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On: 08 October 2014, At: 12:02

Publisher: Routledge

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Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cnap20>

Tending to the “Native Word” : Teachers and the Soviet Campaign for Ukrainian-Language Schooling, 1923-1930

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Published online: 13 May 2009.

To cite this article: Matthew D. Pauly (2009) Tending to the “Native Word” : Teachers and the Soviet Campaign for Ukrainian-Language Schooling, 1923-1930, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 37:3, 251-276, DOI: [10.1080/00905990902867355](https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990902867355)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905990902867355>

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Tending to the “Native Word”: Teachers and the Soviet Campaign for Ukrainian-Language Schooling, 1923–1930

Matthew D. Pauly

In the 1920s, the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education and a circle of progressive educators aimed to radically transform the educational system in Ukraine, and, as a consequence, the skills and mentality of its graduates. To do this, they 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, and teachers, regardless of their ethnicity, were trained and accustomed to teaching in it. 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 during the country's short-lived period of independence, but their attempts were disrupted by the chaos of civil war and the fall of successive governments. It was under Soviet patronage that the “Ukrainization” of the schools reached its greatest extent; however, it was an achievement that required effort, and real qualitative change in the language of instruction was gradual.

Ukrainization offered opportunity for substantive nation-building, but it was not a zero-sum project. Even the most strident advocates for the expansion of the Ukrainian language embraced in some measure the vision of social and cultural transformation promised by the Bolsheviks. The Ukrainian Commissariat of Education (Narkomos), pedagogical theorists, and teachers, with the blessing of the Communist Party, pursued native-language schooling in the UkSSR in an effort to support a progressive pedagogy that promised to liberalize the classroom environment, offer essential labor instruction, and prepare children in the republic for responsible citizenship and early entry into the workforce.¹ Educators were essential to the gains made in both pedagogical and linguistic reform.

Despite periodic surveillance by high-ranking party and government institutions, this study contends that Ukrainization was a highly decentralized process, that its course was fundamentally determined by individuals such as these and, that in spite of penalties for non-involvement, its success hinged on willing cooperation. Francine

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Hirsch's comments regarding the role of ethnographers in Soviet nation-building generally are helpful in this context: "To be sure the party-state was the locus of political power. But the party-state did not have a monopoly on knowledge; on the contrary, it depended to a significant degree on the information about the population that experts and local elites provided."² Similarly, Ukrainian educational theorists and linguists supplied the knowledge necessary for Ukrainization and entrusted local educational sections and teachers to carry out their instructions. This reliance created opportunity for significant progress in Ukrainian-language instruction, while allowing for a modification of the initial intent of the central authorities.

By choosing to emphasize the daily implementation of Ukrainization by educators, 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. However, Mace's final concern is the formulation (and constraint) of an ideology of national communism, not the implementation of Ukrainization.³ 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.⁴ It is only by highlighting the story of those whom Soviet republican authorities tasked to carry out the program that we approach a substantive understanding of the policy's degree of acceptance and impact.

Surprisingly, there has been little attention given to schooling in Ukraine during this critical time. Non-Ukrainian researchers on education in the Soviet Union in the 1920s have generally focused on the Russian experience. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Larry Holmes both reference the Ukrainian educational system, but in the larger context of the debate over the structure and pedagogical orientation of schooling within Russian.⁵ Understandably, they say little about implementation of non-Russian schooling, although this was a critical policy initiative for Soviet educational planners in the union republics and non-Russian areas of the RSFSR alike. William Partlett's works on Stanislav Shatskii's experimentation offer helpful insight into the role of progressive pedagogy in connecting rural schools to the urban experience, a concept that was fundamental to both the program of methodological reform in Ukraine and Ukrainization. However, Partlett's studies are also necessarily limited by their focus.⁶

This work's close reading of the daily implementation of Ukrainization points to an important conclusion underdeveloped by the field: 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 triumph. George Liber argues that a Ukrainian environment had grown 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 and the advancement of Ukrainian cadres. Although he concedes that this process was incomplete, his general conclusion is that the central authorities were concerned that Ukrainian elites were becoming overly assertive as a result of the

policy's success.⁷ While Terry Martin uses specific statistical and anecdotal evidence to underscore some of the problems associated with Ukrainization, he views language transformation in the schools as largely untroubled, a finding which this study disputes.⁸ This article seeks to build upon the work of Ukrainian historians who have been cautious in their evaluation of Ukrainization's achievements,⁹ by detailing some of the difficulties in this critical area. Importantly, it maintains that the struggles that schools had in achieving Ukrainian-language instruction undermined their ability to meet the transformative agenda of training the next generation for the "building of socialism."

With the exception of Martin's sweeping study of "affirmative action" for non-Russians, the emphasis of recent work on Soviet education has been on the 1930s and later.¹⁰ Catriona Kelly's extensive study of childhood in Russia offers valuable commentary on the child's experience in early soviet schools, but she discusses ethnicity in a limited sense and omits a discussion of language policy.¹¹ Peter Blitstein deals most directly with this question, and his argument that obligatory Russian instruction introduced in 1938 did not signal a public campaign for "Russification" of schooling is convincing.¹² However, by this time, the cultural values associated with language knowledge in the Soviet Union had shifted (or stabilized), as Laada Bilaniuk makes clear, and mastery of Russian was a privileged asset for professional advancement.¹³ The parents and officials from non-Russian areas who campaigned for early Russian-language instruction, as identified by Blitstein, did so precisely because they understood this reality, even if there was no official push for the "Russification" of education. What is perhaps more important, then, is what the Soviet authorities did not do. Beyond preserving native-language schooling and entrusting the localities with the task of writing Russian textbooks gauged to the abilities of specific language communities, an energetic program of nation-building appears absent.

While accepting Yuri Slezkine's proposal that the Soviet Union maintained, relied upon, and in some cases accelerated national constructs,¹⁴ this article contends that the repression against local elites that took public form in the late 1920s (the culmination of an extended campaign of OGPU surveillance) marked a substantive shift in the actual implementation of Soviet nationalities policy. Scholarship on Soviet nationalities policy in Central Asia has pointed to this fact, while still stressing the continuities inherent in the Soviet commitment to the national idea. Thus Adeeb Khalid argues that the "centralizing impulses of the new period" motivated Soviet leaders to abandon their alliance with Jadids, a group of progressive Muslim reformers and surrogate nation builders.¹⁵ Edgar locates a similar disjuncture in Soviet nationality policy in Turkmenistan:

If the linguistic debates of the 1920s had symbolically represented Turkmen attempts to define their place in the world, the silencing of those voices symbolized not just a loss of linguistic autonomy, but a curtailing of the role of the indigenous intellectuals in debating and defining Turkmen identity.¹⁶

This work maintains that a parallel shift occurred in Soviet Ukraine and suggests that it undermined the effectiveness of Ukrainization during its perceived "high

point” and made the definitive adjustment (although not wholesale abandonment) of Ukrainization in 1933–1934 possible. It does not seek to minimize the gains made in Ukrainization, but rather to emphasize that it was a process responsive to the external political environment and far from automatic.

Initial Implementation

On 1 August 1923 the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (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. 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.”¹⁷

The Soviet Ukrainian government viewed the Ukrainization of educational institutions and of the Narkomos apparatus as absolute priorities. A Council of People’s Commissar (Radnarkom) order of 27 July 1923 to Narkomos and its local organs was 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.¹⁸ The August VUTsVK decree essentially affirmed this policy and, most importantly, expanded its scope to the Ukrainization of all government departments.¹⁹

Ukrainization of schooling had, in fact, already begun. In early 1923, Narkomos’s unit responsible for primary schooling, Holovsotsvykh (Main Administration for Social Upbringing), 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 1922–1923 school year, perhaps 60% of the republic’s primary schools had already transferred to Ukrainian-language instruction.²⁰ The ethnic Ukrainian population, however, then stood at 72.6%. This meant that 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.

Because of the generative value that the Ukrainian republican government saw in the transformation of educational institutions, the Holovsotsvykh plan set largely unrealistic targets for Ukrainization over the course of the 1923–1924 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 (Dnipropetrovsk), 300 for Odesa, and 300 for Kharkiv.²¹ In keeping with a comprehensive strategy for Ukrainization of the republic, it also

called for the preparation of Ukrainian-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. Provincial 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 1923–1924 year and called upon the Council of People's Commissars, Radnarkom, to set aside specific funds for publication. It maintained that each school be provided with 100 books out of this fund (an ambitious but laudatory goal) at a cost of 30 kopecks per book, a total of 331,710 gold rubles.²²

Local educational sections set as their optimal goal the grouping of students according to national designation.²³ Success in meeting this goal again varied by region. In the central provinces an overwhelming majority of ethnically Ukrainian school children attended Ukrainian-language schools of instruction. In the Kyiv province (*huberniia*), 92.5% of all schools were Ukrainized in the 1923–1924 school year to correspond to the proportion of ethnically Ukrainian children.²⁴ The Podillia and Volyn provinces 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 piecemeal approach to Ukrainization. Many Ukrainian children in the Katerynoslav (present-day Dnipropetrovsk) and Kharkiv provinces continued to study in schools of mixed Ukrainian–Russian-language instruction. In practice, teachers in these schools taught largely in Russian, although Narkomos's ultimate goal was the transfer of all lessons to Ukrainian. Odesa provincial officials pleaded with Narkomos for patience, citing local "conditions."²⁵ They claimed that the area 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.²⁶

Ukrainization from the Bottom Up: The Hiring of Teachers

At this early stage, Narkomos's 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 provincial sections

about measures they had taken on their own and what resources they believed were needed for the policy to succeed.²⁷ Holovsotsvykh entrusted its provincial 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 provincial sections. Among the questions that Holovsotsvykh asked was: “How many teachers are needed to carry out Ukrainization and teach Ukrainian and Ukrainian studies as subjects in non-Ukrainian schools?”²⁸ Holovsotsvykh was taking stock of progress achieved, but refraining 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 provinces to staff Ukrainian schools. However, again it left it largely to local officials to recruit and hire these teachers. In the same Holovsotsvykh query cited above, educational authorities asked the provinces: “how many Ukrainian-speaking teachers can be transferred to other institutions in the province or beyond its borders?”²⁹ A Narkomos report of early 1924 confirmed that the 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.³⁰ More often Narkomos told teachers to seek employment by contacting the local authorities directly.³¹ The need, of course, for Ukrainian-teachers was great in the east, given the new requirements for an expansion of Ukrainian-language schooling in this area. Narkomos recognized this fact, even if it was unwilling to make specific arrangements for teachers. In September 1923, Holovsotsvykh had to reprimand its own Donetsk provincial section for its failure to hire reliable Galician teachers, whom it listed by name, for vacancies for Ukrainian-language instruction.³² Vasyl Arnautov, then the deputy head of Holovsotsvykh, advised Ivan Hrovovzhnskyi, a Galician living in the Podillia province looking for a teaching position, to turn directly to the Donetsk or Katerynoslav provinces, noting that “in regards to the Ukrainization of schools in the specified provinces, workers who know the Ukrainian language are needed.”³³ 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.

As Ukrainization picked up pace, Narkomos 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 provincial Sotsvykh sections asking for information regarding Ukrainian teachers willing to move to Donetsk.³⁴ A December 1924 report by the Donetsk provincial inspector had pointed to a gap between 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.³⁵ The main inspectorate undoubtedly viewed this disparity in Donetsk with concern.

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 sent a note to Donetsk requesting information on specific material guarantees for teachers willing to relocate: payment for the costs of a transfer, the monthly wage of a teacher by position, class loads, prices for foodstuffs, lodging, and fuel.³⁶ The Donetsk provincial 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 (*okruha*) 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.³⁷ 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 might have been in the most need of Ukrainian-language teachers. The choice for point of arrival was left entirely to the teacher.

Owing to the simple lack of literature available, even those schools that had teachers who knew Ukrainian well and were dedicated to their profession could only Ukrainize cautiously. As early as May, Holovsotsvykh had drawn up a list of Ukrainian-language books to be distributed for the 1923–1924 school year.³⁸ 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 Holovsotsvykh planned for any new textbook was 30,000. Given that at the end of the 1922–1923 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.³⁹ Furthermore, the state publishing house needed to reprint many of the books Holovsotsvykh 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 Poltava province 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* [Red Flowers] 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 and valuable book."⁴⁰ The children pleaded to all "sympathetic institutions and 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 the 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,” deputy Narkomos commissar Ian Riappo saw the greatest problems to progress in Ukrainization in those provinces 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 8% of the children were not going to school in their native language.⁴¹ 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 was an ambitious goal. A Chernihiv provincial 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 of seven schools were Ukrainized, but in the Chernihiv region only 49 out of 197 schools had completed this process.⁴² Schools of mixed Ukrainian–Russian instruction continued to operate in this region 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 provinces, where ethnic Ukrainians formed an overwhelming majority of the population, Ukrainization did not always advance smoothly. The central inspectorate pointed to problems in Kyiv province in December 1923: “the question of Ukrainization in the city of Kiev [Kyiv], which has a special significance as the center of cultural-national life, has not been sufficiently impressed upon the Kiev provincial social upbringing section.”⁴³ It blamed shortcomings on lack of initiative by the provincial authorities 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 the educators’ union newspaper, *Narodnii uchytel* (People’s Teacher), 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.⁴⁴ 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. In schools just beginning to Ukrainize, like Kharkiv Labor School No. 32, almost all activities of the Young Pioneers, the Communist organization for young children, were carried out in Russian. Nevira attributed this failure to use Ukrainian on poor leadership by the youth wing of the Communist Party, 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 rounds and practical work."⁴⁵ 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.

Teachers' Inadequate Ukrainian Skills Explained

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 province 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.⁴⁶ "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 for *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."⁴⁷ Competent Ukrainian-speaking teachers were rare in Ukrainian schools, he insisted. The majority were Russians, Russified Ukrainians, or "changelings" [*perevertni*] who used three 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.

Three years after Ukrainization began in earnest, Ukrainian teachers' knowledge of the language remained poor. 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."⁴⁸ The article insisted that 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 because schools and other Soviet institutions were sponsoring a distorted form of Ukrainian: “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.”⁴⁹ The report presents an idealized image of “pure” Ukrainian spoken by the peasant, but its main concern seems to be a Ukrainian heavily tainted by the urban Russian speaker.

The pedagogical press spoke often of the “maiming” of the Ukrainian language by teachers specifically. Nuzhnyi, a correspondent for *Narodnii uchyitel*, 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 contained numerous borrowings from Russian or slightly Ukrainized forms of Russian words. Nuzhnyi concluded: “When you read the letter, you ask what language is this in? Language mixing exists among those leaders responsible for Ukrainization at the railway.”⁵⁰ The letter was a lesson in precisely how not to Ukrainize.

Local educational sections, then, were desperate for qualified teachers, 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 uchyitel* maintained that, in regards to the Ukrainization of the Dnipropetrovsk railroad schools, there was an overabundance of Ukrainian instructors in large, junction centers but that the lack of teachers at small stations severely limited progress.⁵¹ 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 evaluation).⁵²

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 uchyitel* lamented this practice, claiming that for teachers “language is everything, a tool of work.”⁵³ 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 teachers who enrolled in Ukrainian-language courses held in 1924–1925 were said to have forgotten what they had learned by the end of 1926.⁵⁴ Instruction in the classroom might have been formally in Ukrainian, but daily conversation was in Russian.

In November 1926 Narkomos announced that local educational sections would hold a series of formal evaluations (*perevirky*) of Ukrainian knowledge, to begin in January. This announcement caused near-instant anxiety among teachers.⁵⁵ According to one account published in *Narodnii uchytel*, a representative of the Bilotserkva region educational inspectorate announced the upcoming examination at the end of a district (*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.⁵⁶ The newspaper detailed how individual schools then formed small self-study groups (*hurty*), ostensibly to raise the teachers' qualifications in Ukrainian. Instead, they drew up formal complaints about the lack of Ukrainian literature and the absence of a standard Ukrainian orthography. In response, the regional inspectorate prepared a circular, recommending that teachers actually study, rather than issue protests.

Such 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.⁵⁷ Teachers delayed, pleaded for more time and support, or simply claimed that they did not have to study for the exam. *Narodnii uchytel* related a comical story of a Ukrainian teacher who avoided preparing for the *perevirka* because he was “fully” Ukrainian, with “ancestors stretching back to the Zaporizhian Cossacks.”⁵⁸ 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 whether teachers might be exempt from the *perevirka* if they submitted proof (*dovidka*) 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.⁵⁹ Officially, the following categories of teachers were not required to undergo a *perevirka*: (1) graduates of Ukrainian-language institutes, pedagogical technical colleges, or secondary schools, (2) those 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 the Kyiv regional inspectorate, Lukashenko, an overwhelming majority of teachers in the region belonged to one of these three groups.⁶⁰ Thus, the reality was that only a small proportion of teachers actually underwent an examination. The *Narodnii uchyitel* reader's question was an attempt to lower 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 not know the language."⁶¹ 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 post-secondary institutions (*pedvyshy*) 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 *pedvyshy* graduates. He argued that not establishing absolute requirements for Ukrainian-language qualifications was reckless, comparable to allowing a teacher to teach mathematics 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."⁶² 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*. The Ukrainization commission in Budaiivskiyi district (Kyiv region) 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."⁶³ In Dnipropetrovsk, the 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.⁶⁴ 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 uchyitel* questioned whether any commission could examine the knowledge of 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 a *perevirka* of institutions

who themselves should be evaluated."⁶⁵ The observer recommended that the central Narkomos authorities appoint responsible experts for each regional commission. 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 make demands from a province that does not have the ability to use cultural fruits and achievements of the Ukrainian word that are easy to use in Kyiv."⁶⁶ 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."⁶⁷ Lukashenko reported that the *perevirka* in the Kyiv region 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 planned date for commencement of the campaign.⁶⁸ Faced with the fact that teachers were ill-prepared to undergo a *perevirka* and that it would likely yield poor and, consequently, demoralizing results, Narkomos allowed individual regional inspectorates to postpone. This suspension reportedly greatly relieved teachers, but *Narodnii uchytel* emphasized 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."⁶⁹ The newspaper reminded teachers 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.

Union for Liberation of Ukraine

It was increasingly clear that, in spite of the Ukrainization of schools on paper, the quality of instruction was inadequate. Continued pressure on teachers was required because of the results of an earlier party debate on Ukrainization. In response to a March 1926 protest 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.⁷⁰ 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 but it would also 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. 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.

Narkomos continued to demonstrate a preference for the Ukrainization of proletarian children, largely regardless of initial parental preference.⁷¹ Narkomos officials in fact argued Ukrainization remained incomplete because Ukrainian children were still not attending school in numbers proportionate to their standing in the 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.

There were few qualified communist Ukrainizers in the schools or elsewhere and the party leadership was fundamentally uncomfortable with its dependence 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. 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.⁷² These accounts set the stage for a show trial of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who were alleged to be members of a nationalist organization called the Union for Liberation of Ukraine (SVU—*Spilka vyzvolennia Ukrainy*).

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 formally authorized a show trial for a Ukrainian nationalist organization on 3 November 1929, it was the All-Union Politburo that issued regular instructions to the Ukrainian Central Committee on the trial’s preparations, including a personal telegram from Stalin ordering doctors to be included among the accused.⁷³ The Ukrainian OGPU subsequently composed a detailed program and administrative structure for the SVU and placed the most prominent non-party Ukrainian intellectuals at its head. On 5 February 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 9 March to 19 April 1930).⁷⁴ Out of the 45 people selected for sentencing, 25 were professors, teachers, or students. These included: Volodymyr Durdukivskiy, Iosyp Hermaize, Vasyl Doha, and Hryhorii

Ivanytsia. Volodymyr Prystaiko and Iurii Shapoval estimate that the OGPU arrested some 700 people across the republic in connection with the trial.⁷⁵ It specifically targeted school teachers and educators for these arrests.

Mere announcement of arrests was enough to incite protestations of loyalty from teachers. On 24 November 1929 the leadership of the teachers' union, Robos, and the editorial board of the union's newspaper, *Narodnii uchytel*, first publicly reported on the SVU affair, calling on all educators to demand the "most severe" punishment for those charged.⁷⁶ 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."⁷⁷ 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.

Robos had good reason to be worried. The UkSSR chief prosecutor, Lev 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."⁷⁸ 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 counter-revolutionary circles abroad. He further charged that Doha, then an instructor at a Kyiv pedagogical technical college, 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.

Conveniently, the OGPU identified a "school group" of the SVU. It charged the well-known pedagogue, advocate of Ukrainian schooling, and director of Kyiv Labor School No. 1, Volodymyr Durdukivskyi, as head of this group.⁷⁹ 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 Labor School No. 1, who were also arrested, reportedly sought to prevent the admission of children of the proletariat, fearing their influence on the children of "conscious" Ukrainian intelligentsia.⁸⁰ As proof of their treachery, Akhmatov claimed they had read poetry dedicated to the civil war adversary of the Bolsheviks and former leader of a short-lived independent Ukrainian republic, Symon 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 latter fact, even if true, was unsurprising, since Kyiv Labor School No. 1 was designated by Narkomos as a Ukrainian school.

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 Mykola Skrypnyk, Shumskyi's successor as commissar of education, 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 ensured 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 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.⁸¹ At stake were the future of the next Soviet generation and the fulfillment of socialism.

Few teachers could countenance the crimes with which the state charged SVU members, but it was best not to stray into areas that might be considered suspect, and much of Ukrainian culture now was. Terry Martin has argued that the party viewed the SVU show trial as a necessary preventive measure because it accepted as a "psychological truth" that the intelligentsia would oppose the Five-Year Plan's cultural revolution, a program for the creation of a new proletarian ethos.⁸² This certainly seems to be part of the answer for the staging of the trial. However, the party, through the OGPU, 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 party most. The Soviet government put the SVU defendants on trial for precisely what it had exhorted them to do: develop Ukrainian culture.

Ukrainization and the SVU Show Trial

Inevitably, the SVU trial, with its warnings against Ukrainian nationalism, was to have an effect on Ukrainization. The party had already 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. After the SVU affair, in spite of Narkomos's efforts and personal determination of Skrypnyk, the campaign 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. 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 that Narkomos relied upon to move the campaign forward grew even more timid. Ukrainization was supposed to be for and by the proletariat. However, the benefits for educators to realize this strategy seemed few, the practical challenges many, and the risks high.

Importantly, the KP(b)U also held the educational establishment responsible for shortcomings in Ukrainization, particularly in the industrial east, the renewed focus of the party's efforts. The tempo of Ukrainization, it reported, was particularly weak among local Narkomos sections in the Donbas. While recognizing that there was a shortage of Ukrainian-speaking instructors, 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 trained quickly. The party also assumed a renewed responsibility to Ukrainize and promote Ukrainian speakers within its own ranks. It ordered regional party organizational sections each to produce 30 workers for Ukrainization in the Donbas, Kryvyi Rih, and Dnipropetrovsk within two months.⁸³

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 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*]." ⁸⁴ 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.

The place of Ukrainian in the eastern Stalino (Donetsk) region further illustrates the weakness of Ukrainization in industrial and mining areas, even in spite of a clear influx of ethnic Ukrainian laborers. The regional executive committee in this region reported that the use of "broken Ukrainian," or a language that pretended to be Ukrainian, was commonly used in governmental 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.⁸⁵ 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 even sought to bypass the Narkomos requirement for a separate class in Ukrainian by creating courses in Esperanto.

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 region 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 districts (85.5%). These figures indicate a slight excess of Ukrainian schools relative to the ethnic Ukrainian proportion of the population in the city (38.4%) and in the countryside (81.7%).⁸⁶ Regional inspectors reported similar successes in formal Ukrainization in Dnipropetrovsk and Chernihiv.⁸⁷

What is surprising is that as late as 1930, the regional inspectors were still recording the presence 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 3 in Chernihiv.⁸⁸ 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.

Narkomos had already recognized that figures regarding full Ukrainization were suspect. It therefore instituted a new wave of *perevirky* of teachers in 1928–1930. Articles in the pedagogical press explained the need for and requirements of the examinations. Prysaizhniuk, a contributor to *Narodnii uchyitel*, 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.⁸⁹ The teachers’ language was in some instances so muddled that children could not understand the lessons. Prysaizhniuk maintained that there were instances of local authorities appointing teachers who deliberately confused children in this manner. He argued that some remedy was needed quickly or teachers would continue to “pollute” the Ukrainian language and, significantly, harm the development of the children. They would be literate in neither Ukrainian nor Russian.

Given what has already been discussed about the lack of Ukrainian-language schooling and studies in the Stalino region, it is not surprising that a December 1928 *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.⁹⁰ The situation was reportedly no better in the Ukrainian-speaking heartland of the Kyiv region where teachers demonstrated a weak understanding of the basic rules of Ukrainian grammar and syntax.⁹¹ 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.

In spite of the threat of additional *perevirky* and even dismissal, Narkomos reports confirm that teachers' Ukrainian knowledge remained poor. The Kryvyi Rih region inspectorate informed Narkomos in 1930 that "schools still do not clearly and intensely undertake lessons in the Ukrainian language."⁹² 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 chance of dismissal was slight and few teachers or youth leaders saw a real need to improve their Ukrainian language skills.⁹³ Demonstration of a bare minimum of knowledge provided grounds for a regular delay in an examination and postponement of disciplinary action. The authorities in Mykolaiv corroborated this picture of the state of Ukrainization in the schools. In April 1930 the Mykolaiv regional inspectorate and Robos head reported the results of a *perevirka* held at district teachers' conferences. Only 5–10 teachers in each district had met Narkomos's minimum requirement for knowledge of the Ukrainian language. Most did not know grammar or orthography well, and some were entirely illiterate. If they spoke Ukrainian, they often had mastered only the local peasant dialect.⁹⁴

Quantitatively the Ukrainization of schools was "one of the greatest successes" of the campaign, an achievement that other scholars have highlighted. However, these numbers meant little without substantive improvement in the quality of instruction. The problem was that the shortcomings that educational authorities cited and the solutions they proposed in 1928–1930 were little different from those suggested when the Ukrainization campaign began. By 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 found that many post-secondary administrators took a formal approach to Ukrainization.⁹⁵ The safest course was the principal approach that the article was criticizing: passivity. Primary school teachers were unlikely to turn from this example. Open resistance to Ukrainization invited charges of Russian nationalism; an overzealous embrace now raised the flag of Ukrainian nationalism. It was best to prove one's commitment to Soviet nationalities policy only as much as necessary.

The SVU show trial in the spring of 1930 essentially changed nationalities policy in regards to education. Most importantly, it removed or alarmed Ukrainization's most committed administrators and the authoritative 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.⁹⁶ However, as reports of the 1928–1930 *perevirky* have made clear, more needs to be

understood about the quality of Ukrainian-language instruction and the level of preparation of teachers during this time. In the midst of the chaos of the First Five-Year Plan, teachers were much more concerned with sorting out what teaching method was now permissible than improving their Ukrainian.

What was fundamentally different about the period following 1930 was the Ukrainization campaign's mechanistic nature. The Narkomos archival record regarding Ukrainization at the primary school level after 1930 is sparse. Of pre-eminent concern for the party during this period were All-Union Central Committee decrees of July and August 1930 ordering universal enrollment of school-age children.⁹⁷ The Ukrainian Commissariat's claim that 98.2% of children aged 8–10 were enrolled during the 1930–1931 academic year compared to 75.2% during 1929–1930 seems greatly inflated.⁹⁸ Regardless, too few schools had been built and insufficient numbers of teachers had been trained in the intervening time to serve the new students. Government statistics may have reflected high Ukrainization, but this meant little more than schools had been designated as such on paper and increased numbers of ethnic Ukrainian students were enrolled in already overcrowded schools. The 1932–1933 famine created further turmoil in rural Ukrainian schools, a tragedy that is worthy of separate, rigorous study. From this perspective, the post-SVU period does not seem like a golden age of Ukrainian-language schooling. This was not the revolutionary campaign the Ukrainizers originally envisioned, but an obstinate pursuit of quantitatively defined targets, deprived of motivation, and its mainstay of support. When the KP(b)U identified “local Ukrainian nationalism” as the pre-eminent danger to Soviet power in the republic in November 1933, condemned Skrypnyk, and initiated a further purge of the Narkomos apparatus and educational institutions, it was a shift that could be accepted by many in the party.

While focusing on the period of so-called High Stalinism, Serhy Yekelchuk has argued that “Ukrainian culture did not result from Moscow's *diktat* and the suppression of the local intelligentsia's ‘natural’ national sentiment . . . It was their interaction with Moscow, rather than simply the centre's totalizing designs, that produced the official line on non-Russian identities and national patrimonies.”⁹⁹ As this study has made clear, the centralizing aspirations emphasized in conventional histories of the Stalinist period were considerably absent in the 1920s, but the party-state still mandated the Ukrainian Soviet educational system produce a definite result: a loyal citizen prepared to participate in the new socialist economy. The Ukrainian intelligentsia (educational theorists and teachers) assumed a critical role in determining the process to reach this end. To a significant degree then, this article provides a helpful prelude to Yekelchuk's argument. As Yekelchuk notes, in the 1920s (and for those whose formative experiences were drawn from this period), socialism and Ukrainian nation-building were “potentially compatible projects.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the high numbers of Ukrainized primary schools stand as evidence of this fact. However, teachers still had significant work to do to meet the standards the Soviet state had set for itself.

While participatory space continued to exist in the Stalinist state and the Soviet Union remained committed to national categories of understanding, this study emphasizes that the repression of a leading segment of the Ukrainian intellectual elite that began in 1930 had an essential effect in setting the limits of negotiation. Thus, although Ukrainian educators like Hirsch's ethnographers subsequently adjusted to the realities of Soviet power and "learned how to show that their nationalism was the correct 'Soviet' kind, devoid of the 'bourgeois' tendencies and ambitions,"¹⁰¹ this adjustment was fundamental and not foreseen by national elites. Furthermore, this was a decidedly uneven "participatory" process. Linguistic Ukrainization certainly extended across the 1929–1930 threshold, and republican party authorities put it to use in the cultural revolution. The rhetoric regarding the need for Ukrainization, particularly in the industrial east, sharpened and the number of Ukrainized institutions continued to grow. However, it is difficult to come to the conclusion that linguistic Ukrainization in the schools continued with the same boldness for those individuals actually involved in its implementation after 1930, in spite of the impressive achievements on paper. Although even the Stalinist state lacked the ability to predict and precisely control behavior, terror and policy adjustments shaped what Ukrainian teachers chose *not* to do, and obviously had, in very real human terms, tragic consequences for the Ukrainian educational elite.

NOTES

1. See Pauly, "Teaching Place." For broader works on the structure and pedagogical orientation of the Ukrainian educational system, see Lypyns'kyi, "Kontseptsia ta model' osvity"; Sukhomlyn's'ka, *Narys istorii ukrains'koho shkil'nytstva*.
2. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 10–11.
3. Mace, *Communism*.
4. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*.
5. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*; Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*.
6. Partlett, "Breaching Cultural Worlds"; idem, "Bourgeois Ideas."
7. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*, 160–174.
8. Martin describes the Ukrainization of schooling as "natural" and "routine." Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 86–87.
9. Yekelchuk, *Ukraine*, 94. For research by Ukrainian scholars on Ukrainization, see Smolii, "Ukrainizatsiia"; Lozyts'kyi, "Polityka ukrainizatsii"; Polemun and Suravko, *Ukrainizatsiia na Chernihivshchyni*; Borysov, "Ukrainizatsiia ta rozvytok"; Malii, "Ukrainizatsiia osvity."
10. Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*; Holmes, *Stalin's School*.
11. Kelly, *Children's World*, 67–92, 495–569.
12. Blitstein, "Nation-Building or Russification?," 258.
13. Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues*, 18, 89–92.
14. Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment."
15. Khalid, *The Politics*, 199.
16. Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 164.

17. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 80; Mace argues that Kvirring's commitment to Ukrainization was in fact less than complete. Mace, *Communism*, 89–90.
18. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, ark. 13.
19. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 80; Mace, *Communism*, 89; Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*, 43–44.
20. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 103.
21. Ibid.
22. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 104.
23. The Soviet drive to create ethnically homogeneous schools (and thereby reify national categories) had a parallel in the Bohemian experience under Habsburg rule, when Czech and German nationalist movements sought “to ensure that children were not ‘lost’ to the national community because of parents’ persistent indifference to nationalist priorities in the home.” Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 52.
24. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, 10.
25. Ibid.
26. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 888, ark. 18.
27. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 866, ark. 13.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 114.
31. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 121.
32. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 122.
33. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 119.
34. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 10.
35. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 12.
36. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 27.
37. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 853, ark. 40.
38. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 115–16.
39. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 862, ark. 108.
40. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 345.
41. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 621, ark. 65.
42. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 860, ark. 4.
43. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 4, spr. 858, ark. 4.
44. Kh. Nevira, “Shcho shche hal’muie ukrainizatsiiu shkoly,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 5 May 1925, 2.
45. Ibid.
46. I. Pevnyi, “Perevodymo ukrainizatsiiu,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 14 April 1925, 3.
47. M. Makerevych, “Ukrainizatsiia ta vchytel’: ukrainizatsiia vchytel’stva—nevidkladne zavdannia,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 13 October 1925, 2.
48. V. Sihovykh, “Het’ profakatsiu,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 12 January 1927, 3.
49. V. S., “Spravy ukrainizatsii. Za pidvyshchennia ukrains’koi hramotnosti,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 12 January 1927, 3.
50. Z. Nuzhnyi, “Iak ne slid ukrainizuvatysia! (Na Dnipropetrovs’kii zaliznytsi),” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 12 January 1927, 3.
51. Z. Nuzhnyi, “De-shcho pro ukrainizatsiiu Dnipropetrovs’koi zaliznytsi,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 3 November 1926, 3.
52. *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2253, ark. 4–9.
53. M. Mashkivs’kyi, “Do spravy ukrainizatsii vchytel’stva na Pivd.-zakh. zaliznytsiakh,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 6 October 1926, 2.

54. Z. Nuzhnyi, “De-shcho pro ukrainizatsiiu Dnipropetrovs’koi zaliznytsi,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 3 November 1926, 3.
55. I continue to use the Ukrainian word *perevirka* (plural: *perevirky*) throughout this article because the word itself assumed such symbolic value for teachers, and possible English translations (evaluation, audit, verification) are imprecise in this context.
56. 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.
57. S. Khomenko, “Pro perevirku,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 12 January 1927, 3.
58. Mymra, “Pidmet,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 15 December 1926, 3.
59. “Na vsi zapitannia vidpovidni dovidkovo-konsul’tytsionnoho biura,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 4 May 1928, 4.
60. *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 109.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 110.
63. *DAKO*, f. 1212, op. 1, spr. 25, ark. 59.
64. Z. Nuzhnyi, “De-shcho pro ukrainizatsiiu Dnipropetrovs’koi zaliznytsi,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 3 November 1926, 3.
65. “De-shcho pro vykladachiv ta komisii po perevirtsti,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 1 June 1927, 3.
66. *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 110.
67. S. Khomenko, “Pro perevirku,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 12 January 1927, 3.
68. *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 28, ark. 110.
69. V. S., “Spravy ukrainizatsii. Za pidvyschennia ukrains’koi hramotnosity,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 12 January 1927, 3.
70. *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 2248, ark. 1.
71. I discuss this subject in greater detail elsewhere. See Pauly, “Building Socialism,” 196–224.
72. See, for example: *DAKO*, f. 1043, op. 3, spr. 31, ark. 52; *TsDAHOU*, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 3009, ark. 38, 64. It is important to emphasize that the Ukrainian non-party intelligentsia had long been the subject of state police surveillance and that this latest offensive was facilitated (but not necessarily motivated) by an accumulated OGPU distrust of Ukrainization. I argue elsewhere that well before this date party and Narkomos authorities worried that members of the intelligentsia were operating outside their control in their efforts to expand the Ukrainization of education. See Pauly, “Building Socialism,” 225–53. For studies of OGPU surveillance of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, see Prystaiko and Shapoval, *Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi*; Shapoval et al., *ChK-GPU-NKVD*. For a long-term perspective on repression against Ukrainian educators generally, see Marochko and Götz, *Represovani pedahohy*.
73. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 251.
74. Prystaiko, *Sprava “Spilky vyzvolennia Ukrainy”*, 48.
75. *Ibid.*, 15, 44. For additional studies of the SVU affair and the work of those arrested, see Bolabol’chenko, *SVU*; Kuromiya, “Stalin’skii ‘velikii perelom’”; Sydorenko, *Represovane “vidrodzhennia”*; Tron’ko, *Represovane kraieznavstvo*.
76. “Protest spivrobotnykiv VUK’u ta redaktsii hazety,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 24 November 1929, 2.
77. “Ne damo zhovto-blakytym bandytam zavazhaty buduvanniu ukrains’koi kul’tury,” *Narodnii uchytel’*, 27 November 1929, 2.
78. 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. Anton 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. Prystaiko, *Sprava "Spilky vyzvolennia Ukrainy"*, 50.
79. For more on Durdukivs'kyi, see Danylenko and Kravchenko, *Volodymyr Durdukivs'kyi*.
80. "Zhovtblakytyna kontrrevoliutsiia pered proletar'skym sudom," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 24 April 1930, 3.
81. Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy*, 366–67.
82. Fitzpatrick notes that the formation of this ethos inevitably involved the elimination of the bourgeois intelligentsia through "class war." Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution*, 8.
83. "Stan ukrainizatsii v promyslovykh okruhakh," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 11 January 1930, 1.
84. Rama, "Misiachnyk ukrains'koi proletar'skoi kul'tury," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 22 June 1930, 3.
85. H. Shvydkyi, "Ukrainizuiut'sia nadto povil'no," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 11 June 1930, 7.
86. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 421.
87. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 420, 427.
88. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 421, 420, 427.
89. Ivan Prysiazhniuk, "Polipshuite nashu movu," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 16 January 1929, 5.
90. H. Hulak, "Movoznavtsi," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 16 January 1929, 5.
91. K. Kost', "Ukrainizovalys'," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 16 January 1929, 5.
92. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 415.
93. The inspectorate had dismissed only five teachers to date for refusing even to attempt learning Ukrainian.
94. *TsDAVOU*, f. 166, op. 6, spr. 10841, ark. 417.
95. "Natsional'na pytannia," *Narodnii uchyitel'*, 10 April 1929, 3.
96. Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 135.
97. Bondar et al., *Narodna osvita i pedahohichna nauka*, 55.
98. *Ibid.*, 69.
99. Yekelchik, *Stalin's Empire*, 6–7.
100. *Ibid.*, 6.
101. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 12.

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