to large numbers of Ukrainian-speaking cadres to head the largely linguistic campaign of Ukrainization. Its count of Ukrainian membership in the party was based purely on ethnicity and although there was a rise, the proportion of

³⁴⁹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 8-12.

Ukrainians in the party was still much smaller than their proportion of the republic's population.

By the Politburo's own admission, the civil war legacy of antagonism towards Ukrainian national culture persisted among the party's rank and file. Ethnic Ukrainians such as Shumskyi and Hrynko could not join the KP(b)U Central Committee because they "had no influence on the party masses" and still needed to overcome their past "mistakes."³⁵⁰ The Politburo letter did not specify what their errors were, but suggested that their former membership in the Borotbist party was enough to compromise their authority, although it did not completely exclude the possibility of their eventual advancement. The party had for a time sanctioned their management of the Commissariat of Education. Yet, even in these positions, the party did not entirely trust Hrynko and Shumskyi and acted to remove each, although for very different reasons. For Shumskyi, his intervention with Stalin was the beginning of the end.

To compensate for its acknowledgment of low Ukrainian membership in the party, the Politburo offered as evidence of the progress of Ukrainization a description of its greatest success: the expansion of the Ukrainian-language schools. It maintained that primary schools were nearly 80 percent Ukrainized, secondary schools were Ukrainizing fast, and higher educational institutions had made Ukrainian language knowledge a requirement for admission. Ironically then, by the Politburo's own admission, the most dramatic advance of Ukrainization had occurred under Hrynko and Shumskyi's watch.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

Although the Politburo had sanctioned an increase in Ukrainian education, at the same time it worried about the development of Ukrainian national culture under party members it did not fully trust. The party had prioritized political consolidation and economic recovery and growth over the educational and cultural fields, but it was in these areas that it found the greatest danger because it did and could not have complete authority over them. At the same time, education and cultural advancement offered the greatest potential for the party to Ukrainize the proletariat without obvious force. It placed hope in the cultivation of a new generation of Ukrainian-speaking proletariat. However, the large numbers of Ukrainized schools the party touted also represented a ticking clock. It had to intervene to rein in politically unreliable educational administrators, oversee teachers, and ensure the ultimate trustworthiness of school graduates. Otherwise, the party feared, the schools might produce a generation that would undermine its rule in Ukraine.

For the time being, the party attempted to maintain a middle course. A 1926 KP(b)U Central Committee report argued that it was impossible to complete Ukrainization without the active participation of the proletariat. The proletariat and the party needed to head the campaign, completely familiarize themselves with Ukrainian culture, and clean it of its national bourgeois content (*pereval*).³⁵¹ However, it also recognized that a significant portion of the Ukrainian proletariat was Russified and might react negatively to any ill-considered, hasty campaign. Ukrainization of the proletariat would take time (the report considered the eight years that had passed since the

³⁵¹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2255, ark. 1.

revolution brief) and under no circumstances would the party allow the “imposition of Ukrainian culture on workers of other nationalities.” Those who argued for an increased pace forget “there is not enough strength for this” and make a “fetish” out of national culture. The party had to proceed with careful deliberation, at a rate correspondent with the number of trusted Ukrainian instructors it had its disposal, and in a manner sensitive to the concerns of the Russian-speaking population.

As a practical matter this meant the party would push Ukrainization hardest among officials who served the rural population and administered the schools. A proletarian party could not concede that Ukrainian culture was the preserve of the peasantry. Such an acknowledgment would undermine the rationale and intent of the campaign: the liberation of an oppressed national culture and its orientation towards socialism. However, the Ukrainization of the proletariat had to be accomplished gradually. In addition to urban academic institutes, the greatest concentration of instructors for the state-run Ukrainization courses was in the schools. It was here that officials hoped to best manage and form a new Ukrainian, proletarian culture.

The party’s principal organization for oversight and advancement of Ukrainized education was its youth wing, the Komsomol. A March 1926 meeting of the KP(b)U TsK commission emphasized that the Ukrainian Komsomol had to take a leading role in Ukrainization in children’s institutions and that the TsK would hold Komsomol leadership personally responsible for progress in the campaign. The problem was that the commission also found Ukrainization within the Komsomol itself to be unsatisfactory.³⁵²

³⁵² *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 4.

Although ethnic Ukrainian membership in the organization generally had risen to 63%, one commission report found that only 43.5% of its sections in industrial areas reportedly carried out their work in Ukrainian (compared to 86.6% of rural sections).³⁵³ An additional report on Ukrainian membership within the Komsomol confirmed these general figures, noting, however, that Ukrainization of the Komsomol apparatus was poor. Furthermore, a postscript to this report, added in pen, conceded that “a significant portion of those identified in the report as Ukrainian do not know Ukrainian.”³⁵⁴ A Komsomol with few Ukrainian-speaking members had little authority or ability to press schools to rapidly switch their language of instruction.

Not only had the Komsomol failed to Ukrainize, the TsK commission also doubted the commitment of some members to the policy. It concluded that lower ranking activists in the organization had generally not learned Ukrainian and in few instances opposed “the political meaning of Ukrainization.”³⁵⁵ The commission found little leadership in the Komsomol for transfer of official functions to Ukrainian, negligence by okruha sections regarding Ukrainization, and wide use of Russian by members in all but the most rural areas. Whether by design or not, the Ukrainian Komsomol was resisting the very nationalities policy set by the party.

While Ukrainization of the Komsomol itself was important, it was necessary because of the supervisory role the organization was supposed to have over Ukrainian youth. Firstly, the TsK commission mandated that all Komsomol activists take part in the

³⁵³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 13.

³⁵⁴ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 57.

³⁵⁵ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 13.

organization of Ukrainian language schools, specifically in industrial raiony.³⁵⁶ Together with the party's propaganda wing, agitprop, the Komsomol members had to work to ensure "political literacy" in the second level of newly Ukrainized schools. The organization would find it impossible to accomplish both of these tasks and lead "Ukrainian cultural life" in the future if the rank and file did not deepen their knowledge of Ukrainian studies and the language. The Komsomol also assumed a direct role over the Communist children's movement, the Young Pioneers. While the schools would provide political training for its students, the Pioneers' chief responsibility was to arrange public activity for children outside the school. In almost all urban areas and in many of the few villages where the Pioneers had sections, work was in Russian.³⁵⁷ The Ukrainization commission considered it an "especially abnormal phenomenon" that Pioneer sections operating in fully Ukrainized schools still spoke in Russian regularly at their meetings. The commission placed blame for the failures squarely on the Komsomol. It is little wonder then that some in the party worried about the ability of Communists to manage Ukrainization properly.

Re-Ukrainizing Ukrainians

While the Komsomol found it difficult to keep pace with Ukrainization of schools in urban and industrial centers, Narkomos officials continued to worry about the effect the broader Russian language environment in these areas had on the capacity of schools to fully transfer to Ukrainian. In particular, they pointed to the harmful influence of

³⁵⁶ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 18.

³⁵⁷ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 57.

Russian chauvinism among civil servants, who adamantly refused to send their children to Ukrainian-language schools, even if they were ethnically Ukrainian. Similarly, according to one newspaper account, some older teachers remained hostile to Ukrainization, having before the revolution, “with the courtesy of inspectors and cultural trainers, painstakingly implanted a foreign language and foreign culture in our children, crippling their living spirit.”³⁵⁸ A 1927 meeting of Kyiv party and school employees identified at least three schools in the city headed by Russian chauvinists like these.³⁵⁹ Narkomos officials labeled such attitudes anti-Soviet and cited their spread as reason for even more concerted campaign of Ukrainization.

Narkomos had repeatedly set as its target Ukrainian-language schooling for all ethnic Ukrainian school children. In a detailed letter addressed to Arnautov, now head of Uprsootsvykh, the Kyiv okruha school inspector Lukashenko detailed the shortcomings of Ukrainization that persisted as late as 1927. He specifically raised concern that the overwhelming majority of children not attending school were of Ukrainian origin and came from what he labeled the most insecure portion of the city’s population: day laborers and the unemployed.³⁶⁰ The city’s schools had to embrace this population, and continued migration of ethnic Ukrainians into Kyiv would also mandate an increase in the number of Ukrainian-language schools operating at the time. A 1926 report presented by a representative of Uprsootsvykh to a meeting of the Kyiv labor union soviet indicated

³⁵⁸ "Pereshkody v ukrainizatsii," *Narodnii uchytel*, 6 October 1927, 2.

³⁵⁹ *DAKO*, f. R-1043, op. 3, spr. 31, ark. 52

³⁶⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 30.

that the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians in the city was likely to rise.³⁶¹ Furthermore, at the beginning of the 1925-26 school year, 32.5% of the city's students were studying in Ukrainian-language groups, although the proportion of ethnic Ukrainian children in school stood at 40.5% as a whole and 44.8% in the first-grade alone. Significant numbers of Ukrainian children were not enrolled in Ukrainian-language groups or schools.

Lukashenko placed the blame for this gap squarely on the shoulders of Russified Ukrainian parents, who wished to send their children to Russian-language schools because they continued to believe that such schools offer “greater perspectives.”³⁶² In doing so, Lukashenko argued, they ignored the “native language” of the child and made their selection on the basis of what school used to be the privileged gymnasium during tsarist times or had a better administrator or facilities. Lukashenko counseled caution in dealing with these parents. Insensitivity to their wishes might only increase their own chauvinism and hostility towards Ukrainization. District school enrollment commissions needed to take “an approach of propagandizing and convincing [*shliakh propahuvannia i perekonanannia*]” with individual parents. Every increase in enrollment of Russified Ukrainians in Ukrainian-language schools would strengthen the authority of these schools and the push towards Ukrainization in general. Only when parents could not be convinced otherwise should enrollment commissions assent to their wishes.

However, for Lukashenko, a family's decision to send ethnic Ukrainian children to Russian-language schools was largely a matter of choice. So, notwithstanding his words of restraint, he condemned the russophilism he found to be most prevalent among

³⁶¹ *DAKO*, f. R-761, op. 1, spr. 363, ark. 80.

³⁶² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 33.

white-collar workers: “in spite of the Ukrainization of the Soviet apparatus and his personal work, the Soviet office worker is, en masse, demanding to educate his children in the Russian school.”³⁶³ Narkomos officials like Lukasheko must have seen hope in the increasing numbers of working-class children who were attending Ukrainian schools. The KP(b)U and, as a consequence, Narkomos considered the proletariat’s embrace of Ukrainization the best determinant of the policy’s success or failure. Stalin in his letter to the KP(b)U Politburo had cautioned against the forced Ukrainization of the proletariat, both ethnically Russian and Russified. The KP(b)U prohibited the Ukrainization of the former. Its approach to the Russified Ukrainian population was more nuanced. Here Narkomos encouraged, and the party did not contravene, the Ukrainization of the former bourgeoisie. It ultimately decided on a more gradual approach towards the proletariat, whose Ukrainization the party needed, but could not compel.

It was a school’s obligatory transfer to Ukrainian-language instruction in the southern city of Mykolaiv (Nikolaev), far away from the cultural capital of Kyiv that raised the question of Ukrainization of the Russian-speaking population generally for Narkomos and, eventually, the party. In November 1926, TsKNM (the Central Committee of National Minorities, a subsidiary organ of VUTsVK) requested that Narkomos investigate the “abnormal” Ukrainization of Mykolaiv Labor School No. 15. According to a letter subsequently sent to Narkomos by parents of students attending the school, the okruha educational inspector had Ukrainized the first grade of the school

³⁶³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 39.

without regard for the predominantly ethnically Russian composition of the school.³⁶⁴

The letter further claimed that parents of five children in the Ukrainized group had removed their children from the school and the other sixty-five were only waiting to remove their children until their case had been re-considered. The parents who wrote the complaint justified their petition on the basis of a governmental decree protecting the educational rights of national minorities.

In his defense of the Ukrainization of the school, the Mykolaiv okruha educational inspector, Podolskyi, detailed the reasons for Ukrainization of the school. He argued that the Mykolaiv inspectorate had concentrated its early campaign for the Ukrainization of primary schools in workers' districts, where the Ukrainian population was highest.³⁶⁵ However by 1926-27 it turned its attention to the Ukrainization of the lower grades of schools in the central district of the city, where the majority of the population was white-collar or artisan. This move was justified firstly on political grounds, because workers had come to believe that the inspectorate was targeting only their districts for Ukrainization and not the districts of government employees, "who should in fact be the first to demonstrate a model for the implementation of the directives [on Ukrainization] of the central of organs of power and do not read [in Ukrainian]."³⁶⁶ Secondly, the national composition of the district demanded some limited opening of Ukrainian schools. Ukrainization had taken place in three schools of the central district and parents moved quickly to reserve space for their children in them.

³⁶⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 36.

³⁶⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 45.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

According to the Mykolaiv inspector, any school could have been Ukrainized. The inspectorate chose Labor School No. 15, in specific, because it occupied the building of a former gymnasium, owned by the director of the school. The school had used its reputation as gymnasium among the population and gathered around it a group of supporters. Therefore, Podolskyi argued, “In taking the path of Ukrainization, the Inspektura Narosvity intended to simultaneously and definitively destroy the reputation of this school as a gymnasium and to further change the pedagogical staff of this school, to dismantle any remnants of the olden days of schooling [*shkilnoi starovyny*] in it.”³⁶⁷ Out of all the schools Ukrainized in the city, this was the only school parents petitioned to remain Russian.

Podolskyi argued that it was primarily parents of older students, whose instruction in fact remained in Russian, who protested the school’s Ukrainization. An overwhelming majority of parents of the students in the Ukrainized first grade registered their children to stay in the school and a second group was set up in the school to accommodate the number of students. The inspectorate organized another group in a neighboring Russian school for those students who wished to transfer. In the final analysis, Podolskyi claimed that the parents’ protest of the Ukrainization of Labor School No. 15 was reactionary: “the parents were not speaking out to defend ‘their children,’ but the remnants of the olden days of schooling.”³⁶⁸

Uprsotsvykh had tried to find the middle ground between the Mykolaiv inspectorate and the parents of Labor School No. 15. It affirmed the general thrust of the

³⁶⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 46.

³⁶⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 48.

inspectorate's Ukrainization policy, but recommended that the inspectorate organize a parallel Russian group for the first grade in this school.³⁶⁹ Both the parents and the Mykolaiv inspectorate rejected this proposal. In the end, Uprvsotsvykh sided with inspectorate, arguing that the first grade children in the school had ample opportunity to transfer to Russian groups in other schools and that children of the parents who mounted the protest were in older groups unaffected by Ukrainization.³⁷⁰ It recognized that the chief motive of the parents appeared there to be unwillingness to let a Ukrainian-language group use a room in a school renovated out of community funds.

Limits Set

What appeared to be at issue in the Mykolaiv case was the question of whether Russians were a national minority and what sort of protection they deserved. Mykolaiv authorities sought to escape reprimand by arguing that Russian parents still had the option of educating their children in Russian and that the Ukrainization of Labor School No. 15 served a distinct pedagogical and political aim. However, as Podolskyi noted, this school was not the only school Ukrainized in Mykolaiv. Ukrainization proceeded apace in other schools in spite of predominantly Russian student bodies. A December 1926 meeting of the KP(b)U Politburo commission on Ukrainization offered a chance to take stock of the direction of Ukrainization.

The commission met under the veil of criticism mounted by Iurii Larin at an April 1926 session of the All-Union Central Executive Committee (TsIK). At this meeting

³⁶⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 21.

³⁷⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 2255, ark. 44.

Larin addressed the previously taboo question of whether not the Ukrainian government should treat Russians as a national minority, arguing forcefully for the affirmative.³⁷¹ To support his case, Larin pointed to a series of discriminatory acts against Russian-speakers in Ukraine, including the forced instruction of their children in the Ukrainian language.³⁷² Unlike Larin, however, several representatives at the meeting of KP(b)U commission meeting made an effort to separate the question of rights for ethnic Russians versus those of Russified Ukrainians. The problem of what to do about latter remained open to interpretation.

A June 1926 KP(b)U report by Left Opposition member Lobanov was an indication of the confusion over what constituted a Ukrainian. He allowed that the party needed to pursue the Ukrainization of its leadership and that of the government and trade unions, but insisted it must reject the forceful Ukrainization of its rank and file. Even Ukrainization of the leadership had to proceed at a rate correspondent with the Ukrainian make-up of the Soviet apparatus in general, a figure he insisted must be determined by a survey of language not “parentage” (*proiskhodzhenie*).³⁷³ The party would not abandon Ukrainization among the general population, but it had to proceed cautiously, supporting Ukrainian cultural institutions in a bid to increase their attractiveness.

Lobanov was trying to walk a fine line. He conceded that the party could simply wait for the gradual re-Ukrainization of the city, yet it must allow for some amount of

³⁷¹ Martin, 38-39.

³⁷² Although Larin supported the creation of Jewish soviets, he also objected strongly to the forced enrollment of Jewish children in Yiddish schools regardless of what language they spoke. This issue was discussed along with the question of forced Ukrainization of Russian children by the Politburo’s Ukrainization Commission. Martin 49; *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 95-112.

³⁷³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 19-25.

coercion: “The Communist Party, having come to power during a revolution, cannot contemplatively, patiently regard the historical process’s ‘games of power,’ observing ‘neutrality’ towards national relations which are being spontaneously formed.” However, the party’s “artful forcing of this process” must have limits. Lobanov’s report concluded that the present, unbounded policy had allowed for the rise of a competitive struggle among language workers. Its continuation would lead to the growth of Ukrainian nationalism “in some Soviet-protected form” and concealed Russian chauvinism. The party had to act to make the Ukrainian intelligentsia understand the policy had boundaries and to remove any excuse the Russian intelligentsia had to complain of oppression. Lobanov stopped short of demanding “constitutional” recognition of national minority status for Russians, but demanded that local authorities guarantee access to judicial and cultural services in Russian, especially in workers’ districts. The schooling of workers’ children was a key element of this requirement. However, the Lobanov’s stress on language as a marker of ethnicity did not meet with the agreement of current policy.

In the view of many present at the December meeting of the Politburo commission that a certain amount of involuntary Ukrainization of the Russian-speaking population had occurred. Volodymyr Zatonskyi argued that while continued work on Ukrainization was needed among the upper grades of schools, Narkomos had approached the “extreme” of coercive Ukrainization in lower grades.³⁷⁴ He concluded that continued work in this direction might provoke protest and alluded to the situation in Mykolaiv as an example. The next speaker, Lazovert, was even more specific. He cited the case of

³⁷⁴ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 97.

Mykolaiv Labor School No. 15 and supported the demands of the parents to reverse the school's Ukrainization, claiming that the ethnically Russian city of Mykolaiv needed more Russians schools. Even Mykola Skrypnyk, a defender of Ukrainization and future Commissar of Education, acknowledged that the policy had sometimes been inappropriately applied: "I personally believe that the dissatisfaction of the population, which does arise, is due to the fact that the requirements of the population are not being met."³⁷⁵ In effect, he validated the sort of protests mounted in Mykolaiv, if not their specific motivation.

Skrypnyk led the push to recognize the Russian population as a national minority, playing off the more provocative cries of national oppression by speakers such as Lazovert. He conceded that abuses of Russian interests had occurred in individual cases and recognized openly that the Russian population in Ukraine constituted a national minority and that the party should secure for it corresponding rights.³⁷⁶ The very success of Ukrainization mandated such action. Other representatives at the meeting echoed this course. Ethnic Russians would be afforded state protection and the right to educate their children in their native language, previously guaranteed, would be strictly guarded³⁷⁷. The Ukrainization commission refrained from calling for an outright constitutional definition of Russian national minority status. Protection of Russian rights would instead be a matter of rigorous application.

³⁷⁵ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 102-103.

³⁷⁶ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 104.

³⁷⁷ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 96, 107-112.

The meeting was decidedly less clear on the question of Ukrainization of Russified Ukrainian children. Zatonskyi made a convincing case that ethnicity did not determine an individual's native language and argued for cautious Ukrainization among the children of railroad workers. For Skrypnyk, the solution to charting a more appropriate course was stricter management of local organs implementing Ukrainization. Particular sensitivity would have to be paid to the demands of the working class, but Skrypnyk, and those who supported his view, maintained that the party must still push fundamental Ukrainization at the primary school level: russification continued to influence parental choice and Ukrainian school attendance was disproportionately low.³⁷⁸ Ukrainization among children of the proletariat would have to be carefully calibrated.

³⁷⁸ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 104; *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 136.

6: The Ukrainization of the Proletariat

Guided Ukrainization of the Proletariat

The party's debate over the status of Russians in Ukraine, provoked by Larin's initial attack, made clear that the party would disallow the Ukrainization of ethnic Russians. It found a solution in the younger generation of Russified Ukrainians. The regime would achieve the gradual Ukrainization of the proletariat through the state's guided, if not coercive, instruction of the proletarian young. Skrypnyk, who took over the post of Commissar of Education from Shumskyi, drafted a report in 1927 to all okruha educational inspectors, ordering them to respect parental wishes. However, they were to halt russification, by speaking "about reading and writing in the native language, so that further instruction can occur in a language that the child understands."³⁷⁹ Skrypnyk made clear elsewhere that the Russified Ukrainian children spoke "a mixed and spoken language," whose base was Ukrainian.³⁸⁰ The true native language of Russified Ukrainians was Ukrainian and Narkomos needed to recognize this fact in designing educational policy.

More than anything else for Skrypnyk, if Ukrainization was to continue, school enrollment and the process of switching a school's language of instruction had to appear more transparent. As some of the above examples have made clear, there was considerable public skepticism and hostility towards Ukrainization. Even in Ukraine's

³⁷⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 136.

³⁸⁰ Mykola Skrypnyk, "Perebudovnymy shliakhamy," *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, no. 13-14 (1931): 32-34. Cited in Martin, 107.

cultural capital, Kyiv, parents questioned the motivation for the transfer of their children's school to Ukrainian-language instruction. Central authorities appeared equally confused about the targets of Ukrainization here as they did regarding Mykolaiv. In response to a petition by a group of parents, Uprsootsvykh head Arnautov demanded that the Kyiv okruha inspectorate explain its motivation behind the Ukrainization of city school no. 6.³⁸¹ He did not directly criticize the inspectorate, but the uproar the Mykolaiv cases created compelled him to take parental complaints seriously and require inquiry.

Narkomos needed to proceed carefully with Ukrainization of children of the Russified population, but proceed nevertheless. The same report by Kyiv okruha inspector Lukashenko that codemned the pretention with which some parents continued to view Ukrainian schools had advised a cautious path but simultaneously sounded the alarm. Lukashenko maintained that some 1,975 Ukrainian children in the okruha (together with 9,035 Jewish children) were studying in Russian schools.³⁸² There were Russians and Jews studying in Ukrainian schools, but their numbers were comparatively small. These discrepancies, Lukashenko suggests, had to be changed. It was only in the rarest of instances that parents could claim that a school did not exist in their raion that could provide native language instruction. Of course, in spite of Skrypnyk's later judgment, what the "native language" of a child was a matter of dispute.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence urban prejudice against all things Ukrainian had on parental preference. In the minds of members of the ambitious new proletarian elite and the old intelligentsia the Ukrainian language was a peasant language,

³⁸¹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 13.

³⁸² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 26.

uncultured and parochial. The government's promotion of Ukrainian only increased their antagonism towards it. One Luhansk worker and party member wrote to the KP(b)U TsK that anger towards the Ukrainian language was growing among the proletariat's rank and file due to Ukrainization's rapid advancement "by decree." Workers, who had struggled to learn to read Russian, now confronted Ukrainian public signage and literacy training: "semi-literate people prefer to converse or shut up during reading or writing and in place of lessons; one begins to regard the Ukrainian language with hostility."³⁸³ Even new Ukrainian laborers, recently arrived from the village, may well have been perplexed by the obligation to read and write in Ukrainian if they had acquired basic literacy in Russian. Education in Ukrainian was unwarranted according to the Luhansk writer, because it only dragged the proletariat behind: "A worker is always ready for travail, if he knows it will bring a more enlightened and better way of life. But he has already failed to understand the Ukrainian language, because his life has no place for it." He allows that Ukrainization might be begun with the youngest generation but stresses society's weak support for the policy throughout his letter, going so far as to recommend a plebiscite to determine its course. The workers he describes would never countenance Ukrainian-language schooling for their own children.

Some white collar workers looked upon Ukrainization with equal distaste. A December 1926 article that appeared in the wall newspaper of the Petrivska polyclinic in Kyiv lampooned Ukrainization. It recounted a conversation between two men (representative state employees), one of whom was enrolled in a Ukrainian studies

³⁸³ *TsDAHO*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 90-92.

course. This man, designated V., complained that Ukrainization had increased his “suffering,” taking valuable time away from his professional training by forcing him to memorize tracts of Ukrainian literature and poetry. After a twelve-hour working day he had little time to study: “I have to read a lot in our field, but instead of this, you have Aneid, you caress the works of Shevchenko, how he hounded ‘zhydiv’ and ‘kapatsiv’ [pejoratives for Jews and Russians].”³⁸⁴ V. clearly believed Shevchenko was a nationalist and, yet, he risked being labeled a chauvinist himself for holding this opinion. He renamed the Ukrainization commission, “the commission for concentration of capital,” suggesting that it was opportunistic and akin to the “bourgeois” practice of economic monopoly. This article hung for over a year in the polyclinic secretary’s office. Both its publication and display suggest the sentiment polyclinic workers had towards Ukrainization. Ukrainian studies were a burden imposed by the state. If Russified Ukrainians could truly exercise free choice in the selection of a school for their children, some undoubtedly would have decided upon Russian.

A year after the article was removed from the Petrivska polyclinic, in March 1929, the okruha party committee in Kryvyi Rih (Krivoi Rog) reported that the Russified portion of the local intelligentsia was opposed to Ukrainization. Although they maintained a “technically passive relationship” towards Ukrainization measures, in fact they consciously resisted studying Ukrainian and sometimes even resorted to “demonstrative actions.”³⁸⁵ The report does not give further details about who pursued what sort of tactics, but its emphasis on the Russified (as opposed to ethnically Russian)

³⁸⁴ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 63.

³⁸⁵ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 59.

intelligentsia is noteworthy. Ukrainization benefited ethnic Ukrainian elites most and yet these Russified Ukrainians were either unable or unwilling to take advantage of the professional advancement the policy afforded them. Like the many teachers described in *Narodnii uchytel* articles, they lacked confidence in their own Ukrainian abilities and, with the exception of careerist types sensitive to which way the wind was blowing, saw little long-term value in investing in further study. Russian, for them, remained a prestige language that they believed offered the greatest advantage. Whether consciously or not, it had become their “native language.”

In a draft to his 1927 order advising okruha educational inspectors to observe parental choice, Skrypnyk suggested a plan on how to properly determine a child’s native language. Notably, the procedure he advises did not begin with parental identification of a child’s native language. Ideally, schools would create acceptance committees that would decide on the language of instruction for children after an interview. In practice, this method might be seen as coercion. Therefore, he proposed that acceptance commissions converse with children after they received information that the children spoke a language other than “that which the parent considers native.”³⁸⁶ If they found that the language differed, then the commission had to attempt to convince the parents of the “impracticality of teaching a child in a foreign language.” The final decision, however, rested with the parents. The Skrypnyk’s official order directed okruha educational inspectors to pay attention “to all thoughts of relatives, pupils, and sections of

³⁸⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 140.

city soviet” when Ukrainizing the schools.³⁸⁷ However, it also kept the requirement that they try to convince parents about the importance of reading and writing in the native language. Regardless of the specific method used for the determining a language of instruction, it would be the state, through the schools, that would identify a child’s “native language.” Parents had to refute this affirmation of fact.

Although Skrypnyk was concerned about public cries of forced Ukrainization, he believed that they were mostly the result of “misunderstanding.” In particular, he maintained parents often objected to a change in the language of instruction of a school (and refused to allow the transfer of their children to another school) because they had contributed to the school’s betterment. Thus, he advises early notice of a language switch so that educational sections might solicit donations for school renovations in good faith. Otherwise, parents might always have the argument: “[w]e repaired the location and you changed the language of study and forced our children to go to another institution and not ours.”³⁸⁸

While Skrypnyk found this argument credible, he did not believe force was at play. His chief worry was that Ukrainization not “infringe upon the interests of national minorities,” a category in which he included Russians since the December 1926 KP(b)U Ukrainization meeting. However, there were enough schools, according to his assessment, for national minorities. The key was to have educational sections plan correctly for the formation of schools by national composition and remove any appearance of force or, more specifically, lack of choice. Of course, Russified Ukrainian

³⁸⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 136.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

parents still had to demonstrate that their child's native language was Russian if educators questioned their choice. The paradox, Skrypnyk noted, was that claims of forced Ukrainization were being made at a time when Ukrainization was insufficient in some okruhy and cities and "a significant proportion of children who speak Ukrainian, study in the Russian language." A large proportion of these were children of urban Russified Ukrainians.

Instructions for local educational sections made no allowance for continued Russian instruction of Russified Ukrainians. Contrary to the expectation of Lebed and other like-minded party members, Narkomos officials continued to view a person's assimilation to a "non-native" language as a negative phenomenon. "Nativeness" was determined by ethnicity. Thus, a February 1927 Uprsotsvykh memorandum to okruha educational inspectors asks: "How is native language study instruction secured for children of workers. Did it not happen that children of Russian workers were Ukrainized and children of Ukrainian workers were Russified?"³⁸⁹ Uprsotsvykh's assumption was that, in some instances, schools were altering children's ethnic identity through language. It ordered sections to report such cases and in particular incidents of parental complaints.

But, like Skrypnyk's order, Uprsotsvykh was chiefly concerned with process, questioning how local officials determined the language of study for a school. Anticipating the answer, it suggested that the number of true cases of state-sponsored linguistic assimilation were rare, asking if parents faced an entirely different dilemma: "not to teach children in a school they do not want or not to teach them at all because

³⁸⁹ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 13, ark. 111.

there is nowhere to send the children.” Chiefly, it was soliciting evidence to bolster its presumption that there was an appearance of forced Ukrainization because of parental choice or circumstance: parents did not wish to move their children from a newly Ukrainized school to a school of lesser prestige or there was a shortage of Russian schools in a given area. Narkomos wanted to ensure ethnic Russians had adequate options for Russian-language schooling, but it generally discounted complaints regarding the Ukrainization of any one school if there was another Russian school in the area. Russified Ukrainians would have to continue to prove that the native language of their children was not Ukrainian, especially if the children were already enrolled in a school chosen for Ukrainization.

At the same time the KP(b)U first began a serious discussion of the issue of “forced Ukrainization,” Narkomos continued to push for the expansion of Ukrainian-language schooling. In June 1926, Hordienko, a representative from its Kyiv section, reported on Ukrainization of *trudshkoly* to *Kyivprofrada*, the umbrella union organization that included the municipal teachers’ union. According to Hordienko, currently 32.5% of children enrolled in the city’s schools were studying in Ukrainian, but during the 1925-26 school year 44.8% of the student body was ethnically Ukrainian.³⁹⁰ He proposed that after the designation of nine additional Ukrainian schools, 40% of children in the schools would study in Ukrainian.

This Ukrainization would inevitably cause dislocation for the city’s Russian-speaking children who would have to transfer out of the newly Ukrainized schools.

³⁹⁰ *DAKO*, f. 761, op. 1, spr. 363, ark. 80.

Hordienko conceded that it would be necessary to establish norms for the number of schools and groups needed for ethnically Russian children. However, the Ukrainization campaign would also allow children enrolled in Russian schools, but specified by the educational section as ethnically Ukrainian, to move to or remain in the new Ukrainian schools. According to Hordienko's numbers, 12.3% of the city's schoolchildren were ethnic Ukrainians attending non-Ukrainian (most likely Russian) schools. These students, along with Ukrainian children not attending school and children of anticipated migrants to the city, would fill the Ukrainized schools. When all the groups in these schools had fully transferred to Ukrainian-language instruction the proportion of children studying in Ukrainian would ultimately rise to 52%, a target Hordienko expected to correspond with near term growth of the city's Ukrainian population. He suggested that the main schools the educational section should target should be large schools in the center of the city. Narkomos needed large schools to contain these increased numbers and central schools to ensure "equal distribution of Ukrainian trudshkoly": to break the monopoly of Russian schools in this area, induce children of Russified elites who lived here to attend school in Ukrainian, and create space for children of new Ukrainian workers.³⁹¹

It should be stressed that many parents readily supported the transfer in language of instruction and most accepted the shift as a matter of course. In response to the above complaint regarding the Ukrainization of Kyiv Labor School No.6, the school head reported that when parents were told in 1925 that the first groups of the school would

³⁹¹ Ibid.

transfer to Ukrainian “there was no dissatisfaction on part of the parents with the exception of six persons who transferred their children to other schools.”³⁹² There were apparently so many students whose parents wanted them to study in Ukrainian that the following year the school had to move twenty-seven first grade students to another Ukrainian-language school. One resident of the village of M. Traitske in the Kyiv okruha wrote to the inspectorate to applaud Ukrainization of the schools and ask for the establishment of a Ukrainian-language school.³⁹³ In rural locations, parents who believed in education were desperate for any school, all the better if it was Ukrainian.

As a practical necessity schools pursued Ukrainization in a piecemeal fashion, beginning the transfer at the youngest grades where children not yet had extended schooling in Russian. Kyiv Labor School No. 6 may not have had the staff to transfer even the first year entirely to Ukrainian because some Russian groups remained. Furthermore, Russians and Jews continued to attend the school for the time being. They would either complete their schooling in Russian language groups or transfer to a Russian or Yiddish school when the school had been fully Ukrainized. In fact, the report suggests that some non-Ukrainians at the second and third grade level may have wished to study in Ukrainian, an inclination the school may have been willing to satisfy if only to make its task easier in the short-term. Above the third grade, the preference of the majority of these students (and 11 of 29 Ukrainian students) was for Russian-language classes or mixed Ukrainian-Russian classes.

³⁹² *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 13, ark. 117.

³⁹³ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 13, ark. 308.

Narkomos firmly rejected any claim that Russian was superior to Ukrainian. The push to increase Ukrainian schools in the city was part of a larger campaign to promote Ukrainian as a modern, urban language, equal to Russian. Although a strong belief in the correlation between language and ethnicity motivated Narkomos policy to “re-Ukrainize” Russified children (and thereby bend the general prohibition against Ukrainization of the proletariat), the commissariat did seek to extol Ukrainian among the ethnic Russian population as well. In Ukraine, all elementary students (regardless of ethnicity) were to enroll in Ukrainian studies classes and students had to demonstrate knowledge of Ukrainian for entry into higher education.³⁹⁴ While respecting national linguistic rights, Narkomos’s hope was that culture in the UkSSR would have a prevailing, Ukrainian-speaking character. RSFSR Commissar of Education Anatolii Lunacharskii lent his support to the Ukrainizers’ task during a 1928 visit to Kyiv. Criticizing their opponents, he proclaimed that: “We, Russian communists, are outraged at those fine people [*liudtsiv*] who see in the quickly developing Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture some kind of unwanted competition.”³⁹⁵ He argued that Russians needed to increase their knowledge of Ukrainian as “an independent part of the world treasury” and proposed the opening of Ukrainian departments in the Russian republic’s post-secondary institutions

Meeting the Needs of the Ukrainian Proletariat

The years 1926-27 saw a heightening of party vigilance against the “excesses” of Ukrainization, but also a renewed commitment to accelerate the campaign. A draft

³⁹⁴ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 8.

³⁹⁵ "A. V. Lunachars'kyi pro rozvytok ukrains'ko kul'tury," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 1 August 1928, 2.

prepared for June 1926 KP(b)U TsK resolution on the results of Ukrainization noted some problems (*nedochety*) in the “nationalization” of public schools and pointed out the absence of Russian schools in some localities where the ethnic Russian population was significant.³⁹⁶ On a republican level, it concluded that the number of Ukrainian *sotsvykh* schools was in line with the ethnically Ukrainian proportion of the population. However, these schools needed to do a better a job of attracting Ukrainian children to education. Only 45.95% of Ukrainian children were attending school.³⁹⁷ Okuha educational inspectors had maintained that Ukrainization of schools in the cities was helping to increase enrollment, but this Ukrainization had to be implemented responsibly. Ukrainian-language schooling could not be limited to truncated four-year schools or to workers’ districts alone.

Educational planners regularly argued that incomplete Ukrainization limited schooling opportunities for working-class, Ukrainian children. While respecting the bounds it had set regarding the ethnic Russian population, the party saw the linguistic Ukrainization of the city as an urgent task. A December 1926 resolution of the Politburo Ukrainization commission concluded that Narkomos needed to design a plan for the Ukrainization of schools in the growing workers’ areas.³⁹⁸ Under the watchful eye of the party, local education officials would pay attention to the wishes of the population, but their primary aim was to establish a complete network of Ukrainian schools, with full

³⁹⁶ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 137, 180.

³⁹⁷ The document’s preceding comments regarding the Ukrainization of the first concentration of school suggest this percentage of Ukrainian children refers to children old enough to attend the first through fourth grades, ages 8-11.

³⁹⁸ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2251, ark. 1.

seven-year schools as the base. They were to tie the seven-year schools to a specific plan for the Ukrainization of secondary and post-secondary institutions. Narkomos would not limit Ukrainian-language education to primary schooling, as Lebed and opponents to Ukrainization in the party wished. The Ukrainian population, and particularly the emerging Ukrainian proletariat, had to believe that primary schooling in their native language was the beginning of path of advancement for their children.

Newly Ukrainized schools were to strengthen their authority by raising the quality of their instruction and doing away with confusing mixed-language instruction. As the example of Kyiv Labor School No.6 demonstrated, the immediate conversion to Ukrainian might have been more of a wish than an achievable objective. Recognizing that “native language” might not be as innate as the Ukrainizers would have hoped, educational inspectors reported that Ukrainian children did not adjust quickly to the switch from Russian. In a fully “Ukrainized” schools such as in Komorovets (Kharkiv okruha), children continued to speak in both Russian and Ukrainian with each other.³⁹⁹ It did not help, furthermore, that teachers continued to use Russian texts and speak a mixed Ukrainian of their own. Still, Narkomos’s argument was that such idiosyncrasies would be temporary. If Ukrainization was accomplished quickly, according to its logic, children and their parents would find classroom activities less perplexing and schools would be more effective in meeting their educational goals.

For Narkomos officials, it was important to retain a proletarian focus to the Ukrainization campaign in schooling. As was suggested briefly above, Kyiv okruha

³⁹⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 281, ark. 92.

inspector Lukashenko wrote in his long complaint to head of Uprsotsvykh that Ukrainian-language groups in the city's schools had a higher proportion of working class children than any other language group. Workers' children accounted for 44% of the enrollment in Ukrainian groups. The next largest representation of working-class children was a 26% enrollment in Russian groups.⁴⁰⁰ Schools, Lukashenko concludes, were increasing their authority among a developing, non-Russian proletariat, dominated by Ukrainians: "the move to a nationalities policy in the school has led to an interest in education and an elevation of the cultural level of these same culturally backward elements of our society." He considered it critical for schools to increase this respect.

The problem was that schools were still not adequately serving the Ukrainian population. It has already been mentioned that Lukashenko found the comparatively low Ukrainian attendance rates of Kyiv schools alarming. At the December 1926 meeting of Politburo Ukrainization commission Skrypnyk placed the proportion of school-age Ukrainian children who did not attend school on a republican level at 54.4% compared to 46.6% for Russian children.⁴⁰¹ Ironically, Skrypnyk suggests, Russian dissatisfaction was greater because before the revolution all urban schools had been Russian and now educational officials had to divide up largely the same number of schools among different language groups. Beyond isolated cases of school realignment to meet "the requirements of the population," Narkomos would have to establish new schools.

⁴⁰⁰ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 38.

⁴⁰¹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 103.

Lukashenko clearly argued school shortages contributed to dissatisfaction and “nationalist sentiments.”⁴⁰² Classrooms in Kyiv were already stretched to their limit: 40.8 pupils per Ukrainian group and 40.1 per Russian group. Narkomos needed to ensure access to Russian-language schools, as well as expand the network of Ukrainian schools to attract children of “the unorganized labor population” to school. In Myronivka, okruha authorities recommended building a hostel for children from neighboring villages.⁴⁰³ Demand for schooling in this city was so great that any further educational progress required an expansion of infrastructure.

Ukrainizers insisted that failure to pay proper attention to the Ukrainization of the proletariat would mean a weakening of the party’s influence in the republic. Thus, although members of the Politburo Ukrainization commission condemned the forced Ukrainization of the proletariat and acted to protect ethnic Russians as a national minority, the party needed to persuade new Ukrainian labor and Russified Ukrainians to send their children to Ukrainian schools. At the December meeting Chubar suggested that a detailed study of the ethnic make-up of worker’s regions would justify the need for Ukrainian schools. Narkomos had to determine the number of schools based on these data, not an account of initial preference: “to do otherwise would put us on the path urged by Larin, where each person can select the language he wishes, the one he wants to study and emphasize.”⁴⁰⁴ Chubar argued that if educational authorities did not encourage and plan for “native language” study in the cities, then in five years’ time Ukrainian students

⁴⁰² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 33.

⁴⁰³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 5, spr. 671, ark. 468.

⁴⁰⁴ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 108.

would have nowhere to go for higher education in Ukrainian except Poland. Mass study in Ukrainian at the primary level would increase demand and strengthen the rationale for this higher education in the UkSSR. Chubar insisted that Ukrainization was necessary not so much because the proletariat needed to learn Ukrainian, but because it needed to teach it “so that the proletarian leadership is strengthened and does not slip away, so that the proletariat will build its own state.” In a republic of largely Ukrainian-speaking peasants the proletariat had to show the way. The Ukrainian language offered the means for command.

In spite of the heightened concern that the party demonstrated regarding Ukrainization of the schools, Narkomos continued to have difficulty in implementing its charge. Just as the party wanted to exercise control over Narkomos, Narkomos wanted to set strict targets for its okruha sections. Its expectations were high, but it offered little support on how to achieve them. One persistent problem was that Narkomos had failed to set up a Ukrainization program designed specifically for the demands of teachers and yet continued to complain that teachers taught poorly. According to the Kyiv okruha inspector Lukashenko, Narkomos promised that a program for teachers’ study of Ukrainian would be released in October 1926, repeatedly delayed its publication, and one year later still had not circulated one⁴⁰⁵ He reportedly informed Skrypnyk who was at a loss to explain the delay. Arnautov, the head of Upratsvykh, maintained that Narkomos’s internal Ukrainization commission was responsible for working out the

⁴⁰⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 26.

program and, despite Uprsoetsykh's prodding, he did not expect it until February 1928.⁴⁰⁶ He blamed the "bureaucratic process," but, as Lukashenko pointed out, okruha sections were forbidden to release their own programs to fill the gap. Whatever the specific reason for the holdup, the Ukrainization commission clearly did not want local authorities taking matters into their own hands. The program had to set standardized norms for all teachers in the republic.

To a certain extent then, Narkomos's mismanagement contributed to its problems. In the absence of an obligatory program for use in teachers' training courses and faculty groups, Narkomos issued material for a correspondence course. An article in *Narodnii uchytel* explained such an approach was needed because of the high demand for courses in Ukrainian studies among the public (i.e., present and prospective state employees) and teachers alike, but few qualified instructors to teach the material.⁴⁰⁷ Ukrliknep (the administrative command of the campaign to liquidate illiteracy) designed the courses, not Uprsoetsykh, but geared them to the demands of each professional group. For teachers, Ukrliknep's commission for self-study composed assignments "specific to school duties for the next school year."⁴⁰⁸ The commission instructed them to read lectures, complete weekly exercises, send them back to be corrected, and then receive new material. There was a charge for this course, but *Narodnii uchytel* recommended students form groups of five to seven to save on costs and work more effectively. Students were also invited to

⁴⁰⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 24.

⁴⁰⁷ "Zaochni kursi ukrainoznavstva," *Narodnii uchytel* - *dodatok*, 13 April 1927, 3.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

listen to free lectures on the radio or visit the commission's head office in Kharkiv for consultations.

It is unknown how many teachers enrolled in these courses. However, their incentive to enroll in them increased with the May 1927 announcement that yet another round of Ukrainian language examinations would be held at the beginning of the 1927-28 school year, likely targeted for those areas where it had been postponed. The only preparatory work Narkomos organized for the *perevirka* was correspondence work, which Narkomos published in an addendum to *Narodnii uchytel*. The first lecture appeared in the newspaper in July and the publication of new lectures continued until the end of the year. The newspaper or Upratsvykh archival record makes no mention of where and when the *perevirka* actually occurred. Preparation must have been difficult. Lukashenko pointed to the continuing “famine” [*holod*] of books and textbooks.⁴⁰⁹ The state publishing house was printing pedagogical literature now, but not in the volume needed. This made it difficult not only to teach in the classroom, but also to procure recommended material needed for Ukrainian-language study.

Narkomos's publication of the lectures in Ukrainian studies was a recognition that there was a problem, but it continued to rely on teachers' initiative to first seek out *Narodnii uchytel*, form a study group, and dedicate time to reading and writing out the assignments. The teachers' union, Robos, offered to answer questions on the lectures published in the newspaper, but at a cost: 1.20 rubles for each month's lecture. Few teachers would have been able to spend even this amount of extra money.

⁴⁰⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 1978, ark. 26.

Distrust of the Intelligentsia: Early Cries of a Nationalist Threat

The party leadership expected teachers to take up the banner of Ukrainization for the policy to succeed. As Narkomos had argued, an improvement in the quality of Ukrainian instruction, would raise the authority of Ukrainian schools, increase attendance, and ensure a more effective education. The party, however, did not entirely trust teachers and non-party intelligentsia to design and implement Ukrainization. In a series of documents beginning in 1926 republican party leaders pointed to the danger of poor oversight over Ukrainization.

An unsigned Politburo report from March 15, 1926, likely given by Zatonskyi at a meeting convened specifically to consider his assessment of the state of Ukrainization, pointed directly to the effect of the campaign on the intelligentsia. In spite of the centralized leadership of Ukrainization, the party had tolerated some “spontaneity” and “uncontrolled elements.”⁴¹⁰ Lower organs, particularly in the Right Bank and Poltava, had pursued Ukrainization aggressively. Their success had caused a shift in the attitudes of intelligentsia, particularly some teachers. The report suggests that nationalists were seeking to capitalize on the success of Ukrainization and turn the intelligentsia against Soviet power. The report cited several reasons for this apparent nationalist infiltration: the increased frustration of low-ranking intelligentsia over their “unendurable, difficult material situation,” weakening union influence over the teacher, debts owed by the state

⁴¹⁰ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 39.

press to Ukrainian academics for work they had completed (for example, Hrushevskiy), and the party's neglect of intelligentsia loyal to Soviet power.⁴¹¹

Thus, the Politburo report argued, the party had failed on two accounts. Firstly, it failed to address what it considered to be a legitimate issue of the intelligentsia: adequate compensation. Party leaders were fully aware that teachers, in particular, received miserable pay, but their priorities lay elsewhere. What is more surprising is that this report identified a causal link between earnings and national frustration. Perhaps not all party members agreed with this logic, but all must have paid heed to the report's discussion of a disregard of "anti-Soviet elements." Perhaps here was the rationale behind Narkomos's insistence discussed above that it develop a standardized plan for Ukrainian language instruction for the whole republic. The party could not trust Right bank educational sections, such as Lukashenko, to develop their own. Who knows what they might recommend? The report singled out Kyiv party "higher-ups" in particular for lack of proper leadership, linking this shortcoming with a perceived growth in nationalism and peasant political activity. The party had difficulty combating such tendencies, it explained, because of the "extreme weakness of Marxist forces" among the intelligentsia. In short, the report charged that due to a lack of qualified Communists, Soviet authorities had relied excessively on non-party intellectuals to implement Ukrainization and some of them were trying to bend the policy to their own design.

Even Shumskiy conceded that anti-Soviet elements had taken advantage of the climate permitted by Ukrainization. He put a definite face on these forces in material he

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

prepared for a Politburo meeting at the end March, maintaining that one group had coalesced at meetings of the Rukh publishing house. Their platform united “part of the Galician immigrants, some teachers, including teachers of the Ukrainian language, and members of the autocephalous citizenry.”⁴¹² He too explained they were capitalizing upon lack of proper government support for Ukrainian cultural affairs. Among several government missteps, he pointed to the nonpayment of honorariums to Ivanytsia (later tried as a member of SVU). Communists also “covered their ears” at what Shumskyi suggested was a sincere attempt at a Marxist interpretation of the writings of the famous pedagogue Drahomanov by Hermaize (also arrested as a SVU organizer) and Doroshkevych. The party had slighted the intelligentsia for no apparent reason and ignored important allies. Some of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, as a result, was demanding a greater role in the administration of culture and anti-Soviet groups working among them were “winning over the sympathies of the mass of Ukrainian society.”

The solution, Shumskyi asserted, was in more Ukrainization, not less. Firstly, the party needed to ensure that teachers were properly paid. Teachers’ salaries had risen comparatively little versus those of workers, civil servants, and even other higher ranking intelligentsia. They were overburdened and received no extra compensation for their efforts. “Non-proletarian powers, former counter-revolutionaries, and Petliurists” were inciting discussion of a teachers’ strike in twenty-two okruhy.⁴¹³ The party needed to reexamine the question of payment immediately or risk losing political influence. The party also had to increase the authority in trade unions and “fulfill the promises given by

⁴¹² *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 43.

⁴¹³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 46.

Soviet authorities.” It was critically important that the party manage the cultural front, prepare workers trained in the nationalities question, and bring sympathetic members of the intelligentsia into the party. However, in making this argument, Shumskyi unwisely planted the seed of suspicion and foretold his own downfall. Whom could the party trust?

The republican party leadership could not permit Shumskyi’s protest to Stalin regarding Kaganovich’s management of Ukrainization to go unpunished. In the summer of 1926, the KP(b)U Central Committee criticized Shumskyi for his defense of “disloyal” Ukrainian intellectuals such Khvylovyi. After a series of such criticisms, in March 1927, a plenum of the Central Committee forced Shumskyi to step down from his post as commissar and recommended transferring him outside Ukraine. Karlo Maksymovych, the Western Ukrainian Communist Party (KPZU) delegate to the plenum, spoke against Shumskyi’s demotion and argued that these measures only harmed the Communist Party’s standing among Ukrainians in Poland and benefited Ukrainian nationalists and Polish “fascists.”⁴¹⁴ Maksymovych’s defense of Shumskyi led to a split within the KPZU when Maksymovych and his majority faction unsuccessfully protested to the Komintern regarding the KP(b)U’s treatment of Shumskyi. The Komintern forced a replacement of the entire KPZU leadership in 1928. As Terry Martin writes: “The Shumskyi affair, then escalated dramatically over the course of the two years from a typical factional struggle in the non-Russian republics to an international scandal and the condemnation of a fascist

⁴¹⁴ Mace, 113.

deviation within the Ukrainian Communist Party.”⁴¹⁵ It confirmed in the minds of many party members an essential suspicion of Ukrainization.

The party’s anxiety about Ukrainian nationalism was already high enough in 1926-27. It received regular reports that a Ukrainian nationalist movement was growing. A 1926 KP(b)U TsK assessment entitled “Results of Ukrainization” reminded members of the civil war history of nationalist banditry and linked it to a resurgence of Ukrainian nationalism in the village and in Ukrainian literature.⁴¹⁶ It was careful to note that there was also a parallel rise in Russian chauvinism among government employees who were conducting a campaign against Ukrainization, through anonymous letters and other writings. However, even at this early date, the party leadership claimed that Ukrainian nationalism presented a particular threat for several reasons. Firstly, the KP(b)U’s information maintained nationalism was growing in the countryside, about which the party knew less and still viewed as unreceptive if not hostile. Secondly, whereas the party had made some inroads in sovietizing government employees, the Ukrainian intelligentsia was largely non-Communist. The likelihood of its turning against the regime was, therefore, viewed as comparatively high.

Another report, prepared for the drafting of the June 1926 KP(b)U TsK plenum theses, pointed to the susceptibility of the rural population to influence by kulaks, who were the supposed custodians of Ukrainian nationalism, according to party propaganda. The theses stated that their authority was growing largely because “it goes without saying, the continued insufficient satisfactory material position of the basic groups of the

⁴¹⁵ Martin, 219.

⁴¹⁶ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 86.

rural intelligentsia (teachers, agronomists, and doctors) only favors the growth of kulak influence on them.”⁴¹⁷ Nationalism in the city was also reportedly rooted in the village, imported by petty bourgeois and intelligentsia migrants. The report also held Ukrainization partly to blame, noting a rise in nationalism among government employees in the Ukrainized Soviet apparatus. It stopped well short of criticizing Ukrainization as whole, but reasoned that the tie between Ukrainian petty bourgeois elements and the newly Ukrainized elite was strong and that the former would soon try to spread their influence to the proletariat and party.

A previous draft of the report was even more explicit about the peasant origin of Ukrainian nationalism, yet also contended that in the city the ideology had taken on an even more dangerous bent. It identified nationalism’s rise in the village with the increased strength of the kulak under the post-civil war NEP, suggesting it had spread to the city due to an attraction “to the culture of peasant elements,” reinforced in part by the Ukrainization of higher education institutes.⁴¹⁸ However, the nationalists also sought to play on the bourgeois and intelligentsia’s embrace of modernism. These “modernist nationalists” rejected the romanticization of the peasant: “This group is decidedly sick with the ethnographism of khutor-kulak ukrainophilia and provincialism, with the outmoded organicism of the latter, with the idealization of dumplings and cherry-tinted imprisonment.” The group stood for the industrialization of Ukraine, its opening up to world culture, and most critically, for the rejection of Russian as an imposition on Ukrainian development. It applauded Ukrainization but wanted even more.

⁴¹⁷ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 97.

⁴¹⁸ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 139.

Somehow these seemingly irreconcilable two groups came to a “deal”: the kulak provincial nationalist and the elite urban chauvinist. The report suggests the possible collusion of a foreign power. It found the latter faction more dangerous because it allegedly included some Soviet specialists, as well as post-secondary instructors and literature analysts. Its position was far too seductive: “it holds in its hands a rather serious ideological position, making it possible to influence - with its Europeanism, scholarship, technical level, and formal loyalty - young students, sometimes workers and, finally, even some “well-shod” Marxist elements inside our party, who have again warmed up the theory of the battle of two cultures and forgot the testament of Lenin.”⁴¹⁹

What mattered, of course, was that the party claimed this union to be the case. A deep-seated distrust of the peasant, represented in his most antagonistic form as the kulak, had developed into a suspicion of all those who promoted the peasant’s language too zealously at the expense of Russian. Mykola Khvylovyi was the chief representative of the latter view. But the party viewed any gesture away from Moscow as nothing short of heresy. Khvylovyism, as it came to be called, confirmed the party’s distrust of the intelligentsia and allowed it to instinctively question displays of intellectual independence as signs of potential nationalism.

Independence Provokes Suspicion

The reality was that few teachers could be characterized as nationalists. The pedagogical press regularly reported about their poor Ukrainian skills. Not only were

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

teachers unable to improve their Ukrainian, some remained openly hostile to the policy. As *Narodnyi uchytel* characterized such attitudes, there were school directors “who at every opportune and inopportune occasion attempted to prove their contempt for the Ukrainian language and of Ukrainization in general.”⁴²⁰ Perhaps worse, some teachers had managed to posture themselves as Ukrainizers, but knew little Ukrainian: “they offend the task, lend a hostile attitude to the Ukrainization of employees, and provide material for damaging anecdotes.”⁴²¹ In some cases, teachers employed as Ukrainian studies instructors could only teach the Ukrainian alphabet. Poor instructors in pedagogical institutions were cultivating “semi-literacy” among their graduates.⁴²² This was not a problem limited to the old guard then, accustomed to teaching in Russian, but also existed among the lauded next generation of teachers.

The teachers’ press maintained that animosity towards Ukrainization was prevalent precisely because teachers such as these did not know how to teach Ukrainian properly. The muddling of the Ukrainian language by teachers emboldened those teachers and members of the intelligentsia who cared about Ukrainization. *Narodnii uchytel* speaks repeatedly of the “profanization” of Ukrainian. Teachers were not simply making mistakes; they were polluting the language and doing lasting harm to its future. Such talk disturbed those party members who saw Ukrainian more as a tool for administration and less as a cultural value.

⁴²⁰ O., "Dumky pro ukrainizatsiu nesvidomi," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 June 1927, 3.

⁴²¹ "Pereshkody v ukrainizatsii," *Narodnii uchytel*, 6 October 1927, 2.

⁴²² V. Sihovykh, "Het' profakatsiu." *Narodnii uchytel*, 12 January 1927, 3.

Of course, the teachers' general poor knowledge of Ukrainian prevented them from accomplishing the very political tasks that the party expected of them. Firstly, teachers could not take on the lead role in explaining Soviet nationalities policy and the importance of studying and using Ukrainian. One *Narodnii uchytel* contributor labeled teachers who refused to improve their Ukrainian and assume a primary role in administering Ukrainization as "blockheads" (*tverdolobi*). He described teachers who only spoke in Ukrainian when inspectors visited their schools and one director who made a cursory attempt at using Ukrainian at a conference and then switched to Russian, apologizing: "You know, after you speak a little in that "mova," the jowls hurt."⁴²³ This sort of formal approach to Ukrainization or outright rejection of it reduced the party's own ability to counteract societal prejudice against Ukrainian. For example, one government employee in Dnipropetrovsk refused to undergo a *perevirka* in Ukrainian because he claimed the language was "dog-like."⁴²⁴ Party assessments of Ukrainization contain several reports of similar anecdotes. One *Narodnii uchytel* comic depicts a hippopotamus receiving a shot marked "Ukrainization." The caption reads: "innoculations for thick-skinned people."⁴²⁵ Such extreme attitudes may not have been wide-ranging, but they also were not uncommon.

Teachers who did not know Ukrainian well were also of little use in the party's campaigns to eradicate illiteracy in the countryside and propagandize among the peasantry. Some might have felt comfortable using Ukrainian in the classroom, but still

⁴²³ I., "Pro ukrains'ku movu ta bil' u shcheplakh," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 June 1927, 3.

⁴²⁴ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 11.

⁴²⁵ *Narodnii uchytel*, 16 January 1929.

did not know the language well enough to use it for this sort of political work among the general public. They worried about speaking Ukrainian to their students' parents, "fearing compromising themselves in front of the peasantry."⁴²⁶ Others who had a better grasp of the language simply did not believe that Ukrainian should be used for activities outside the school. They procured Russian books for the village reading rooms and thereby both slowed down Ukrainization and reinforced an understanding of Ukrainian as a non-literary language. Vorobiov, a *Narodnii uchytel* contributor, conceded that peasants may have had trouble understanding the sort of standardized Ukrainian being touted by Narkomos, but maintained that teachers still had to forsake their reliance on Russian.⁴²⁷ Ukrainization would have no meaning otherwise and peasants would continue to view the teacher, as an extension of Soviet power, as fundamentally foreign.

Of course, the shortage of Ukrainian-speakers meant that some who knew the language well had the advantage and could profit. A 1926 report sent to the KP(b)U TsK by Narkomos's in-house Ukrainization commission, noted that a new type of Ukrainian-language teacher had appeared in the past two years. This teacher was more "developed" (*rozvynutyi*), largely as a result of experience or education in Soviet higher pedagogical institutions.⁴²⁸ These teachers performed duties for literacy centers, local party cells, and municipal Ukrainization committees, but they also displayed "elements of self-seeking behavior." The report claimed some Kharkiv teachers had abandoned their work in schools altogether for better paid work as Ukrainian studies instructors under Ukrliknep.

⁴²⁶ Vorobiov, H. "Ukrainizatsiia v hromads'kii roboti." *Narodnii uchytel*, 5 May 1927, 3.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 12.

The demand for their skills was so great that they could “slip into positions” and receive even higher, unregulated wages.

This practice undoubtedly increased the party’s suspicions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia generally. The majority of the teachers were not party members. Some were former autocephalous priests, whom Ukrliknep attempted to expose and remove from their positions. Ukrliknep made use of the few Communist instructors it had, putting them in workers’ clubs and factories and ensuring they had ample opportunity to raise their qualifications. Nevertheless, the 1926 Narkomos report cited twenty-five Communist instructors for the campaign against illiteracy in the whole capital city of Kharkiv. This was not a promising trend. The conclusion the party must have drawn was that Ukrainian cultural forces in the party remained weak and that non-party intelligentsia could not be trusted. The logic these party documents suggested was that if Ukrainizers were not nationalists, they were opportunists, seeking to exploit Ukrainization for their own personal gain.

Of course, there were few options. In effect conceding the culpability of both the party and Narkomos itself, Narkomos Ukrainization commission assessment noted that sometimes okruha sections employed intelligentsia without a proper understanding of their political orientation: “willfully or not, agitprop and organs of Narosvita in localities sometimes used the work of the intelligentsia ‘on trust.’”⁴²⁹ Adherents of Mykola Khvylovyi’s discredited ideas on Ukrainian autonomy were allegedly particularly strong among the Odesa intelligentsia, although the report did not elaborate.

⁴²⁹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 13.

What appeared to be most vexing to Narkomos was that members of the intelligentsia were operating outside its control. It maintained that they were trying to publish their “own organs” in Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Odesa.⁴³⁰ A literary circle in Kyiv called “*Chas*” (Time) had succeeded in putting out an anthology of classical Ukrainian works on its own. Furthermore, some members of the intelligentsia viewed cultural work as apolitical. A professor Syniavskyi, a member of Narkomos’s orthography commission, told an assembly of teachers that “political” matters had no bearing on his work.⁴³¹ In another context, this perhaps could be considered an admirable sentiment. The orthography commission did strive to establish a standardized Ukrainian that could be recognized by all, doing away with Russian borrowings to the language and integrating Galician variant forms. However, its work was fundamentally political in the sense that the orthography was intended for use in party and government work, for propaganda and administration of Soviet power.

In the absence of competent governmental or party authority, the local intelligentsia had stepped in to administer Ukrainization. For example, the Odesa educational section had reported that in 1925 the huberniia political education section had organized a scientific commission of Ukrainian activists and intelligentsia. This group attracted dozens of workers to compile a program in Ukrainian language, literature, and embroidery, monitor Ukrainization of Soviet institutions and sotsvykh schools, and organize the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Although Odesa officials granted that the efforts of this commission were sincere, it operated independently of the okruha education section

⁴³⁰ One such journal, *Holos ukrainizatora*, had a short-lived period of publication.

⁴³¹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 13 zv.

because of lack of supervision and assumed “inappropriate functions.”⁴³² Therefore, the okruha executive committee subordinated its activities to a city inspector of Ukrainization, a position provided for by Narkomos instructions, who in Odesa also headed an okruha Ukrainization commission. Local authorities needed the help of members of the intelligentsia such as teachers, but they could not be permitted to set the agenda for the campaign themselves.

In Kyiv, educators also displayed an excess of initiative that alarmed Soviet authorities. In March 1927 the Kyiv okruha inspectorate received a memorandum from Kybamchyi, the head of Kyiv Labor School No.38. Kybamchyi wrote to honor the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Taras Shevchenko Labor School No. 1, now specified as an experimental school under the patronage of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. He spoke glowingly of its early founding three weeks after the overthrow of the tsar, struggle to survive during Kyiv’s occupation by the White general Denikin, and rescue by Soviet power. It had prospered and guided the development of other Ukrainian schools largely due to the efforts of Durdukivskyi: “this is ten years of tireless, constant work by its founder and organizer, the current head, ‘the soldier of the great army of workers of the Ukrainian school,’ comrade V. F. Durdukivskyi.”⁴³³ Kybamchyi made a “secret request” that his school be renamed after Durdukivskyi, “the Pioneer of the Ukrainian labor school.”

The response of Narkomos administrators demonstrated that this petition was too presumptuous. Narkomos named schools after high-ranking party members and

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 13, ark. 13.

acclaimed figures from Ukraine and Russia's revolutionary past, not non-party intelligentsia. Kyiv education inspector Lukashenko wrote to the okruha agitprop section expressing unease about the enthusiasm of teachers for the May celebration of the tenth anniversary of Labor School No.1: "Considering that without proper leadership from our side, this celebration can acquire an undesired character . . . I believe an appeal is necessary to create under Okrnarosvita a commission for the preparation of this anniversary."⁴³⁴ He asked for directives from the party for the creation of this commission, naming possible members from the okruha education section, party committee, and Robos. Among the proposed candidates, Lukashenko included Durdukivskyi. His addition possibly represented an attempt to watch over and contain his activity rather than a sign of esteem. A year later the DPU (OGPU) arrested Durdukivskyi for his alleged association with the SVU. At this earlier date his growing popularity among Kyiv's national intelligentsia was clearly a matter of concern.

Thus, regardless of whether the members of the intelligentsia were "nationalists" or not, republican party documents reveal that its leadership resented giving control of Ukrainization to them. It viewed independent activity as potentially dangerous because it was incapable of leading the Ukrainization campaign itself. Its language insecurity, coupled with the memory of its struggle against Ukrainian independence during the civil war, only increased its suspicions. It worried that even if the intelligentsia were not involved in political activity directed against Soviet power, intellectuals were not fully

⁴³⁴ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 31, ark. 69.

committed to its survival. The intelligentsia had to be active propagandists for socialism and not rest content in their scholarship.

The party and Narkomos made a distinction between high intelligentsia, academics, essayists, and pedagogical theorists, and low intelligentsia, teachers. Teachers did not know Ukrainian as well as the former. However, as has been already noted, the party worried that the nationalist intelligentsia might exercise undue influence over teachers and take advantage of teachers' resentment of their poor standard of living. Especially in the cities, teachers who did know Ukrainian joined with more prominent intellectuals in academic circles. Ironically, Narkomos's own recommendations to teachers for Ukrainian study encouraged the very sort of unregulated work that it came to frown upon. In rural locations, teachers occupied an even more prominent position as representatives of Soviet enlightenment. They led literacy centers, ran reading houses, and, of course, exercised authority over children and their parents. For the party, their potential intellectual autonomy threatened party control.

7: Fear and Regimentation

Shifting Contexts

By 1928 the political environment in the Soviet Union had changed significantly. Having defeated the Left Opposition in 1927, Stalin initiated a “revolution from above,” designed to rapidly propel the Soviet economy forward. A war crisis, begun with Britain’s decision to break relations with the Soviet Union in May 1927, undoubtedly contributed to Stalin’s conviction that the party needed to ensure increased production relative to the capitalist world. He encouraged a climate of hysteria that enabled him to demand unity versus his critics and advance his plans for rapid industrialization. Confronted with a grain shortage, in early 1928 Stalin moved against the Right’s gradualist program in agriculture and called for the arbitrary confiscation of grain as well as the arrest of peasants who had earlier refused to sell their yield at the artificially low prices set by the Soviet government. The export of grain was desperately needed in order to finance the ambitious plan for industrialization outlined in the country’s new economic scheme, set to begin in October 1928: the First Five-Year Plan.

Grain confiscations continued throughout 1929 and, in November, Stalin announced that the mass collectivization of agriculture was required to guarantee an adequate supply of foodstuffs. Although Stalin portrayed the initial collectivization campaign as “voluntary,” the VKP(b) TsK made clear to local authorities that they needed to demonstrate widespread “success” in recruitment and meet targets well above those designated in the Five-Year Plan. Concurrent with the collectivization campaign,

the party leadership also demanded an assault on kulaks. Officially, the term designated rich peasants but in reality it applied to the broad stratum of middle income peasants that opposed collectivization. Together collectivization and dekulakization - the arrest and seizure of peasant property - led to near civil war conditions in the countryside. After first announcing the campaign's general success, Stalin blamed local authorities for "excesses." Collectivization continued through the early 1930s, but at a slower pace.

In the cultural field, Soviet authorities capitalized on a general resentment among Komsomol members, young party activists, and working-class recruits towards the NEP-era policy of collaborating with bourgeois specialists and intellectuals. The spring 1928 show trial of fifty-three engineers from the Shakhty mining area in the Donbas on charges of sabotage and collusion with foreign powers set the stage for the future prosecution of non-party intelligentsia. It also signaled the mobilization of society for the defense and support of the First Five-Year Plan. As part of this campaign, the party leadership permitted and partly encouraged a "cultural revolution," described by Sheila Fitzpatrick as "a political confrontation of 'proletarian' Communists and the 'bourgeois' intelligentsia, in which the Communists sought to overthrow the cultural authorities inherited by the old regime."⁴³⁵ The transformation of culture, guided by a "proletarian intelligentsia," would enable the behavioral shift required for public participation in the Five-Year Plan. The course of the "cultural revolution" was sometimes spontaneous, but generally the social purging demanded by lower level activists served the short-term needs of central authorities from 1928 to 1932. The "cultural revolution" gave popular

⁴³⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 115.

sanction to Stalin's "revolution from above" and created space for the assertion of greater party authority after local activists were brought under control

In the case of Ukrainian primary education, the First Five-Year Plan was to have a number of effects. It placed new demands on teachers to participate in public campaigns beyond the classroom, chiefly collectivization. While in Russia, the longstanding commissar of education, Anatolii Lunacharskii, was dismissed in 1929 following charges of "bureaucratism" and bourgeois appeasement, Skrypnyk's assumption of the Ukrainian commissariat delayed a similar shake-up. However, Skrypnyk conceded the need for a radical shift in classroom methodology and structural reorganization. The end result of this effort was a rejection of progressive pedagogy and the subordination of the Ukrainian educational system to all-Union norms. Finally, of preeminent concern to this study, the party leadership sanctioned a move against what it perceived to be a growing danger in the schools and educational system: Ukrainian nationalism.

Teachers Compromised

The identification and suppression of Ukrainian nationalism among educators provided an added dimension to Stalin's revolution in the republic. Fitzpatrick writes that prior to the cultural revolution, central authorities generally treated Soviet teachers lightly because they presented "no potential political threat."⁴³⁶ Local authorities, however, ignored this restraint. In the case of Ukraine, Stalin and some republican leaders already shared a common suspicion of what they believed to be the very real

⁴³⁶ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 100.

political hazard of Ukrainian nationalism. The cultural revolution provided the vehicle to extinguish it. Furthermore, what was imagined to be at stake was not just “class” leadership, but the potential corruption of the next generation. Ukrainization would persist, but it would be robbed of the force needed for its realization.

While the KP(b)U Central Committee’s reports made generally vague claims about the spread of nationalism, local authorities cited specific cases. A meeting of party and Komsomol school staff in Kyiv found that Russians and Ukrainians had begun to “show their real face” in 1927.⁴³⁷ A report by one participant, Klekh, claimed that Russian chauvinist sentiment predominated in at least three of the city’s schools. In one of these schools, Labor School No. 67, a former member of the center right Kadet party served as director and purportedly fostered an environment marked by nationalist anecdotes, poetry, and drama. Of critical importance to Ukrainization, Klekh singled out the danger represented by Durdukivskiy’s Labor School No. 1. He maintained that nearly all the teachers at the school were former members of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party and the direction of the school remained oriented towards the former national platform of this party. Furthermore, the school administration selected its own employees: “The school is a closed circle. Strangers are not permitted to become acquainted with the circle and its work.”⁴³⁸ Klekh suggested that local Narkomos authorities were partly at fault for allowing this situation to persist by approving (if not initiating) appointments to the school. He reported that another school, Labor School No.

⁴³⁷ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 31, ark. 52.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

64, staffed Ukrainian “chauvinist” teachers: the faculty was only 50% “Soviet” and often did not support the activities of the school’s reportedly competent head.

The Kyiv meeting blamed the growth of nationalism on the absence of proper local party leadership. A second speaker, Ianushivska, insisted that Narkomos knew little about actual events in the schools, had done little to orient teachers towards a labor-based curriculum, and that non-party inspectors and administrators had allowed “deviations” in the schools and were exercising a negative influence over Komsomol members. She cautioned the danger of this neglect was real, an anti-Soviet mood was spreading, and “the idea is being introduced about the organization of a faction of non-party teachers in order to achieve victory over the Communists.” Another city-wide gathering of Communist pedagogues confirmed that teachers had joined Russian monarchists and Ukrainian “yellow-blues” (nationalists).⁴³⁹ The party had been too weak to effect a change in their attitudes to date: “the conditions of work here, as in the periphery, are complicated enough because we cannot politically influence the whole mass of workers with our forces, capabilities, and apparatus.” Party leadership and growth was needed to combat this perceived nationalism.

If the party’s work among educators to date had been insufficient, Robos (the teachers’ union) had also failed. According to Tkach, a contributor to *Narodnii uchytel*, the union had not adequately explained the “ideological essence and social roots of this nationalist deviation.”⁴⁴⁰ As a result, even if the majority of educators supported the party, some had fallen victim to the “spontaneous pressure of bourgeois nationalism and

⁴³⁹ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 31, ark. 61.

⁴⁴⁰ Tkach, “Natsional’na pytannia i zavdannia spilky,” *Narodnii uchytel*, 30 May 1928, 2.

remnants of the past.” The union needed to explain to teachers the true direction of Soviet nationalities policy, but also the harm committed by Shumskyi, Khvylovyi and the economist Volobuiev (as well as the Russocentric arguments of Larin and Zinoviev).⁴⁴¹ Tkach did not criticize Ukrainization directly. On the contrary, he insisted that it enabled recruitment of the peasantry to the socialist cause and permitted a strengthening of its relationship with the proletariat. But the union’s achievements in Ukrainization had largely been formal in character.

Teachers needed to actively pursue Ukrainization, but also guard against perversions of the campaign. According to speakers at a June 1928 Robos conference, the teachers’ chief failing was passivity. This passivity had led to lax Ukrainization, but it had also permitted enemies of Soviet power to co-opt the campaign for their own use. An educator could not claim to be a Soviet educator, one Robos member insisted, if he remained a “mute witness” to the struggle against nationalism and risked falling under its influence.⁴⁴² Teachers needed to take an “enormous role” in explaining the proper meaning of Soviet nationalities policy to the proletariat and peasantry. Failure to do so would mean forfeiture of the policy’s very goal, the maintenance of a union between the laboring classes: “Language is the form through which millions of Ukrainian peasants, millions of nationalities oppressed by tsarism, should be tied to the socialist construction

⁴⁴¹ Mykhailo Volobuiev was an ethnic Russian economist and head of Holovpolitovsita, the Narkomos agency for adult political education. He published two articles in the main KP(b)U journal in which he suggested that Soviet Russia continued to treat Ukraine as a colony and further argued for greater Ukrainian control over the republic’s economy. The KP(b)U leadership immediately condemned this view. Volobuiev recanted his argument, but was later arrested. For detailed discussions of the debate regarding Shumskyi, Khvylovyi, and Volobuiev, see Mace, 86-190; Liber, 126-131.

⁴⁴² *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 55, ark. 49-50.

of international proletarian culture.”⁴⁴³ Teachers had to commit themselves to the active study of language and convince others of the extreme importance for securing cultural leadership.

Conference speakers argued that the union had failed to safeguard against the distortion of this mandate. Although the majority of teachers had turned away from the Ukrainian counterrevolutionary parties that bid for their allegiance during the civil war, negative influences persisted. During the course of Ukrainization, even “responsible parties fell into the labyrinth of great-state or Ukrainian chauvinism.”⁴⁴⁴ Some pushed the slogan “Ukraine for Ukrainians,” claiming the republic served as a colony of Russia. Teachers remained at risk to such a movement because the union’s leadership had not been clear. It had promoted knowledge of the Ukrainian language, but had not properly explained its purpose. In the struggle with “Khvylovyism, Shumskyism, and Volobuievshchyna,” the union “did not show clear direction and did not come together with the party and Soviet power.”⁴⁴⁵ How could teachers enlighten the peasantry and proletariat if they did not understand nationalities policy themselves? Conference reports suggest that because teachers had participated in Ukrainization without a proper understanding they were uniquely susceptible to nationalist influence. A little knowledge was a dangerous thing.

As statements by the Robos leadership made clear, the Ukrainization campaign was intimately tied to broader political campaigns that demanded teacher involvement.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 55, ark. 47.

⁴⁴⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 55, ark. 50.

Just as teachers could not remain neutral in the Ukrainization campaign, they could not passively regard the growth of enemies of Soviet power. For one thing, according to the party, kulaks and petit bourgeois traders (NEPmen) were respectively the carriers of Ukrainian and Russian nationalism. Yet, “there are those teachers that may be nice to workers and to NEPmen, to landless peasants and to kulaks. They want to have authority among one and the other - to serve the Communist guide and please the bourgeois devil.”⁴⁴⁶ Such appeasement only increased the authority of counterrevolutionary circles and contributed to nationalist attitudes.

Delegates to the Robos conference expressed dismay that earlier slogans by the union regarding “voluntary” public work had allowed some teachers to excuse themselves from public campaigns altogether. Most village teachers were consummate activists, one representative claimed, performing multiple tasks: “the village teacher is, as they say, ‘a shoemaker, reaper, and plays the pipe.’”⁴⁴⁷ However, there were those who had done so little that other segments of the population took charge of public education, freeing teachers to walk a “bachelor’s walk.” Others sunk to the lowest levels of peasant culture, condemning religion publicly, but then observing religious customs in their own home. The union could not permit teachers to ignore their responsibilities beyond the school or give them duplicitous attention; they needed to take the lead, as “informed” fighters of the revolution.

Teachers who did not assume a role in broader public campaigns and educate the population in their meaning risked political isolation and the taint of nationalism.

⁴⁴⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 55, ark. 51.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Skarbek, a Polish teacher, argued that Ukrainian chauvinism was rising among the peasantry in her raion in response to the party's grain requisition campaign: "the Ukrainians say, in regards to the implementation of this campaign, that the grain is being collected by *katsapy* [a derogatory term for Russians]." ⁴⁴⁸ She claimed that other teachers had not done enough to combat this tendency and protect the interests of non-Ukrainians in the region, including the Polish population. Teacher involvement may have not made any difference in staving off peasant anger over the confiscation of their grain. Yet, the party likely took any teacher absence from the campaign and failure to combat Ukrainian nationalism as signs of anti-Soviet behavior and, in this context, chauvinist sympathies.

Some teachers tried to demonstrate their commitment to the Soviet cause by their public activism, but they had little specific guidance on appropriate conduct. Starchevskaia, a representative at the Robos meeting, maintained that the union had failed to offer concrete support for teachers trying to increase their involvement. ⁴⁴⁹ If they sought to consult the main academic journals for direction, they risked further exposure to nationalist deviation. A meeting of the Politburo meeting on Ukrainization concluded that the leading literary journal, *Chervonyi shliakh* (Red Path), had "fallen under the surrounding influence of non-class elements." Another political and cultural journal, *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia* (Life and Revolution), had been established to rally the intelligentsia, but was now reportedly being used by "hostile forces." The kraieznavstvo organ, *Ukraina* (Ukraine), had dabbled too much in the trivialities of the past and needed

⁴⁴⁸ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 55, ark. 120.

⁴⁴⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 55, ark. 87.

to address more contemporary issues proposed by Marxist academics.⁴⁵⁰ The commission urged greater Ukrainization, particularly in the Donbas region. Yet in spite of this and Robos's invocations, too much activism on the part of the teachers and other intellectuals was a dangerous thing, particularly in matters concerning Ukrainization. Teachers were doubly damned. Passivity signified political indolence; energy marked assertiveness bordering on counterrevolutionary plotting.

Two brief reports from okruha party organizations regarding Komsomol activity in 1929 demonstrate the hazards of lax public activism. In the Luhansk okruha, the party committee claimed that Komsomol participation in production questions was weak, particularly among young workers in artels (communal teams of laborers). In the villages, some Komsomol members resisted collectivization and the grain requisition campaign; most did nothing. They also failed to appreciate the danger of rightist deviations within the party that favored some compromise with rural interests and did not push for a renewed campaign of political education: "parts of the backward worker youth and Komsomol members exhibited destructive attitudes, narrow-mindedness, and were delinquent in their studies."⁴⁵¹ On top of all this, the okruha party section's report stressed that Komsomol sections almost entirely avoided work in the "building of Ukrainian national culture" and among national minorities. In short, Luhansk Komsomol organizations were too passive on all fronts. There was little chance of progress on divisive national questions when the Komsomol shrunk from engagement on hard-line

⁴⁵⁰ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2247, ark. 25.

⁴⁵¹ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 104.

political issues. Its rural cells were setting a poor example for young teachers and students alike.

In the Lubny okruha, the okruha party committee suggested that the Komsomol's inattentiveness had led to the growth of kulak membership in the organization. It blamed the organization's passivity and confusion on "defilement" by these foreign elements.⁴⁵² Komsomol members had lost "class awareness" and failed to counter the threat embodied by capitalist enemies and deviations in the party. They had neglected recruitment of workers and agricultural laborers and some had also resisted the party's political and economic campaign, that is, collectivization. The party found that the only type of activism prevalent in the Komsomol was "unhealthy." It recommended an immediate purge of the okruha organization.

Okruha control committees in 1929 reported that this lack of party and Komsomol discipline endangered pedagogical oversight. In the Kyiv okruha, party cells at the Prytiat construction site had permitted the appointment of the wife of a priest to a Pioneer group (*maidanchyk*). She taught the children to sing "God Save the Tsar."⁴⁵³ They also had turned a blind eye to bribes offered to the site's administrators by kulaks and children of White Guards seeking employment. In the Dnipropetrovsk okruha, the secretary of the party section in the village of the Khrestoprovets supported the claims of a teacher that agriculture was in decline because of party policy. Under the influence of the teacher and party official, the head of the village council, who was also a party member, failed to mention the size of the community's granaries in his description of taxable property in

⁴⁵² *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 105.

⁴⁵³ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 82.

attempt to avoid “a decline of agriculture.”⁴⁵⁴ The party believed rural authorities were all too susceptible to counterrevolutionary activity it associated with “kulak” teachers.

Occasionally, soviet officials lent an unambiguous label to the counterrevolutionary, rural activism they described in their accounts: Ukrainian nationalism. A 1928 report from the Obukhovskiy raion education inspector in the Kyiv okruha found that Cherkaskiy, a teacher in the village of Khodosiivsky, was organizing peasants to oppose Soviet power. As early as 1921 he had allegedly distributed Petliurist posters at a secret meeting of prosperous peasants and former members of the defunct cultural association *Prosvita*. Although Cherkaskiy presented himself as “a Soviet worker to the eye,” he stood with prosperous peasants at meetings, first suggesting that funds raised by taxation would never be spent in the village and then supporting peasant opposition to the head of the school, who was trying to introduce an early school year. According to the account, he had further expressed dissatisfaction with Soviet nationalities policy, claiming that “we do not have our people, they gave us a Lithuanian as head of the RVK [raion executive committee], some Pole as an inspector, and so on.”⁴⁵⁵ His nationalist leanings purportedly fueled his protection of kulaks. Cherkaskiy refused to work with the head of the reading hut because “he is very Red” and tried to monopolize space in the building for his conspiratorial, kulak group. The report claimed that his aim was nothing less than the destruction of peasant trust in Soviet power.

The raion inspector’s exposure of Cherkaskiy intentions was not unusual. Local party officials repeatedly charged educators and students with duplicity in the “cause of

⁴⁵⁴ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 36.

⁴⁵⁵ *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 169.

the people.” In January 1928 the Mykolaiv okruha party committee found a group of students had prepared counter-revolutionary propaganda to contest local elections. According to the committee’s report, the students sent the most politically active peasants leaflets asking them “to help the people” and resist the proposals of Communists and the poor peasants’ league (*bidnota*). At night, they purportedly pasted posters calling on peasants to “Kick party members from the village soviets.”⁴⁵⁶ What was alarming to the Mykolaiv party committee was not just the apparent boldness of this group, but the fact it counted nine former Komsomol members among its membership. Authorities had deprived their parents of their right to vote, presumably due to their identification as kulaks. Another report from April 1929 maintained that teachers and kulaks had apparently organized students for an anti-Soviet demonstration in the Shevchenkove okruha, near Kharkiv. An unspecified number of teachers were arrested as a result of the demonstration.⁴⁵⁷ Thus, kulak influence had corrupted former Komsomol members and teachers alike, who used their authority to manipulate youth and challenge Soviet power with populist appeals.

The category of kulak was, in fact, a political one, although the party claimed to construct it according to economic criteria. The number of truly “prosperous” peasants was few, with a single head of livestock differentiating them and so-called “middle” peasants. The party’s grain requisition campaign and drive towards collectivization led to widespread social dislocation and popular unrest. A DPU report claimed that some 12,000 peasants had led thirty-seven mass protests across the republic in January 1930

⁴⁵⁶ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 38

⁴⁵⁷ *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 64.

alone.⁴⁵⁸ The KP(b)U often identified those who opposed its campaigns as “kulaks,” regardless of their actual wealth. Dissatisfaction with these campaigns may have provoked the very sort of demonstrations against Soviet power described by the okruha party committees. The Ukrainian peasantry had reason to believe that the party was robbing them of their very means of survival. It is difficult to confirm the accuracy of the specific charges made in the reports, but the likelihood that the peasantry turned to teachers, as representatives of local authority, to protest the grain requisition campaign seems real.

Regardless, teachers’ close association with the peasantry was enough to make the party wary of their influence in besieged rural communities. As has been argued above, teachers earned the party’s suspicion if they failed to push the party’s programs enough, but also if they appeared overeager, especially regarding Ukrainization. Either they came from kulak, religious, or bourgeois background themselves or the party believed they were far too vulnerable to the sway of such hostile forces. The stage was then set for a direct campaign against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, including prominent educators and teachers. They had been the targets of protracted slander. Beginning in May 1929 the DPU rounded up a total of 45 suspects for alleged membership in a nationalist, counterrevolutionary organization, the SVU.

⁴⁵⁸ Volodymyr Prystaiko and Iurii Shapoval, *Sprava "Spilky vyzvolennia Ukrainy": nevidomi dokumenty i fakty* (Kyiv: Intel, 1995), 39.

Union for Liberation of Ukraine

The SVU was an invention of the party leadership, created to justify its repression of the activity of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, activity that it had long held suspect and could not entirely control. Although the KP(b)U Politburo formally authorized a show trial for a Ukrainian nationalist organization on November 3, 1929, the VKP(b) Politburo issued regular instruction to the Ukrainian central committee on the trial's preparations, including a personal telegram from Stalin ordering doctors to be included among the accused.⁴⁵⁹ The Ukrainian DPU subsequently composed a detailed program and administrative structure for the SVU and placed the most prominent non-party Ukrainian intellectuals at its head. The DPU designated Serhii Iefremov, the vice-president of VUAN and an expert on Ukrainian literature, as the principal leader of the alleged organization. On February 5, 1930 Stalin called a special meeting of the VKP(b) Politburo to confirm members of the court and the prosecution team for the main trial (held from March 9 to April 19, 1930).⁴⁶⁰ Out of the forty-five people selected for sentencing, twenty-five were professors, teachers, or students. These included: Volodymyr Durdukivskyi, Iosyp Hermaize, Vasyi Doha, and Hryhorii Ivanytsia. Voldymyr Prystaiko and Iurii Shapoval estimate that the DPU arrested some 700 people across the republic in connection with the trial.⁴⁶¹ It specifically targeted labor school teachers and professors for these arrests.

⁴⁵⁹ Martin, 251.

⁴⁶⁰ Prystaiko, 48.

⁴⁶¹ Prystaiko, 15, 44. For additional studies of the SVU affair and the work of those arrested, see: Anatolii Bolabolchenko, *SVU- sud nad perekonanniamy* (Kyiv: Kobza, 1994); Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Stalin'skii 'velikii perelom' i protses nad 'Soiuzom Osvobozhdeniia Ukrainy,'" *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 1

The public show trial of the SVU, held in the Kharkiv opera house, sent a warning to Ukrainian intellectuals everywhere, especially teachers in Ukrainian-language schools. Mere announcement of arrests was enough to incite protestations of loyalty. On November 24, 1929 the Robos leadership and editorial board of *Narodnii uchytel* first publicly reported on the SVU affair, calling on all educators to demand the “most severe” punishment for those charged.⁴⁶² Three days later the Robos presidium insisted that the SVU represented a minority, but conceded that the union needed to renew its efforts to oppose “unfit members of the intelligentsia” lurking in its midst. It ordered teachers “to intensify their work, to have a correct Marxist-Leninist understanding and to strengthen their proletarian-class education in the union and reject those who want to infiltrate it.” The best answer to the SVU threat was for educators to take a more active role in the “building of socialism,” including the campaigns for industrialization, collectivization, and “Ukrainian culture with national form and international content.”⁴⁶³ If Ukrainization was to proceed, teachers had to accomplish it under the guidance of the party and Komsomol and in concert with the wider political and economic agenda of the First Five-Year Plan.

Local groups of educators similarly pledged their loyalty to Soviet power and committed themselves to fight nationalism at every turn. A Kyiv okruha conference of Robos issued telegrams to the VKP(b) TsK and the DPU condemning the SVU in the

(1994): 190-197; O. I. Sydorenko and D. V. Tabachnyk, eds., *Represovane "vidrodzhennia"* (Kyiv: Ukraina, 1993); P. T. Tron'ko and others, *Represovane kraieznavstvo (20-30-i roky)* (Kyiv: Ridnyi kraj, 1991).

⁴⁶² "Protest spivrobotnykiv VUK'u ta redaktsii hazety," *Narodnii uchytel*, 24 November 1929, 2.

⁴⁶³ "Ne damo zhovto-blakytynym bandytam zavazhaty buduvanniu ukrains'koi kul'tury," *Narodnii uchytel*, 27 November 1929, 2.

name of “an army of 18,000 educators.” It also claimed to have organized a popular demonstration against the SVU, after having learned of similar resolutions by raion and municipal executive committees. The national question could only be resolved under Soviet power, it insisted, and those enemy elements who sought to rally the population with “national slogans,” were hiding their true intention- a return of power to the propertied classes.⁴⁶⁴

Many Robos cells and educational institutions threatened a purge of their own ranks. A Robos meeting in Kamianska boasted it would “use all its strength to expose all class enemies who are hiding under the mask of culture.” Kharkiv Labor School No. 30 pledged to submit its workers to a review of the city’s executive committee.⁴⁶⁵ Educators in the city of Slaviakyski, Artemivsk (Artemovsk) okruha, pledged to conduct similar internal purges and the Robos section in Sumy promised to kick wreckers out of the ranks of the “red teachers.”⁴⁶⁶ None of these groups specified the form of these campaigns, but all felt it necessary to announce their commencement, perhaps in order to preempt the DPU’s own investigations.

Other educators sought to demonstrate their loyalty by fundraising for the Five-Year Plan and Soviet institutions. Instructors at the Iziium pedagogical technicum (Kharkiv okruha) pledged money towards a “contract for industrialization” as a sign of protest against the SVU. Some post-secondary students and local scholars vowed to

⁴⁶⁴ "18,000 osvitynykiv Kyieva hanbliat' zukhvalykh kontr-revoliutsioneriv iz SVU," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 1 December 1929, 3.

⁴⁶⁵ "Osvitiany vyslovliuut' svoie hromads'ke oburennia z konterrevoliutsiinykh uchynkiv zmovnytskoi zhrai z 'SVU'." *Narodnii uchytel'*, 4 December 1929, 3.

⁴⁶⁶ "Vymahaiemo suvoroi kary." *Narodnii uchytel'*, 1 December 1929, 3.

solicit funds for the cost of a new airplane and school teachers promised to raise cash for the Red Army's operations in the Far East. Teachers had to not only display a commitment to Soviet power but also confirm a central role for education in the construction of socialism. Thus, they needed to build Ukrainian culture and distinguish this task from the activities of the SVU "wreckers." Teachers in Uman pledged to renew their efforts to tie "proletarian education and practice." In the Stalino okruha, teachers at the Selydivska seven-year school called on their compatriots to simultaneously build Ukrainian culture, liquidate illiteracy, and collectivize agriculture.⁴⁶⁷ Education and Ukrainian culture had to be linked to the primary task of training present and future workers for economic transformation.

Nevertheless, it was in the field of education that authorities located the crucial danger. The UkSSR chief prosecutor, Akhmatov, warned *Narodnii uchytel* readers about the work of the Scientific Pedagogical Society (*Naukovo-Pedahichne Tovarystvo - NPT*). The NPT, Akhmatov argued, allowed for the consolidation of "Petliurists."⁴⁶⁸ He charged that members of the society, led by prominent pedagogues Ivanytsia and Doha, regularly criticized the Soviet school in order to foment dissatisfaction among teachers and create distrust in the educational system. Akhmatov claimed Ivanytsia advanced the slogan "do svitla" (to the light) in his textbooks, but had found inspiration only among counterrevolutionary circles abroad. He further charged that Doha, then an instructor at a

⁴⁶⁷ "Osvitiany vyslovliuiut' svoie hromads'ke oburennia z konterrevoliutsiinykh uchynkiv zmovnytskoi zhrai z 'SVU'." *Narodnii uchytel*, 4 December 1929, 3.

⁴⁶⁸ The party took care to recruit two educational officials to ensure that the proper message was sent at trial and Narkomos as a whole was not tainted. Antin Prykhod'ko, the presiding judge, was Deputy Commissar of Education. Another member of the court was Ivan Sokolians'kyi, Head of the Institute of Defectology and a prominent educator. See Prystaiko, 50.

Kyiv pedagogical technicum, had barred Communist and Komsomol members from his courses to “preserve the purity of the Ukrainian school.” The two had allegedly attracted enough anti-Soviet teachers to form a shadow Ministry of Education in waiting.

Although the government stressed the threat represented by scholars such as Ivanytsia and Doha, its charges of a counterrevolutionary conspiracy by previously lauded teachers suggested a more insidious source of concern. When *Narodnii uchytel* reported that students and instructors at Ukrainian-studies courses in Kharkiv had criticized the plotting of purported SVU academicians as “a disgraceful and insolent attack on our youth,”⁴⁶⁹ it was essentially repeating the official account: the SVU was not just an organization content to band together the remnants of the national bourgeois intelligentsia for the possible overthrow of Soviet rule. Its power depended on the recruitment of the next generation. An effective way to bridge the gap between the duplicitous activity of academicians and the assemblage of a counterrevolutionary movement was to implicate teachers in the SVU conspiracy. The emotive language of a corruption of youth, instigated by scholars but carried out by teachers, lent a sense of urgency to the state’s charges. The very future of the revolution was at stake.

Conveniently, the DPU identified a “school group” of the SVU. It charged the well-known pedagogue and advocate of Ukrainian schooling, Durdukivskyi, as head of this group. Akhmatov alleged that Durdukivskyi, contrary to his published record, was an advocate of the tsarist gymnasium and opposed to the new Soviet school. He and four other teachers at Kyiv Labor School No. 1, who were also arrested, reportedly sought to

⁴⁶⁹ "Vymahaiemo suvoroi kary," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 December 1929, 3.

prevent the admission of children of the proletariat, fearing their influence on the children of “conscious” Ukrainian intelligentsia.⁴⁷⁰ As proof of their treachery, Akhmatov claimed they had read poetry dedicated to Petliura and collected money for a monument to immortalize him. Furthermore, they had admitted only four Jews to the school. Given the Soviet government’s own drive towards ethnic consolidation in the schools this fact, even if true, was unsurprising. Kyiv Labor School No. 1 was designated by Narkomos as a Ukrainian school.

Akhmatov’s information was drawn from a set program that SVU members confessed to at trial. An internal DPU report outlined the program, detailing several other functions of the school group, including preventing children from joining Young Pioneer groups.⁴⁷¹ Labor School No. 1 allegedly functioned as an organizational center for nationalist teachers across the republic. The school group expanded by recruiting provincial teachers who came to Kyiv on excursions, perhaps with their students as the Narkomos *poradnyk* recommended. Similarly, the Scientific Pedagogical Society sought to use its public meetings to win over teachers to an anti-Soviet orientation.

Not only had teachers organized, but even more menacingly the government claimed, so had the youth. Akhmatov maintained that a fraternal student organization, the Society of Unity and Concord (*Tovarystvo iednannia i zhody - TTe*) had secretly created a parallel youth wing to the SVU, the Union of Ukrainian Youth (*Spilka ukrainskoi molodi - SUM*).⁴⁷² He named Mykola Pavlushko, the Kyiv Komsomol

⁴⁷⁰ "Zhovtoblakytyna kontrevoliutsiia pered proletars'kym sudom," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 24 April 1930, 3.

⁴⁷¹ Prystaiko, 206.

⁴⁷² "Zhovtoblakytyna kontrevoliutsiia pered proletars'kym sudom," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 24 April 1930, 3.

secretary, a member of TIE, and a Kyiv Institute of Public Education (INO) student as the organization's head.⁴⁷³ Under the tutelage of teachers, schoolchildren had also apparently formed counterrevolutionary groups. A DPU document detailing arrests of cultural leaders, professors, and teachers throughout the country for ties to the SVU pointed to one alarming example. In the Pryluky okruha, a teacher and 1925 graduate of the Kyiv INO had organized a nationalist group, composed primarily of kulak children. The DPU report claimed that the group had read nationalist literature in secret and used Shevchenko's poetry as their inspiration to campaign in surrounding villages for a popular uprising against Soviet power. Authorities arrested six labor school students as a result of their investigation.⁴⁷⁴ Arrests of children appear to have been rare, but the DPU's inclusion of information in its report was an indication of just how far it was willing to go in its operation against the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

The list of the supposed crimes planned by the SVU revealed at the trial was long, beginning with proposals for the murder of everyone from Skrypnyk to Stalin and culminating in an elaborate plan for an insurrection against Soviet power and a Polish-aided invasion by émigré Ukrainian nationalist forces. The role of youth, Akhmatov made clear, was to incite the population for this uprising and spread nationalist myths, "in defense of Ukrainian culture." The SVU insured that the revolution was robbed of its heirs, but also made students foot soldiers in a campaign for its overthrow. Reinforcing the image of corrupted youth, Akhmatov lamented that the SVU had planned its treason

⁴⁷³ The DPU arrested Pavlushko first. He lived with Durdukivs'kyi and Iefremov and revealed the location of Iefremov's diary during his interrogation. Soviet prosecutors made extensive use of Iefremov's diary, which was critical of Soviet power, at trial.

⁴⁷⁴ Prystaiko, 159-160.

from the “body of the young socialist republic,” deceiving the childlike Soviet society with its blend of national bourgeois historicism and pseudo-Marxism. Elsewhere, Skrypnyk made clear to young cultural activists that the SVU was fighting for control of the preparation of new cadres, a key task of the Five-Year Plan.⁴⁷⁵ At stake were the future of next Soviet generation and the fulfillment of socialism.

The prosecution of “model” teachers and students, themselves products of the Soviet educational system, sent a warning to educators. In addition to Akhmatov’s warnings and the regular articles in *Narodnii uchytel* and the general press, the government transmitted the court proceedings on radio. The incentive for Robos to make a distinction between the educator-activist and self-indulgent (potentially traitorous) intellectual was high. One Robos section protested that SVU activity had nothing in common with “the work of the broadest stratum of labor intelligentsia and especially teachers, who together with the proletariat and the Communist Party are carrying out the Five-Year Plan of socialist building.”⁴⁷⁶ Teachers’ critical role in the classroom, coupled with their participation in public work (the fight against illiteracy and the promotion of collectivization) made them suspect, but at the same time gave evidence of constructive “action.” Scholars had to demonstrate the same.

In November 1929, over 700 educators met to consider the SVU conspiracy in the eastern Ukrainian city of Luhansk. The group consisted not only of teachers and professional education instructors, but also members of the local section of scientific workers. After listening to a report on the SVU by a representative of the okruha DPU,

⁴⁷⁵ Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy*, vol. 2 (Kharkiv: Proletar, 1931), 366-367.

⁴⁷⁶ "Vymahaiemo suvoroi kary," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 December 1929, 3.

the head of the Robos section of scientific workers claimed that local scholars had been too passive: “In the age of socialism it is not possible to just stand on the ‘Soviet platform.’ We must sit near the engine and help the train travel faster to socialism.”⁴⁷⁷ The Robos section head conceded that Luhansk scholars had compromised too long with reactionary views of scholars of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN) and therefore were partly too blame. As evidence he pointed to a 1924 lecture given to graduate students at the Luhansk Marxist-Leninist Academy by Hermaize, a VUAN historian, textbook author, and now arrested member of the SVU. He suggested that administrators of the academy and local scholars in general had thereby created an environment of reconciliation (*prymyrenstvo*), refusing to see early signs of treason. The meeting denounced the SVU, taking the added step of tying it to a recent attack on a Soviet diplomat in Lwów (Lviv), Poland by a Ukrainian student, and resolved to “triple the effort to build the fortress of the socialist homeland of laborers.”⁴⁷⁸ Scholarly work would have to be justified even more in terms of service to the state.

The SVU arrests and trial did not mean the end of Ukrainization. Instead of attacking Ukrainization, prosecutors argued that the SVU had formed because of the policy’s success. Akhmatov himself authored an article in *Narodnii uchytel* in which he maintained that the SVU members viewed Ukrainization as a Soviet “provocation” designed to wrest control of Ukrainian culture from “conscious Ukrainians.”⁴⁷⁹ While SVU members conceded a practical cooperation with the Soviet government in order to

⁴⁷⁷ "Han'ba zlochyntsiam z taboru SVU," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 December 1929, 3.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ L. Akhmatov, "Sprava pro 'Spilku vyzvolennia Ukrainy'," *Narodnii uchytel*, 28 February 1930, 2.

keep the policy “in Ukrainian hands,” Akhmatov claimed they worked behind the scenes to bring about its downfall. They exploited the romanticism of some circles of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and managed to convince them that Ukrainization offered a means to simultaneously defend the Ukrainian language and oppose Russian speakers. He again invoked the idea that the SVU was both a counterrevolutionary and anti-Semitic organization premised on the seemingly contradictory idea that Jewish nation was “the carrier of the idea of Russian statehood.” Members allegedly taught anti-Semitism in pedagogical institutes, advocated pogroms, and sought to bar Jewish candidates from scientific organizations.⁴⁸⁰ Fundamentally, Akhmatov stressed, the SVU sought control over Ukrainization in order to foment national hatred among youth. He repeated that VUAN was the center of the organization’s activity, but it relied on the rural intelligentsia (specifically primary school teachers) to spread its ideas, disseminate nationalist literature to the young and combat the work of the Komsomol and Pioneers to develop a Soviet generation.

The only way to successfully defend Soviet power, authorities claimed, was to reassert a “pure” understanding of the meaning of the revolution and Leninist nationalities policy. A 1930 Komsomol pamphlet claimed that “Ukrainization will deal a horrible blow to the nation of SUM [Union of Ukrainian Youth] adherents.”⁴⁸¹

Nevertheless, while the Komsomol and party lauded Ukrainization, seeing in its success

⁴⁸⁰ Prosecutors linked the SVU to anti-Semitism by citing passages from Iefremov’s diary where he suggested Petliura may not have been responsible for pogroms committed during the war by Ukrainian national forces.

⁴⁸¹ Tsentral’nyi komitet LKSM Ukrainy, *Molodi fashysty ukrainskoi kontrrevoliutsii do protsesu SVU*. (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1930), 111.

the motive for the desperate acts of the SVU and SUM, at the same time the affair deprived the state of committed and capable administrators of a campaign desperate for talent. More ominously, the arrests of alleged Ukrainian nationalists and the SVU show trial sent an unequivocal message to the rank and file Ukrainizers: they might be next. One local Robos section's proclamations captured these contradictory sentiments: "The exuberant [*buinyi*] blossoming of Ukrainian proletarian culture testifies that valid national questions are only solved by the working-peasant masses under the leadership of a proletarian-peasant party and its proletarian state." In the same breath, it called for severe punishment of those accused and ordered educators to assist the DPU in exposing "individual scoundrels, who have penetrated the ranks of educators."⁴⁸²

The limits of just how much a teacher might add to the "blossoming" of Ukrainian culture were unclear. Few could countenance the crimes with which the state charged SVU members. It was best not to stray into areas that might be considered suspect and much of Ukrainian culture now was. Martin argues that the party viewed the bulk of the Ukrainian intelligentsia as "*smenovekhovtsy*," a term derived from an émigré Russian nationalist organization, *smena vekh* (Change of Landmarks), which advocated tactical cooperation with the Bolsheviks.⁴⁸³ From the party's perspective, Ukrainian bourgeois intellectuals had made a similar choice. Martin maintains that the party viewed the SVU show trial as a necessary preventive measure because it accepted as a "psychological

⁴⁸² "Vymahaiemo suvoroi kary," *Narodnii uchytel*, 1 December 1929, 3.

⁴⁸³ Martin, 222.

truth” that the intelligentsia would oppose the Five-Year Plan’s cultural revolution, a program for the creation of a new proletarian ethos.⁴⁸⁴

As Chapter 6 argued, the KP(b)U leadership had very little trust in the intelligentsia. The DPU, in fact, had planned to deport the accused SVU leader Iefremov as early as 1922 and in 1926 had prepared a report on “rightist” elements among the Ukrainian intelligentsia.⁴⁸⁵ The DPU, in particular, was one of the fiercest critics of Ukrainization and the least Ukrainized institution in the republic. However, the DPU acted against the Ukrainian intelligentsia not simply because it had always suspected them, but because it feared the power of intellectuals to direct education and culture beyond the sphere of the party. It was the uncertainty of the consequences of the intelligentsia’s work that troubled the DPU most. Nevertheless, Ukrainian educators were not the calculating opportunists of the DPU’s image. Iefremov and others resisted party involvement in academic life and Iefremov’s own opinion of Soviet power was less than favorable. However, the Soviet government put the SVU defendants, Iefremov included, on trial for precisely what it had exhorted them to do: develop Ukrainian culture.

Simple Priorities

Given the challenges already described in promoting high Ukrainian-language proficiency among teachers, it was unsurprising that many teachers readily abandoned an overt promotion of Ukrainization. Their very survival was another matter altogether.

⁴⁸⁴ Fitzpatrick notes that the formation of this ethos inevitably involved the elimination of the bourgeois intelligentsia through “class war.” See Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1934*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 8.

⁴⁸⁵ Prystaiko, 23-24.

Press reports suggest that some teachers did oppose collectivization. The extent and openness of their resistance is unclear. *Narodnii uchytel* maintained that the number of so-called “kulak sympathizers” among teachers was not great. However, an article in the newspaper listed numerous crimes that teachers had committed. It divided counterrevolutionary teachers into two groups: those who by landholdings were kulaks and others who sided with them by their actions. One teacher’s husband allegedly made the dramatic statement at a village meeting: “Do not give your grain because the authorities do not give you anything and give only to the workers. When there is war, kill the workers first.”⁴⁸⁶ It is astonishing that anyone would make such a bold statement in a public forum, although it reveals some insight into the rationale of the requisition campaign. The teacher herself was suspect because of her marriage to this alleged troublemaker.

The article attests that okruha Robos meetings further revealed the true attitude of some teachers towards collectivization. At one such meeting, a teacher suggested the campaign was entirely unrealistic. Others apparently reported that their colleagues confided to the peasantry that they were opposed to the operation, but nevertheless had to publicly support it. Some refrained from taking a leadership role, insisting that the peasantry would not listen to them. They logged hours for “civic political work” without any real commitment to the collectivization campaign. The newspaper labeled this approach “kulak” and demanded the dismissal of these “traitors.” The teachers’ behavior was, however, reflective of a sentiment shared by the peasantry and teachers who lived

⁴⁸⁶ O., "Het' kurkuliv ta kurkul'sku idealohiiu z lav nashoi spilky," *Narodnii uchytel*, 17 June 1929, 6.

amongst them and depended upon their support: the grain requisition campaign threatened to cause severe food shortages in the already impoverished countryside. It is reasonable to assume that some teachers took a skeptical, passive, even, as described in the newspaper, a duplicitous approach towards a policy that in Ukraine would culminate in the deaths of millions. In the climate of danger introduced by the SVU trial such a stance was impermissible.

As if to make the line even more clear, at the same time *Narodnii uchytel* was warning of the nefarious activities of SVU educators and cautioning against counterrevolutionary behavior by rural teachers, it was lauding the bravery of the activist teacher. It thereby provided a model of normative behavior for teachers to follow and honored them for their revolutionary heroism. The Soviet press had taken care in the lead up to the SVU trial to demonstrate the kulak-peasant origins of Ukrainian nationalism. A series of articles on kulak violence against teachers unambiguously exposed the potential of enemies of Soviet power. The newspaper's message was that it was in the teacher's interest to side with public campaigns such as collectivization. To do otherwise meant risking identification with a vilified enemy and the label of bourgeois nationalism.

Akhmatov again set the stage. In response to the latest in a series of reported murders of teachers, Akhmatov issued a statement to the press in November 1929. He announced that two teachers, Zadorozhnyi and Beta, had recently been murdered by kulaks in rural eastern Ukraine. They had purportedly been targeted for their active participation in the collectivization and literacy campaigns (involvement in the latter was also strongly identified with Soviet power). Akhmatov took these murders as well as

other acts of kulak “terrorism” (arson, physical assault, and earlier murders) as evidence that the class struggle in the village was sharpening. The majority of teachers, he emphasized, were “on one side of the barricade, together with the poor and hired farmers.”⁴⁸⁷ Kulaks saw teachers as mortal enemies because they were Soviet workers, critical leaders in the task of building socialism. He promised to make the prosecution of these murders his direct responsibility and to afford teachers all legal protection to defend them against future attacks.

Reports of other acts of violence committed against teachers soon followed. One teacher informed *Narodnii uchytel* readers that kulaks in the Artemivsk region had murdered two poor peasants in connection with their political work and had forced a teacher in one village to flee her post. In another village, kulaks had staged a smear campaign against a teacher, complaining to educational authorities that she was “conducting anti-pedagogical work versus the students.”⁴⁸⁸ A raion commission found the charges baseless. The Robos raion section later concluded that the local village did nothing to protect the teacher and oppose the kulaks. Its findings implied that village authorities were firmly in kulak hands and the teachers stood alone against their influence.⁴⁸⁹

The pedagogical press presented teachers in the most positive light possible in order to repair their public image as well as serve the broader interests of the state. The

⁴⁸⁷ "Na zakhyst uchyteliv-aktyvistiv," *Narodnii uchytel*, 13 November 1929, 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Uchytel', "Na grunti kliasovoi pomsty," *Narodnii uchytel*, 4 December 1929, 6.

⁴⁸⁹ For more on the teacher's lonely role as mediator of the collectivization campaign see E. Thomas Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism: Policy, Practice, and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 17-52.

press touted teachers as defiant heroes, valiantly carrying out collectivization and the demands of the Five-Year Plan in the face of a threat mounted by what it presented as a small, but desperate minority. Consequently, when *Narodnii uchytel* reported that the head of a labor school in the Bilotserkva okruha had died from eight bullet wounds and four of his colleagues narrowly escaped a similar fate, it also extolled his high reputation in the community and among his peers.⁴⁹⁰ Another, apparently botched, shooting of a teacher and Komsomol member in the Chernihiv region was explained as “kulak revenge for the teacher’s active work.”⁴⁹¹ In spite of the increase in attacks, such teachers refused to back down from their political work. One teacher in the village of Khorostiuk who sustained an attack vowed to continue his work for collectivization and Soviet power. Another group of village teachers had contributed to the full realization of the grain requisition campaign in spite of pressure from kulaks. In this instance, the head of the village Soviet had purportedly succumbed to kulak influence and, instead of explaining the importance of the campaign to the village, had blamed it entirely on the teachers.⁴⁹² If true, this tactic suggests just how unpopular the grain seizures were. Given the apparent weakness of local authorities, the state relied very much on teacher leadership in this operation. Thus, it followed a complicated strategy of warning educators of traitors in their midst, but exalting those who stood with Soviet power. In the desperate environment introduced by the collectivization campaign, Ukrainization was a negligible concern for rural teachers. They were simply trying to stay alive.

⁴⁹⁰ Ia. F., "Shche odna zhertva," *Narodnii uchytel*, 4 December 1929, 6.

⁴⁹¹ S., "Novyi napad na vchytelia-hromads'koho robitnyka," *Narodnii uchytel*, 4 December 1929, 6.

⁴⁹² "Svoikh pozytsii my ne zdamo," *Narodnii uchytel*, December 4, 1929, 6; Myropil'skyi, "Vchyteli vynni," *Narodnii uchytel*, 4 December 1929, 6.

Ukrainization and the Five-Year Plan

Inevitably, the heightened political language of the Five-Year Plan had an effect on the classroom itself. The Sumy okruha party section informed the KP(b)U Central Committee that a local newspaper, *Serp i molot*, had reported on class struggle among children in the schools. According to the party section, the newspaper had incorrectly emphasized the battle against children of class enemies and had not adequately discussed the principal tasks of the school within the wider environment of class struggle: strengthening of instruction, party leadership over education, and the organization of self-reliant Pioneer organizations to oppose bourgeois infiltration of the schools.⁴⁹³ The party did not intend the harassment of children, but rather a full scale redirection of education.⁴⁹⁴ The okruha section ordered a purge of the newspaper's editorial board and instructed its agitprop activists to prepare another article explaining party educational policy. It is not surprising, however, that the newspaper made this "error." Broader pedagogical questions took a decidedly inferior place to daily reports of rural class struggle, kulak violence, and orders for proletarian vigilance.

As discussed above, the party rejected the forced Ukrainization of the Russian-speaking population, but Narkomos continued to favor the gradual Ukrainization of the Russified, but ethnically Ukrainian, proletariat through their children. Without the Ukrainization of the proletariat, Soviet nationalities policy had little meaning in the republic. In the post-SVU environment, in spite of Narkomos's efforts, the campaign

⁴⁹³ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 140.

⁴⁹⁴ Skrypnyk argued for the education of kulak children in order to prevent the formation of a kulak cadre and "create people who will work on the tasks of the Communist Party." M. Skrypnyk, "Osnovni problemy sotsial'noho vykhovannia za rekonstruktyvnoi doby," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 5-6 (1930): 29-30.

hesitated. Of course, the need for the Ukrainization of the proletariat was officially even greater. Clearly, in the party's eyes, the old national elites could not be trusted to administer the republic's scientific and educational establishments. If Ukrainian national culture was to survive, Narkomos had to situate it firmly in the proletarian camp. The new emphasis on the use of trusted cadres (ideally party members) meant the circle of qualified Ukrainian-language instructors was still small. Furthermore, with some of the most prominent Ukrainizers purged, the teachers Narkomos relied upon to move the campaign forward, grew even more timid. Ukrainization was supposed to be for and by the proletariat. However, the incentives for educators to realize this strategy seemed few, the practical challenges many, and the risks high.

The attack on bourgeois culture and specialists that defined the "cultural revolution" of the Five-Year Plan generally argued for a shift in Ukrainization strategy. The party began to turn its attention to the concerted "cultivation of modernized, industrial Ukrainian culture."⁴⁹⁵ On December 23, 1929, seven months after the first SVU arrest, the KP(b)U published a decree on the state of Ukrainization in the critical industrial centers. It emphasized that the proletariat needed to take a leading role in building of Ukrainian national culture, but recognized that the government was still battling with "russophilic banter" that the proletariat were indifferent.⁴⁹⁶ While the party had some success in the general development of Ukrainian culture, it conceded that lower party organization in the industrial regions of the Donbas had not responded to the party's calls for an intensification of the campaign and work remained sporadic. The decrees of

⁴⁹⁵ Martin, 100.

⁴⁹⁶ "Stan ukrainizatsii v promyslovykh okruhakh," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 11 January 1930, 1.

the party had proven insufficient, proper checks on implementation did not exist, and many cadres did not even understand the need for the campaign. It blamed part of the failure on the influence of industrial specialists educated during the pre-revolutionary period: “from here arises not only a negative attitude on the part of a significant part of specialists to Ukrainization, but signs of open russophilic great-state attitude.”⁴⁹⁷ The party had not done enough to rebuff these attitudes and they were spreading to the working mass.

Importantly, the KP(b)U also held the educational establishment responsible. The tempo of Ukrainization, it reported, was particularly weak among local Narkomos sections. While recognizing there was a shortage of Ukrainian-speaking instructors in the Donbas, it recommended a full-scale review of their numbers in order to properly develop and staff a network of Ukrainian schools. Teachers who did not know Ukrainian would have to be quickly trained. The party also assumed a renewed responsibility to Ukrainize and promote Ukrainian-speakers within its own ranks. It ordered okruha party organizational sections to each produce thirty workers for Ukrainization in the Donbas, Kryvyi Rih, and Dnipropetrovsk in two months time.⁴⁹⁸ It would have to change attitudes towards Ukrainization fast.

In spite of this bold gesture by the party, it remained ill-equipped to prod these industrial areas into action. In the view of one metal worker, who was part of a delegation from the Donbas that met with Commissar of Education Skrypnyk, sentiment for Ukrainization in the region was not high among the young. According to him, a

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

group of students from the Kharkiv agricultural institute which had come to the Donbas to evaluate its cultural needs in 1928 informed the local Narkomos section: “The Donbas does not need qualified Ukrainian workers because the Donbas is Russian [*ruskyi*].”⁴⁹⁹ The metal worker complained to Skrypnyk that the students had no right make this determination. Nevertheless the anecdote’s assumption is instructive. These representatives of the new Soviet intelligentsia, who might have been recruited to staff Ukrainian-language schools, propagandize among the unions, collective farmers, or even the party, were doubtful of the program’s utility.

Furthermore, attempts to expand a proletarian Ukrainian culture in Donbas were problematic. A KP(b)U directive had ordered trade unions to organize a month of Ukrainian culture in the Artemivsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kryvyi Rih regions for June 1930.⁵⁰⁰ It further instructed them to organize brigades of writers to popularize Ukrainian literature and scholarship, award workplaces that organized the best “red corners” on Ukrainian culture, and generally popularize Ukrainian culture. However, one week after the month was supposed to have commenced, little had been accomplished. According to *Narodnii uchytel*, Robos members had been particularly negligent in their responsibility as “the vanguard of the cultural front.”⁵⁰¹ When the secretary of the Robos All-Ukrainian Committee was asked what his organization had done for the month, he answered: the entire union was on vacation.

⁴⁹⁹ Rama, "Misiachnyk ukrains'koi proletar'skoi kul'tury," *Narodnii uchytel*, 22 June 1930, 3.

⁵⁰⁰ Martin describes a wider, three-month campaign beginning in June 1929. Martin, 100.

⁵⁰¹ Rama, 3.

The place of Ukrainian in the eastern Stalino region further illustrates the weakness of Ukrainization in industrial and mining areas, even in spite of a clear influx of ethnic Ukrainian laborers. The okruha executive committee in this region reported that the use of “broken Ukrainian,” or language that pretended to be Ukrainian, was commonly used in soviet institutions. Apparently, local authorities saw little use in studying Ukrainian or promoting its use. In spite of the fact that the worker population was over 30% ethnically Ukrainian, children overwhelmingly attended Russian-language schools.⁵⁰² Out of 2,340 Ukrainian children enrolled in school, only 193 studied in the one seven-year Ukrainian school that existed in Stalino. Russian and national minority schools had sought to even bypass the Narkomos requirement for a separate class in Ukrainian by creating courses in Esperanto.

In mining sites located outside of the city, where the ethnic Ukrainian population constituted a clear majority of the working force, there were no Ukrainian cultural groups and only a smattering of Ukrainian literature available in workers’ libraries. In the past year, over seven thousand Komsomol members and 1,200 contractors had come to work in the mines. All of them reportedly spoke Ukrainian, but trade union authorities led cultural work in Russian only. Until fall 1929, there were no Ukrainian studies courses available to workers throughout the okruha. Union leaders were either apathetic or openly hostile towards Ukrainization. Only as a result of pressure from okruha leaders,

⁵⁰² H. Shvydkyi, "Ukrainizuiut'sia nadto povil'no," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 11 June 1930, 7.

did the okruha union administration consent to the assignment of Ukrainizers to the region.⁵⁰³ The challenge for the future, however painted, was immense.

The Façade of “Full Ukrainization”

The shortage of Ukrainian schools in Stalino was characteristic of new manufacturing and mining centers in the Donbas. The ethnic Ukrainian population in this area fluctuated according to the labor demands of expanding industry. It was admittedly more difficult for local authorities to determine the specific educational needs of groups within diverse, growing populations. In more established urban centers, Ukrainization in the schools appeared fine on paper. According to a 1930 report by the Kharkiv okruha inspector, there were 28 Ukrainian schools out of the 63 schools in the city (43.7%) and 488 out of 686 four-year schools in the surrounding raiony (85.5%). These figures indicate a slight excess of Ukrainian schools relative to the proportion of the ethnic Ukrainian population in the city (38.4%) and in the countryside (81.7%).⁵⁰⁴ Okruha inspectors reported similar successes in formal Ukrainization in Dnipropetrovsk and Chernihiv.⁵⁰⁵

What is surprising is that at late as 1930, the okruha inspectors were still reporting on the existence of schools of mixed Ukrainian-Russian instruction. There were 10 such schools in the city of Kharkiv, 3 in the city of Dnipropetrovsk (11 in the countryside), and

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 421.

⁵⁰⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 420, 427.

3 in Chernihiv.⁵⁰⁶ Although local authorities foresaw the “full Ukrainization” of these schools, the fact they continued to exist suggests that schools did not have enough qualified Ukrainian speakers to staff all its schools and raises questions about the quality of instruction in the formally Ukrainized schools. If there were competent Ukrainian-speakers in surplus Ukrainian schools, why were they not transferred to schools designated for Ukrainization? Why were half-Ukrainized schools needed anyhow if the Narkomos leadership’s objective continued to be the formation of monolingual schools comprised entirely of a single ethnicity? In fact some of the formally Ukrainized schools were schools of mixed instruction. This was especially true for the higher grades. Full seven-year Ukrainian schools were still small in number.

Narkomos recognized that figures regarding full Ukrainization were suspect. It therefore instituted new *perevirky* of teachers in the winter of 1929-30. Articles in the pedagogical press explained the need for and requirements of the examination. Prysiazhniuk, a contributor to *Narodnii uchytel* claimed that it was not uncommon to encounter teachers who continue to use the Ukrainian language with Russianisms [*rusytsyzmamy*] and that this habit of mixing Ukrainian and Russian was being passed onto the children.⁵⁰⁷ The teachers’ language was in some instances so muddled that children could not understand the lessons. Prysiazhniuk claimed there were instances of local authorities appointing teachers who even deliberately confused children in this manner. He argued some remedy was needed quickly or teachers would continue to

⁵⁰⁶ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 421, 420, 427.

⁵⁰⁷ Ivan Prysiazhniuk, "Polipshuite nashu movu," *Narodnii uchytel*’, 16 January 1929, 5.

“pollute” the Ukrainian language and, significantly, harm the development of the children. They would be literate in neither Ukrainian nor Russian.

News of a coming *perevirka* again sent teachers into a panic. They scrambled for literature and demanded more detailed instructions. Prysaizhniuk described their desperate, last minute preparations as behavior similar to “feeding hounds when they are starving.”⁵⁰⁸ They did not intend mastery of language, nor understand why it was necessary. They simply wanted to survive the process.

Given what has already been discussed about the lack of Ukrainian-language schooling and studies in the Stalino okruha, it is not surprising that a December 1929 *perevirka* in this area revealed an utter lack of knowledge of Ukrainian. It disclosed the extent of the ignorance and apathy in detail. Only a minority of the teachers knew anything about Ukrainian culture and history. Even teachers in the higher grades who had some ability in Ukrainian had not read any new writers or engaged in any substantive language study. Even if they had read Ukrainian classics such as *Pesny Shevchenko* they did not understand their value and, importantly, failed to provide any Marxist social analysis of these works. The only teachers that purportedly attempted to keep up to date on pedagogy were in the Russian schools.⁵⁰⁹ In short, teachers not only had weak Ukrainian skills, but were also ill-equipped to apply any such knowledge to Narkomos’s principal goal: the transformation of the school for the building of socialism. Thus, when Martin points to Skrypnyk’s report that 97.4 percent of Ukrainian children enrolled in school were attending Ukrainian-language institutions in 1929-30, this did not mean

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ H. Hulak, "Movoznavtsi," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 16 January 1929, 5.

that the instruction in the Ukrainized schools had changed greatly. Quantitatively speaking the Ukrainization of schools was “one of the greatest successes” of the campaign. However, authorities needed to do much more to assure that these numbers meant anything.

The situation was reportedly no better in the Ukrainian-speaking heartland of the Kyiv region. One *Narodnii uchytel* writer, Kost, claimed that teachers’ understanding of language had declined. Kost reviewed the archive of a tsarist-era higher zemstvo school and argued that the written work of teachers in this school was superior to that of contemporary teachers: “We are not idealizing the old school, but only underlining that a certain knowledge of grammar (etymology and syntax) was demanded from the teacher. Without this knowledge, a person is not a teacher.”⁵¹⁰ He claimed that it was not only Narkomos which required teachers to improve their language skills, but populations served by these teachers. These communities sought punishment for those teachers who continued to demonstrate language is crippling (*shkutylyhaie*). Kost insists that teachers needed to recognize their obligations themselves, they had to be “smiths and jewelers” of the word. If they failed in their duty, they would compromise their students’ future.

Local authorities sometimes made allowances for shortcomings in the teachers’ knowledge. Another *Narodnii uchytel* contributor, Eskiz, claimed that only one teacher formally passed the Ukrainian-language *perevirka* in the Makarivskyi raion (Kyiv okruha). Most teachers petitioned the examination committee for a postponement of their examination until the spring or summer break; the remainder fell into the lower

⁵¹⁰ K. Kost', "Ukrainizovalys'," *Narodnii uchytel*', 16 January 1929, 5.

second or third categories of knowledge.⁵¹¹ The committee evidently chose either to grant these petitions or “temporarily” place teachers in the above categories and give them the option of repeating the evaluation. Eskiz suggests that the *perevirka* may have been too demanding. It consisted of written work in Ukrainian literature, an oral quiz in syntax, and dictations. During the oral quizzes participants were required to talk about the content of some author’s work and use proper style and pronunciation. The problem, he maintains, was that teachers rarely received new Soviet literature or a description of the Narkomos program. Narkomos gave them no time to prepare or any indication of the themes that would be covered. It was no wonder then that the teachers failed to perform adequately. A postponement in the *perevirka* for most meant that local authorities recognized the challenges in preparing for the *perevirka* and had to adjust accordingly.

One article in *Narodnii uchytel* blamed the difficulties teachers’ encountered in the *perevirka* on the union. He claimed that the problem of Ukrainization was worse in rural schools. Yet the union had not pressed state publishers to distribute literature across the republic. A “wave of *perevirka* of Ukrainian studies has swept to distant corners ‘blocked by heaps of snow,’” but book deliveries had not broken through to these far-flung locales.⁵¹² Even if teachers managed to get their hands on some literature it was almost always technical in nature. Literary journals, which reviewed and published the new authors covered in the *perevirka*, were reportedly impossible to obtain. Although okruha educational inspectors had promised to organize preparatory courses, they had broken this pledge. Union officials assumed no accountability themselves. In short, the

⁵¹¹ Eskiz, "Lyshe odna . . . (Makarivs'kyi raion na Kyivshchyni)," *Narodnii uchytel*, 16 January 1929, 5.

⁵¹² V. L., "Sprava ukrainizatsii," *Narodnii uchytel*, 14 March 1929, 4.

article concluded, teachers faced “insurmountable difficulties.” Ukrainian literacy, according to this understanding, was fundamentally about command of the content and style of new “red” literature, not simply a demonstration of conversational fluency. Teachers had to prove they could participate in the cultural campaigns associated with the Five-Year Plan. The random publications to which rural teachers had access were clearly insufficient.

However, not all in the press were willing to give teachers such latitude. Another correspondent for *Narodnii uchytel*, Samarchenko, reacted to reports of teacher anxiety and complaints with indignation. He questioned why, more than ten years after the revolution, Narkomos still had to raise the question of “Ukrainizing Ukrainian teachers.” Ideally, teachers had nothing to fear from a *perevirka*:

Teachers should come to the commission in a comradely way and demonstrate that the ‘modern teacher’ is an unquestionably literate [*pismenna*] person in regards to Ukrainian studies and that he will not simply cripple [*kalichyty*] the children’s language, but rather will raise the language of Ukrainian children to the higher level of a literary language.⁵¹³

Reality, however, was shattering such “rose-colored dreams.” Teachers still did not know Ukrainian well enough and resisted having their knowledge evaluated. Previous *perevirky* had obviously made little impact.

Samarchenko rejected the notion advanced by Eskiz and others that *perevirka* commissions were too harsh. Teachers did not have the excuse of not having access to books, he claimed. Those who really wanted to could procure them. At the very least, they should not confuse the literature they had read. Furthermore, their knowledge of

⁵¹³ Samarchenko, "Ukrainizatsiia vchytel'stva shche pro te zhe same," *Narodnii uchytel'*, 16 January 1929, 5.

basic Ukrainian grammar and syntax was so poor that even the teacher petitions were filled with mistakes. The *perevirka* was meant to send teachers a signal. However, ultimately the teachers' had to overcome their own apathy. State-run courses in Ukrainian knowledge, Samarchenko implied, could not simply "plant knowledge of Ukrainian studies in the head."⁵¹⁴ Teachers who did not pursue this knowledge themselves had no right to teach in Ukrainian schools. He contends that the "depressed mood" predominant among teachers taking the *perevirka* would befall Soviet society generally. How could teachers illiterate in Ukrainian advance the cause of socialism in a predominantly Ukrainian-speaking republic? Soviet Ukraine would be the eventual victim of their failings.

In spite of the threat of additional *perevirky* and even dismissal, Narkomos reports confirm that teachers' Ukrainian knowledge remained poor. The Kryvyi Rih okruha inspectorate informed Narkomos in 1930 that "schools still do not clearly and intensely undertake lesson in the Ukrainian language."⁵¹⁵ The results of an earlier *perevirka* found that teachers still made extensive use of slang: 69 passed the examination, 598 failed, 168 did not appear, and 148 were given exemptions. The okruha educational section did attempt a remedy. Raion methodological sections organized a total of sixty courses in Ukrainian studies and the state of Ukrainization became a regular subject of discussion in teachers meetings and in the okruha newspaper, *Chervonyi hirnyk* (Red Miner). However, a second *perevirka* in 1929 was delayed. As of the writing of the report in May, authorities had carried out a *perevirka* only in the city of Kryvyi Rih and in two

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 415.

raiony. In the city, fifty percent of the teachers passed, in the surrounding countryside only thirty percent passed. The inspectorate pledged to carry out a *perevirka* in the raiony by the end of the year. However, the continued high failure rate of teachers was alarming. Furthermore, although the inspectorate had promised to expand Ukrainian-language use for children's extracurricular activities, all youth work in the okruha's principal cities remained in Russian. The chance of dismissal was slight and few teachers or youth leaders saw real incentive to improve their Ukrainian language skills.⁵¹⁶ Demonstration of a bare minimum of knowledge provided grounds for a regular delay in an examination and postponement of disciplinary action.

Authorities in Mykolaiv corroborated this picture of the state of Ukrainization in the schools. In April 1930 the Mykolaiv okruha inspectorate and Robos head sent a letter to teachers in the region. It reported the results of a *perevirka* held at raion teachers' conferences. Only five to ten teachers in each raion had met Narkomos's minimum requirement for Ukrainian language knowledge. Most did not know grammar or orthography well, some were entirely illiterate. If they spoke Ukrainian, they often had only mastered the local peasant dialect.⁵¹⁷ Furthermore, they used archaic expressions in their writing and expressed astonishment that there was anything new in the Ukrainian language, regularly referring to the authority of the "Shevchenko language." Regarding Ukrainian studies, they were either familiar with only a few names of Ukrainian authors or could repeat excerpts of their writing without reference to context. Their knowledge

⁵¹⁶ The inspectorate had only dismissed five teachers to date for refusing to even attempt learning Ukrainian.

⁵¹⁷ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 417.

of Ukrainian history was similar. They had memorized phrases written by the Marxist historian Iavorskyi, but had little understanding of what they meant. They had ignored *kraieznavstvo* altogether.

The letter stressed that the central role of the Ukrainian language in the Five-Year Plan and called teachers to action. If teachers neglected Ukrainian knowledge, they diminished the influence of Soviet power:

The matter of Ukrainization has acquired special significance now when the question of a cultural revolution has been broadly posed, [a question] that, in specific conditions of Ukrainian culture, especially in the village, should concern the work of conscious Ukrainian citizens, primarily, of course, the cultural authority in the village - teachers who uphold Ukrainian culture in its essence and in competent work.⁵¹⁸

Teachers needed to be “armed” with Ukrainian culture for both their pedagogical and public work. Thus, the inspectorate promised to pay special attention to the state of Ukrainization during the course of its regular inspections and threatened Narkomos would “take measures against those who do not achieve the program’s minimum.” It recommended that teachers form their own groups (*hurtki*) for Ukrainian knowledge. In a separate communication to Narkomos, the inspectorate announced it had already enrolled 155 teachers in special courses on Ukrainian studies and promised to hold another *perevirka* at the end of the academic year.⁵¹⁹ Clearly, it felt the need to demonstrate some sort of progress.

The problem was that the shortcomings educational authorities cited and the solutions they proposed in 1929-30 were little different than those suggested when the

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 416.

Ukrainization campaign began. At the time of the SVU arrests and trial, few in Narkomos were willing to suggest bold solutions to the vexing problem of Ukrainization and educators responded to renewed campaigns with as little effort as needed. An April 1929 article in *Narodnii uchytel* on the state of Ukrainization in higher education reveals some of the inherent tensions in the party's nationalities policy at the time of the cultural revolution. It found that many post-secondary administrators took a formal approach to Ukrainization.⁵²⁰ Professors either did not push Ukrainization or were openly opposed to it. Students did not understand the policy and some sought to deliberately sabotage it. Educational administrators purportedly did little to oppose such "rabble rousers."

It was not enough for educators to rest content with an improvement in their own language knowledge. They needed to be ever watchful against "stewing" of groups opposed to Soviet nationalities policy. The article claimed that this danger came from two fronts: russophilic bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie, who were opposed to Ukrainian culture generally, and Petliurists and kulaks, who sought to co-opt it and incite Ukrainian chauvinism and anti-Semitism. It instructed the post-secondary instructors to see Ukrainization as a call to battle: "He should be and active builder in the construction of a Ukrainian culture in form, but proletarian and international in content."⁵²¹

Martin argues that the SVU show trial established a pattern of "asymmetric terror," where the party framed fighting bourgeois nationalism as a core task and *korenizatsiia* as a secondary one.⁵²² Those who resisted Ukrainization did not suffer the

⁵²⁰ "Natsional'na pytannia." *Narodnii uchytel*, 10 April 1929, 3.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Martin, 258.

same fate as “deviationist” Ukrainizers, in spite of Kaganovich’s attempt to exert greater pressure on them. Although Martin claims that threats of dismissal motivated some higher education instructors to accept Ukrainization, the above *Narodnii uchytel* report casts doubt on the sincerity or value of their efforts. Certainly, at the primary school level, teacher avoidance and failure of examinations revealed that resistance was still widespread.

The safest course was the principal approach the article was criticizing: passivity. Clearly, many post-secondary instructors had already chosen this path. Primary school teachers were unlikely to turn from their example. Open resistance to Ukrainization invited charges of Russian nationalism; an overzealous embrace raised the flag of Ukrainian nationalism. The warnings associated with Ukrainization stand out in much greater relief than the article’s invocation. Few tempted fate by trying to sort out the difference between cultural form and content. It was best to prove one’s commitment to Soviet nationalities policy only as much as necessary.

The Subordination of Ukrainian Educational Norms

A fundamental redirection in educational policy would take place in the organization of the Ukrainian system of education. Debate over standardization of educational norms coincided with the commencement of the First Five-Year Plan and presaged a prioritization of all-Union demands over republican interests. Skrypnyk sanctioned the dismantling of the Ukrainian system largely out of consideration of the VKP(b)’s broad economic goals. This process occurred gradually, overlapping in part

with the SVU show trial. Although not directly connected to the educational standardization talks, the SVU affair offered Narkomos an excuse for a redirection once discussion had begun. A consequence of this effort was a framework for increased party control, particularly from the center, over education. Ultimately, the door was open for a rejection of the progressive pedagogy that Ukrainization was supposed to have enabled.

In October 1928 the subject of centralization of republican educational systems assumed center stage at an All-Ukrainian Conference for Sotsvykh Workers. The head of the conference's commission on unification declared at the outset that he did not believe that standardization was necessary: the Russian and Ukrainian systems of education, the chief competing options, answered the specific needs of each republic and centralization would "cripple education."⁵²³ Another participant agreed, arguing that the thought of an identical educational system throughout the Soviet Union was ridiculous: "it is impossible to put all institutions under one stamp." Much of the debate centered on the meaning of a polytechnical education. The conference attendees criticized the Russian polytechnical school as being too abstract.⁵²⁴ They defended the link between the Ukrainian labor school and the secondary professional school. Better coordination between the schools might be needed, but the system enabled children to receive focused professional training only after they had acquired an education in basic labor ideology at the labor school level. This system best met the needs of Ukraine's labor shortage economy and represented a true polytechnical approach.

⁵²³ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 525, ark. 13-14.

⁵²⁴ Sukhomlyns'ka, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkilnytstvo*, 174.

Discussion at the local level varied. Kyiv okruha educational authorities passed a resolution in April 1929 confirming the centralization of the Soviet educational system on the basis of the Ukrainian model. It emphasized that the labor school must offer a terminal polytechnical education, but offered little in the way of modifying the current system other than suggesting an eighth year of primary schooling might be added when economic conditions improved. It even confirmed the continuance of the pre-professional industrial FZU school and agrarian ShKM (School for Collective Farm Youth) at a level parallel to the labor school's higher grades.

A report by the Odesa okruha inspectorate indicated considerable debate over the question of centralization in the region. The report claimed that there was a general consensus among the educators for centralization of the educational system on the basis of an eight-year school. However, there was a handful of teachers opposed to centralization entirely, as well as those who argued for rigid adherence to the Ukrainian seven-year school and those who wished wholesale replication of the Russian nine-year school.⁵²⁵ In December 1928, educators confirmed a series of theses on centralization. They insisted on maintenance of the Ukrainian system's nomenclature, a division between social upbringing and professional education. The labor school, as the basis of this system, was not just a general educational school, but also a "public-political" one, designed to "bring up" (*vykhovaty*) children in the values of socialism. The educators' resolution suggested the labor school had neglected this task due to an overload of

⁵²⁵ *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 8, spr. 525, ark. 4.

expectations. It thus proposed an additional year of labor school instruction without an accompanying increase in the school's program.

Commissar of Education Skrypnyk argued similarly for centralization based on a reform of the existing Ukrainian system. He had long believed that the republic's professional secondary schools were too specialized, in spite of his predecessors' insistence on their polytechnical character: "I think that this theory is only a belated attempt at correcting an inopportune theory of monotecnism."⁵²⁶ He maintained a compromise between the Ukrainian and Russian systems might be reached if the Ukrainians generalized the curriculum of their professional secondary school: "Our schools must be professional-polytechnical. They must dispense knowledge and prepare a worker for a specific qualification, but simultaneously must provide theoretical and practical familiarity with every important field of production."⁵²⁷ Other republics might then adopt this secondary school.

Skrypnyk linked the task of the centralization of the system of education to the economic priorities of the Five-Year Plan. He stressed that an all-Union scheme for economic coordination required educational unity between the republics. All educational institutions had to be devoted to the common task of training the next generation of laborers. His commissariat had already come under criticism for its failure to produce a large educated workforce.⁵²⁸ Skrypnyk repeated his commitment to the goal of universal primary schooling and its qualitative improvement, arguing for the replacement of rural

⁵²⁶ M. Skrypnyk, "Za iedynu systemu narodn'oi osvity," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 5-6 (1930): 8.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Mace, 223.

four-year schools with seven-year instruction wherever possible. He maintained that the seven-year school offered the best chance of giving the young a comprehensive, labor-oriented education, yet still assuring they begin “professional-polytechnical” training by age fifteen in order to participate in the building of socialism in the shortest time frame possible. The demands of industrialization meant that a student’s general education in the labor school should not be lengthened. It could also not be shortened. Skrypnyk was sharply critical of the FZU’s recruitment of students who had only completed four grades and stressed the importance of a complete program of “social upbringing” before any skill training began.⁵²⁹

The complete centralization of the educational systems was not immediate, but in spite of the public discussion over its possibility and form, the party leadership had already determined it would occur. An All-Union Party meeting on education was planned for April 1930 in Moscow, some ten long years after Hrynko defended (and won support) for the Ukrainian system of education at the first meeting in 1920. Although Skrypnyk and the new Russian Commissar of Education, Andrei Bubnov, were scheduled to speak at the meeting, their speeches were cancelled because they had already signed documents setting the stage for a “unified” system of education.⁵³⁰ When the conference met, it unanimously resolved that: “The further existence of different educational systems in the union republics cannot now be justified. The specifics of national culture and local

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Krylov, 84.

conditions must be addressed in a single system of public education and in a single, plan of cultural work for the whole USSR.”⁵³¹

The final form of this system would not be decided until later. The party meeting resolved that all schools needed to emphasize a polytechnical approach and ordered Ukrainian professional schools and the two highest grades of the Russian nine-year school to convert to technicums. In August 1932 the All-Union Central Committee abolished this arrangement and ordered all seven-year schools to convert to ten-year polytechnical schools by the 1932-33 academic year.⁵³² Union authorities assumed direct control over higher education in the same year. However, scholars widely consider 1930 the end of a separate Ukrainian educational system.⁵³³

The beginning of the 1930s was also a time of remarkable confusion for teachers trying to sort out what Narkomos expected of them methodologically. The 1929-30 curriculum fundamentally altered the focus of schools. In Russia, an activist pedagogue named V. N. Shulgin had been criticizing schools for their lack of revolutionary zeal. During the midst of the cultural revolution, he became a leading administrator of the Russian Narkompros and used his position to exhort teachers to pursue socially useful “projects” with their students, linking activities to factories or collective farms.⁵³⁴ As Gail Lapidus has written, the party’s attempts to mobilize students for work during the Five-Year Plan had already disrupted the work of educational institutions. When

⁵³¹ Bondar, 53.

⁵³² Iasnyts’kyi, 162.

⁵³³ Krylov, 78; Bondar, 54; Sukhomlyn’ska, ed., *Narys istorii ukrains’koho shkilnytstvo*, 173.

⁵³⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 139-157.

Shulgin began to speak of the imminent “withering away” of the school, he was in fact offering an “optimistic rationalization of educational chaos.”⁵³⁵

There has been remarkably little written on Shulgin’s influence outside of Russia. The Ukrainian Commissariat of Education responded to this pressure from its Russian counterpart by reworking its previous demands for *kraieznavstvo* production-oriented exercises. On one level, this approach built upon the 1920s experience. Mylovydov, a contributor to the pedagogical journal *Radianska osvita*, noted that the 1929-30 curriculum was similar to the old program in its directives to draw general lessons from local study.⁵³⁶ Educational authorities continued to use progressive language. Skrypnyk stressed that a student needed to acquire “knowledge on his own initiative with his labor and wisdom.”⁵³⁷ Skrypnyk also stressed that the Ukrainian Narkomos would not permit the use of child labor by collective farms or factories for labor’s sake.⁵³⁸ He maintained that Ukrainian teachers must always prioritize the pedagogical value of any activity.

However, there was heightened militancy to this brand of methodology that overrode all other concerns. Mylovydov argued that the 1929-30 program placed a new emphasis on direct observation. According to the program, “the school organizes around itself all of society, participates, and gives direction to the life of the raion.”⁵³⁹ The

⁵³⁵ Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Educational Strategies and Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Soviet Development," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 93.

⁵³⁶ L. Mylovydov, "Kraieznavstvo v novykh prohramakh trudshkil I-ho kontsentru," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 4 (1930): 45.

⁵³⁷ M. Skrypnyk, "Cherhovi pytannia sotsvykhu," *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 2 (1929): 9.

⁵³⁸ M. Skrypnyk, "Osnovni problemy sotsial'noho vykhovannia za rekonstruktyvnoi doby": 19.

⁵³⁹ Mylovydov, 47.

program included a whole section of explanatory notes on how to accomplish this task.

Skrypnyk argued this sort of activity would train students for leadership:

Social upbringing, in my opinion, is ideological production, particular to the phase of socialist reconstruction of our country, which has as its task the re-upbringing and upbringing of millions of adults and young generations of laboring humanity to remake and make them capable of the execution of great historical tasks, to have them become a proletarian class before us.⁵⁴⁰

The project method was indoctrination through application. Now, students' activities were linked to concrete tasks: industrialization, collectivization and class struggle.

Although complexes were nominally retained, these themes alone guided instruction.

More research needs to be done on the actual impact of the "project" method at the level of the classroom in Ukraine. Nevertheless, 1929-30 academic year marked a critical juncture in educational policy. It was at this time that practices that Shulgin had long advocated came to fruition. By 1931 Shulgin's favor among the party leadership was already waning. The commissariats of education did not, however, advocate a return to 1920s progressivism, but rather opted for traditional, subject-oriented methodology, designed to provide students with a set body of knowledge. Although the cultural revolution did not anticipate this turn, Lapidus argues that, in the Russian case

By facilitating the short-term economic needs, and by injecting direct, if crude, political criteria into the evaluation of the educational theory and practice, the cultural revolution destroyed the limited autonomy that [the Russian] Narkompros had achieved, and its vision of an education that joined social needs to individual development.⁵⁴¹

Similarly, in Ukraine, the Communist Party in the person of Commissar of Education

Mykola Skrypnyk would exercise strict control over the field of education. Gone was the

⁵⁴⁰ M. Skrypnyk, M. "Osnovni problemy sotsial'noho vykhovannia za rekonstruktyvnoi doby": 16.

⁵⁴¹ Lapidus, 104.

complex system's focus on the civic instruction through the development of child's interests and talents.

A survey of pedagogical literature in Ukraine demonstrates this important shift in educational policy during the early 1930s. The teachers' newspaper *Narodnii uchytel* ceased publication in 1930, having lasted only five years as an advocate of both the complex system and Ukrainization. The largely theoretical journal *Shliakh osvita* was replaced in 1931 by *Komunistychna osvita*, which placed a class understanding of the school's mission at the fore. The journal *Radianska osvita* merged one year later with a new competing journal, *Za politekhnichnu osvitu*, as *Politekhnichna shkola*. These were years of immense flux and editorial boards were struggling to adapt to changed environment. But already by 1930 it was clear that the progressive pedagogy, advocated by non-party theorists and administrators, had ended.

The SVU show trial helped lend a sense of urgency the task of educational reform and the gradual subordination of the Ukrainian system gave authorities powerful tools to control curriculum in the classroom. Skrypnyk explained that Narkomos's chief responsibility now lay in the coordination of methodology, not administrative operations. The existence of "counterrevolutionary ideological saboteurs" in education required new attention.⁵⁴² At first, authorities claimed imprisoned SVU members like Durdukivskyi had tried to force a return to "formal" instruction in the schools.⁵⁴³ They were not only

⁵⁴² M. Skrypnyk, "Za iedynu systemu narodn'oi osvity." *Radians'ka osvita*, no. 5-6 (1930): 13.

⁵⁴³ M. Skrypnyk, "Osnovni problemy sotsial'noho vykhovannia za rekonstruktyvnoi doby": 21; Viddil narodn'oi osvity Kyivs'koi mis'krady, *V borot'bi za realizatsiiu ukhval TsK VKP(b) ta Kyivs'koho MPK pro shkolu ta pionerorhanizatsii* (Kyiv: Radians'ka shkola, 1932), 27.

trying to implant a nationalist orientation in their students, they were also undermining Soviet pedagogy.

By 1932 the pedagogical press claimed that Ukrainian nationalists had used the complex system to impair education. One critic, Pomohaiba, accused SVU member Ivanytsia of intentionally equating the complex method with Marxism in order to confuse teachers.⁵⁴⁴ He found numerous counterrevolutionary passages that appeared in the textbooks and pedagogical writings of Ivanytsia and Doha (both arrested as members of SVU). He did not describe specific “nationalist” tracts, but rather the failure of SVU members to acknowledge class struggle and the role of the party. One article edited by Doha, Durdukivskiy, and Ivanytsia allegedly excluded the “primary role of the teacher.” Of course, progressive pedagogy dictated that the teacher’s role was as a facilitator and Ivanytsia was a leading proponent of exercises favoring child self-activity. In a 1932 report to Robos, Skrypnyk labeled “all philosophical, idealistic, and theoretical founders of the complex system” enemies.⁵⁴⁵ The SVU then became a convenient excuse to end such excessive theorizing in pedagogy as well as teacher and student independence in the schools.

Ukrainian proposals for the standardization of a Soviet educational system during the debates of the late 1920s imagined an extension of the heart of the Soviet Ukrainian pedagogy: the creation of a new socialist citizen, familiar with all aspects of labor, equipped to learn more, but not locked permanently into any one profession.

⁵⁴⁴ V. Pomahaiba, "Posylyty vohon' po fashysts'kii pedahohitsi SVU," *Politekhnichna osvita*, no. 3 (1932): 8.

⁵⁴⁵ Viddil narodn'oi osvity Kyivs'koi mis'krady, 32.

Centralization, as imposed from above, ultimately meant an end to this progressive zeal.

In response to the demands of the party, Narkomos came to stress the importance of discipline in the schools, textbooks, and a traditional hierarchy of institutions.

Acquisition of basic knowledge and an emphasis on educational advancement superceded any notion of pedagogical experimentation. Ukrainization at the primary school level continued, but remained troubled. The homogenization of education offered reasonable grounds for this retreat. It demonstrated that power lay in the center and privileged the transportability of education. Professional advancement would require mastery of the language of the center: Russian. This reality did not mean the end of Ukrainian schooling, but the beginning of its limitation.

From the perspective of educational policy then, 1930 was a critical year. The SVU show trial in the spring of 1930 also changed nationalities policy irrevocably. Most importantly, it removed or scared Ukrainization's most committed administrators and suppliers of the "raw material" needed for success. The period following 1930 was a time of an apparently significant expansion of Ukrainian-language schooling. Bohdan Krawchenko labels it the "high point," noting that by 1932, 87% of general education schools had Ukrainian as their language of instruction and 85% of children enrolled in schools were of Ukrainian nationality.⁵⁴⁶ However, as reports of the 1930 perevirky have made clear, much more research needs to be done on the quality of Ukrainian-language instruction and the level of preparation of teachers during this time. Given the chaos provoked by Shulgin's "project method" and the party's abrupt turn against it, teachers

⁵⁴⁶ Krawchenko, 135.

were much more concerned with sorting out what teaching method was now permissible than improving their Ukrainian. They would have had few sources to which to turn. As Krawchenko concedes, a 1931 review of books published between 1928 and 1930 revealed “major ideological errors” and the editorial staffs of were purged.⁵⁴⁷ In one of its last editions in November 1930, the *Narodnii uchytel* editorial board called for the severe punishment of the manager of its own publishing house for allowing the publication of a “rightist” brochure.⁵⁴⁸

What was fundamentally different about the period following 1930 was the Ukrainization campaign’s mechanistic nature. The archival record for Narkomos in the years that followed appears to contain no comprehensive files about Ukrainization at the primary school level. Of pre-eminent concern for the party during this period were VKP(b) TsK decrees of July and August 1930 ordering universal enrollment of school age children.⁵⁴⁹ The Ukrainian Commissariat’s claim that 98.2% of children aged 8-10 were enrolled during the 1930-31 academic year compared to 75.2% during 1929-30 seems highly inflated and while Presidium of the VUTsVK claimed great success in a September 1931 report, it also acknowledged not all local authorities had met their targets.⁵⁵⁰ Regardless, even if the official figures are somewhat accurate, not enough schools had been built and teachers trained in the intervening time to serve the new students. Students placed in newly “Ukrainized” schools were doubtless subject to a poor quality education. Government statistics may have reflected high Ukrainization,

⁵⁴⁷ Krawchenko, 139-140.

⁵⁴⁸ "Vokoruchyty korinnia pravoho ukhylu v spilsti robos." *Narodnii uchytel*, 26 November 1930, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ Bondar, 55.

⁵⁵⁰ Bondar, 69.

but this meant little more than schools had been designated as such on paper and increased numbers of ethnic Ukrainian students were enrolled in overcrowded schools. The 1932-33 famine created further chaos in rural Ukrainian schools, a tragedy that is worthy of separate, rigorous study. The characterization of 1930-33 as the golden age of Ukrainian schooling does not appear apt.

Conclusion

Recent events have underscored the symbolic power of language and education demonstrated by the experience of Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s. In the November 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections, incumbent prime minister Viktor Yanukovich attempted to muster support for his campaign by claiming that a victory by his opponent, Viktor Yushchenko, would lead to a weakening of the linguistic rights of Ukraine's Russian-speaking community, including parental choice of a child's language of instruction. He promised to hold a national referendum on granting the Russian language official status. The Yanukovich campaign's claims of "discrimination" against Russian-speakers provided the framework for the prime minister's political platform and shaped media coverage of the election. The international press regularly spoke of the possible division of Ukraine between language communities, repeating the warnings of the Yanukovich camp. After the Central Election Commission declared Yanukovich the official victor of the November poll, Yushchenko supporters took to the streets, claiming widespread vote-rigging by Yanukovich's followers. The Ukrainian Supreme Court intervened and forced a second runoff in which Yushchenko emerged as the ultimate victor.

Other issues besides language played a critical role in determining voter choice, but the intersection between language and education was salient enough for Yushchenko to include a pledge to respect the right of parents to educate their children in the "language of their parents" in his inauguration speech. Furthermore, parties allied with Yanukovich's defeated camp have continued to point to "shortages" of Russian schools

in some of Ukraine's major cities, including Kyiv. Language remains an important rhetorical device for political mobilization and debate because of its emotive potential.

In the 1920s the Ukrainian republican and party leadership asked educators and intellectuals to use language as a tool for the radical transformation of society. This study has sought to unpack what this process meant and demonstrate at the level of the classroom the union between educational and nationalities policy. It thus seeks to go beyond a discussion of language transfer by decree which previous scholarship has addressed. The KP(b)U entrusted the Commissariat of Education (Narkomos) to apply an innovative, progressive pedagogy towards the creation of a new generation of Soviet citizens. Russian educators shared this approach, but their Ukrainian counterparts gave it greater attention because of the distinct professional orientation of the Ukrainian educational system. Narkomos aimed to do away with traditional subject divisions and teacher pedantry by integrating lessons into thematic groupings or complexes firmly oriented towards instructing students in the value of labor and the role of production. Students would gain a "labor mentality" by acculturation and more rapidly take their place in the rebuilding of an economy recovering from the civil war.

Narkomos maintained that instruction in the Ukrainian language was absolutely necessary for teachers to achieve this goal. It judged Ukrainian to be the native language for all ethnic Ukrainian children and educators stressed the primary role of language in the new methodology. The commissariat also sought to rationalize education by recommending that teachers develop an awareness of production through the study of the familiar, or "regional studies" (*kraieznavstvo*). The curriculum provided for the gradual

broadening of this study to an investigation of a region's tie to all of Ukraine. The Ukrainian language and Ukrainian studies were both at the core of a curriculum that allowed teachers and students considerable freedom to innovate. Narkomos's hope was that children would gain the outlook, self-confidence, and decision-making skills necessary to undertake their public duties as young adults.

However, most teachers were ill-prepared for the dual demands of a progressive pedagogy and Ukrainization. They were poorly paid, generally had a low level of education, and little training in how to teach in Ukrainian or design a curriculum on the basis of the complex system touted by Narkomos guides. Schools, on the whole, remained in a state of disrepair and teachers lacked paper, basic school supplies, and most importantly, Ukrainian-language textbooks or pedagogical guides. Narkomos had pursued a decentralized process for both Ukrainization and curricular planning, leaving the tasks of school reform to local educational sections. The general lack of state and community financial support for education meant that these sections could offer teachers few opportunities for retraining. Some returned to a formalistic approach in the classroom or abandoned methodology altogether.

Importantly, evaluations of teachers' language knowledge revealed that teachers had also not made much qualitative progress in transferring to Ukrainian language knowledge. Narkomos correlated resistance to linguistic and pedagogical reform and viewed instances of both as anti-Soviet behavior. Although local educational sections occasionally acted to discipline or dismiss problematic teachers, they also made allowances for delay. There were few incentives for real change. Ultimately, this study

has argued, the success of Ukrainization must be judged at this level. An increase in Ukrainian-language schooling did not translate into a rapid transformation of the classroom's language environment.

In spite of the problems associated with Ukrainization, this dissertation maintains that the shift to Ukrainian-language schooling was a fundamental aspect of the party's program for galvanizing republic-wide support for its economic programs and assuring urban authority over the village. If industrial laborers and the party were to administer the countryside, they would have to master its language -- Ukrainian. The Ukrainization campaign meant little without Ukrainization of the proletariat. Nevertheless, protests regarding the "forced" Ukrainization of some laborers (and their children) occasioned the intervention of the party. Commissar of Education Shumskyi continued to insist on the need for Ukrainization of the proletariat, but the KP(b)U Politburo and Stalin rejected any semblance of coercion. However, after Shumskyi's ouster in 1926, Narkomos did not (and could not) abandon the Ukrainization of the republic's industrial laborers, but settled on a more indirect formula. Ukrainization of the proletariat would occur gradually through children. Although the KP(b)U absolutely forbade the involuntary schooling of ethnic Russian children in Ukrainian, it gave Narkomos the freedom to continue to Ukrainize children of Russified Ukrainians. In effect, Russified Ukrainian parents had to resist a strong Narkomos campaign of persuasion and disprove the identification of Ukrainian as the native language of their children. Narkomos's final objective was the creation of a Ukrainian-speaking, labor-oriented cadre that would alter the linguistic environment of the cities.

The paradox of both the program for Ukrainization and the new Soviet school was that the Communist Party leadership required absolute political control and yet had little day-to-day management over the classroom and the political costs of its activity. Although the shortcomings of Ukrainization among teachers were widespread, there was a group of educators committed to the policy and its improvement. The person of Ukrainizer and pedagogical innovator was often one and the same. The KP(b)U relied on these individuals greatly for Ukrainization's general success. Consequently, the importance of the field of education, often characterized as a "soft line" concern, should not be minimized. In some areas, educators were creating alternative centers of authority to Narkomos. The KP(b)U monitored the activity of these figures and grew increasingly worried about their potential power. Non-party educators subscribed to a broad understanding of Ukrainian culture's place in the building of socialism and worked to strengthen this role. They hoped that Ukrainization's ultimate agenda would be shaped by their efforts. They put great faith in the ability of education to define behavior, a faith that the party leadership ultimately shared and feared.

This study has argued that the SVU show trial irrevocably damaged future efforts for Ukrainization and suggested that the oft-cited achievements of 1930-33 must be questioned. The SVU show trial was aimed directly at Ukrainizing and progressive educators. The KP(b)U, guided by Moscow, put forty-five members of the intelligentsia on trial, not just because it had little confidence in them, but because it was worried about the real consequences of their work (despite the actual deficiencies of a Ukrainian-language education in 1929-30). The signal that the party intended for teachers was that

they must place Ukrainization under the party's leadership and wed it to the public campaigns of the Five-Year Plan. The message teachers understood was that it was best not to burden themselves unnecessarily with the goals of campaign. Although Narkomos achieved full Ukrainization formally, examinations of teacher knowledge continued to reveal a weak grasp of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian studies topics. Few were leading the charge for a policy that the republican leaders continued to tout.

Furthermore, the party's move to rein in Ukrainization corresponded with a protracted move to assume management over classroom methodology. By 1930 it was clear that the complex method had not realized Narkomos's academic goals and had created too much opportunity for variant interpretations of curriculum. Soviet authorities politicized the school and linked student activism to the explicit goals of the First Five-Year Plan: collectivization and industrialization. The move to conform the Ukrainian educational system to all-Union norms foreshadowed the regimentation of the educational system generally. The SVU trial ultimately offered an excuse for a full-scale rejection of the complex system. Several SVU defendants had been prominent sponsors of progressive pedagogy. Now the complex system as a whole was tainted by association and the pedagogical press blamed Ukrainian nationalists for confusion in the schools.

In 1933-34, when the party finally declared "local nationalism" the chief danger, Soviet authorities purged the Narkomos apparatus almost entirely of its existing staff and dismissed thousands of Ukrainian teachers.⁵⁵¹ By the late 1930s, the number of Ukrainian schools dropped in major urban centers and Soviet authorities began a gradual

⁵⁵¹ Krawchenko, 133.

campaign for the re-Russification of higher education. Both these processes would accelerate after the war. In fact, the die had been cast earlier. The SVU show trial had already fundamentally undermined the potential of Ukrainian-language instruction. It was at this point that the restriction and subordination of Ukrainian-language instruction began and it never recovered the dynamism it had enjoyed prior to 1930.

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1997-1998 Graduate Assistant, Department of Central Eurasian Studies,
Indiana University
Assisted in research for the Department and the Inner Asian and
Uralic National Resource Center. Tasks included monitoring
Central Asian and Baltic newspapers, collecting research materials,
and providing instructional aid to faculty.

Spring 1997 Graduate Assistant, Russian and East European Institute, Indiana
University
Drafted guides for the Russian and East European Institute.
Reviewed and edited the Institute's proposal for a Department of
Education Title VI National Resource Center grant.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

“Soviet Polonophobia and the Formulation of Nationalities Policy in the Ukrainian SSR, 1927-34.” In *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity*, edited by David Ransel and Bozena Shallcross. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.

“Transforming the National Classroom: Local Studies in Soviet Ukrainian Schools, 1923-1928.” Paper accepted for American Association for Advancement of Slavic Studies Annual Conference, Salt Lake City, November 2005 (upcoming)

“National Culture Under Proletarian Guidance: The Soviet Manipulation of Ukrainian-Language Schooling, 1923-1930.” Presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meetings, Montreal, April 2005

“In Defense of the Child: The Limits of Ukrainian Language Schooling in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1930.” Presented at the American Association for Advancement of Slavic Studies Annual Conference, Toronto, November 2003.

“The Kobzar in the Labor School: The Ukrainian Variant of A Soviet Educational System, 1920-1928.” Presented at the Association for the Study of Nationalities Annual Conference, New York City, April 2003.

WORKSHOPS AND COLLOQUIA

“Assessing the Impact of the Recent Elections and Regime Changes in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan,” Presenter at Workshop, Center for European and Russian Studies, Michigan State University, April 22, 2005

“An Introduction to the Problem of Trafficking Women in the Balkans,” Discussant, International Human Rights Film Series, School of Law, Michigan State University, March 4, 2005

ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

May 1999 Valerie Gulick Fellowship, Department of History, Indiana University
Awarded to support supplementary doctoral dissertation research in Ukraine.

1998-99 ACTR/ACCELS Advanced Research Scholar Fellowship
Awarded to support doctoral dissertation research and advanced language training in Ukraine.

December 1997 REEI Mellon Grant-in-Aid of Research, Indiana University
Awarded to support doctoral dissertation research at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

- November 1997 Graduate School Grant-in-Aid of Research, Indiana University
Awarded to support doctoral dissertation research at the Hoover
Institution, Stanford University.
- August 1997 Senkowsky Prize, Harvard University.
Awarded for superior academic achievement at the Harvard
Ukrainian Summer Institute.
- Summer 1996 Social Sciences Research Council Fellowship, University of
Kansas
Awarded for study of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian area
studies at Lviv State University.
- 1994-1998 Foreign Language and Areas Studies Fellowships, Indiana
University
United States Department of Education fellowships for study of
Lithuanian (summer 1998), Ukrainian (summer 1997) and Polish
(academic year 1995-96, summer 1995, and academic year 1994-
95).

SKILLS

Speaking and reading knowledge of Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, French and German.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS)

REFERENCES

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