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The Ideology of the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (Borotbists) / The Ukrainian Communist Party (Borotbists), 1918-1920. PhD Project*

The subject of my research is the ideology of the Borotbists – the most influential national communist movement operating in Ukraine during the revolutionary period of 1917-1920. The party was created after the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries split in May 1918 during its Fourth Congress. Its left wing (also known as “Borotbists” by the name of the newspaper “Borot’ba” [“The Struggle”] issued by its leaders) gained control over the party’s Central Committee and began to call for cooperation with the Bolsheviks. At the Fifth (First)¹ Congress (March 1919) the name of the party was changed into “Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (Communists-Borotbists)” (UPSR-CB). On August 6, 1919, the UPSR-CB unified with the left wing of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Independentists). The new party was given the name “Ukrainian Communist Party (Borotbists)”. In August and November-December 1919 the UCP(B) made an effort to join the Comintern, but its application was rejected twice. After a session of the Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in December 1919, which was attended by representatives of the UCP(B) and the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (CP(B)U), the Borotbists decided to merge with the Bolsheviks. After the Fourth Conference of the CP(B)U in March 1920, about 4,000 former Borotbists (less than a third of their total membership) became members of the Bolshevik party. At the same time, a number of former Borotbists joined the Ukrainian Communist Party (Ukapists).

The ideology of the party of Borotbists was based on the old “narodnik” tradition. Great attention was paid to the peasant question that was especially acute in the Ukrainian territories of the former Russian Empire. Borotbists called for the socialization of agrarian property. Besides that, among the main items of their unofficial program were the creation of a separate Ukrainian Red Army (closely allied with the Russian one), the protection of the Ukrainian language through cultural and educational policy, and the creation of the World Federation of Soviet Republics on the principles of equal rights of all its members.

The history of this party and particularly the development of its ideology are not properly studied in both Ukrainian and Western historiography. The most important works on this subject in the Soviet period² were written by authors who did not have access to Soviet state

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¹ Borotbists used a double numbering of their congresses in the party materials.

² Ivan Maistrenko: *Borotbism. A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism*, New York, Research Program on the USSR, 1954 (2 ed.: *Borot’bism. A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Revolution*, Stuttgart, Ibidem-Verlag, 2007); James Mace: *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation. National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1983.

and party archives. The works of Soviet Ukrainian historians³ were based on a narrow base of non-classified documents, and their authors could not study a large number of extremely important aspects of Borotbist history, such as its role in the Revolution and its relations with the CP(B)U, the Russian Bolsheviks and the Comintern in the years 1919-1920. Ukrainian historians who published their works after 1991⁴ used the wide complexes of declassified documents from Ukrainian archives,⁵ but at the same time neglected crucial Russian archival materials.⁶ A study dedicated to the ideology of the Borotbists is to be published yet.

Making use of previously unexplored Ukrainian and Russian archival sources, my project aims to reconstruct the ideology of the Borotbist party in the process of its development from the first days of its activity until the time of its liquidation.

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³ Ivan Kuras: *Torzhestvo proletarskogo internatsionalizma i krakh melkoburzhuznykh partii na Ukrainie*, Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1978; Iu. Klintukh: *Krakh ideologii i politiki melkoburzhuznoi partii borotbistov*, Kiev, 1971 et al.

⁴ O. Liubovets': *Partiia borot'bystiv v ukrains'kii revoliutsii 1917-1920 rr.* Avtoref. dys. ... kand. ist. nauk, Kyiv, 1993; Id.: *Ukrains'ki partii i politychni al'ternatyvy 1917-1920 rokiv*, Kyiv, 2005; V. Ohienko: *Diial'nist' ukrains'kykh natsional-komunistiv (1918-1920)*. Avtoref. dys. ... kand. ist. nauk, Kyiv, 2008 et al.

⁵ The Central State Archive of Civic Organizations of Ukraine (TsDAHOU, former Central Party Archive of the CPU), the Central State Archive of the Supreme Bodies of Authority of Ukraine (TsDAVOVU, former State Archive of the October Revolution of the Ukrainian SSR), regional archives etc.

⁶ The Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI) and the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF).