

Korenizacija: an Ambiguous and Temporary Strategy of Legitimization of Soviet Power in Ukraine (1923-1933) and its Legacy

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Abstract: The Soviet government showed evidence of poor linearity in its policies towards nationalities. Not only does this policy appear to have been contradictory in several places, but has undergone changes and transformations over the years, so as to make it almost unreadable. Meanwhile, in order to attract the nationalities that were part of the Russian Empire and in accordance with the principle enunciated by Lenin, namely that the Empire was a “prison of peoples”, in the first decade of Soviet power an ambiguous policy of enhancement of nationalities was passed that received the name of indigenization or *korenizacija*; ambiguous, because the aim was also to categorize and control the population, according to a typical perspective of colonial power.

The Soviet constitution of 1924 gave the center many powers; the Republics had the same powers as the Russian regions, while the party remained centralized; the use of national languages in the educational system was increased, but not in universities. In Ukraine, the Bolshevik Party was dominated by the Russians and it was thanks to Lenin, who rejected the proposal, that the emergence of an autonomous republic in Donbas was prevented. Stalin, on the other hand, favoured *korenizacija* especially for the alliances with the local Bolshevik leaders, given the centralist tendencies of Trockij and his other opponents.

The formal cancellation of *korenizacija* in Ukraine was ratified by two secret decrees of the Politbjuro on the 14th and 15th of December 1932, at the height of the grain requisition campaign. In many regards, *korenizacija* is still considered a “golden age” of Ukrainian culture and language, but its ambiguity and tragic end are little known.

The article uses published or archival primary sources and the main secondary sources on the topic (Martin Hirsch, etc.). It is part of a broader research

project on the contemporary history of Ukraine conducted by the author at the University of Brussels.

Keywords: Ukraine, *korenizacija*, Soviet Union, strategy of legitimization

1. In 1923, a resolution of the Twelfth Soviet Communist Party Congress, accompanied by a resolution of the Party Central Committee, enforced the implementation of policies promoting national languages and national elites. These policies of enhancement of the nationalities, which would eventually be called *korenizacija*¹ (“taking root”, indigenization), were enforced in order to attract the nationalities that were part of the Russian Empire. But this was not an official designation: Stalin always used the general term *nacionalizacija*, and in Ukraine the term *Ukrainizacija* was preferred (as *Uzbekizacija*, *Oirotizacija*, etc.)². The aim of this policy was to “make Soviet power seem ‘native’, ‘intimate’, ‘popular’, ‘comprehensible’”³, thanks to the use of native languages and the action of native cadres. Economic equalization, infrastructure, technology, and cultural development were the objectives underlying *korenizacija*, especially in the most backward regions of the former Tsarist Empire (or regarded as such by the new Bolshevik power). Thus Soviet power undertook an ambitious, but also ambiguous policy (due to the inherent suspicion that the Bolshevik internationalist culture had towards nationalism) of aiding minority cultures, educating local cadres (also by liberalizing attendance of the best Russian universities), as well as protecting and encouraging the use of national languages.

It was a policy that rejected the principle of non-territorial national-cultural autonomy, developed by the Austromarxists and applied during the brief stint of the independent Ukrainian Rada (1917-1918), whereas in the USSR, national federated republics were created, and within them, territories and autonomous districts for internal national minorities. National or local languages were the official languages of each Republic and autonomous territory, according to the idea that it was necessary to maximize the national cultures, depriving them of their separatist and non-Socialist content. Stalin then coined the phrase: “socialist in content and national in form”⁴. So the USSR “was the world’s first state to institutionalize ethno-territorial federalism, classify all citizens according to their biological nationalities and formally prescribe preferential treatment of certain ethnically defined populations”⁵.

Indeed, the Soviet government showed evidence of poor linearity in its policies towards nationalities. Not only does this policy appear to have been

¹ In this text, the scientific system is used to transliterate Cyrillic alphabets. For Ukrainian toponyms, names, etc., I transliterate directly from the Ukrainian language. All translations are mine.

² Martin 2001: 12.

³ Martin 2001: 12.

⁴ *XVI s’ezd VKP/b* 1930: 56.

⁵ Slezkine 1994: 415.

contradictory in several spheres, but has undergone changes and transformations over the years, so as to make it almost unreadable. The ambiguity stems from the fact that it was also a sort of instrumental decolonization, which served to preserve the territorial boundaries and the amplitude of the Russian Empire so as not to give rise to centrifugal nationalisms. Thus the process of nation-building of the Empire's peoples was promoted⁶. In addition, it was hoped that an attraction would be exercised in the long term on those territories of Poland, Romania and Finland where strong Ukrainian (seven million people), Belarussian, Finnish and Romanian minorities lived: the Piedmont Principle⁷.

The aim of *korenizacija* was also to categorize and control the population, according to a typical perspective of colonial power: "Soviet experts, like their British and German contemporaries, used their expertise to place their subjects into standardized knowable categories (...) that facilitated centralized rule"⁸. For a revolutionary power, social control also had a mobilizing role, which was to involve the Soviet peoples who had previously lived in the former Tsarist Empire in the socialist experiment. Therefore, "no issue was more central to the formation of the Soviet Union than the national question".⁹ From a strictly political point of view, Stalin favored *korenizacija* especially because it aided alliances with the local Bolshevik leaders, given the centralist tendencies of Trockij and his other opponents (and the backing of Ukraine was crucial in this battle)¹⁰. As a "cultural technology of rule", *korenizacija* assimilated the Soviet Union's practices to those of the Western powers but differed significantly from the colonial policy of Tsarist Russia, which had fluctuated between Russification and tolerant submission (religious and cultural tolerance, as in Poland, Finland and many Asian regions)¹¹. Indeed, as the renowned historian of British colonial rule, Nicholas Dirks, stressed, census-taking and border-making were forms of knowledge that "both enabled conquest and were produced by it; (...) knowledge was what colonialism was all about"¹²; cultural cataloging, then, favored a process of assimilation of dominated peoples, who, assuming the ruler's geo-cultural knowledge, were so ready to share their general culture. On the contrary, as an example of forced Russification by the Tsarist Empire, we can cite precisely the prohibition of public use of the Ukrainian language, which was in force between 1863 (the year of the Polish anti-tsarist uprising) and the 1905 Revolution in that part of Ukraine under Russian rule. On the other hand, its revolutionary nature and a need for legitimacy through ethnic monitoring led the Soviet government to

⁶ Martin 2001: 1.

⁷ *Visti VUCVK* 10.4.1924: 1.

⁸ Hirsch 2005: 102.

⁹ Hirsch 2005: 5.

¹⁰ Martin 2001: 84.

¹¹ Hirsch 2005: 147.

¹² Dirks 1996: IX.

establish close contacts and connections with all ethnic groups of the USSR, unlike the British or French Empires, where only a few national groups had cultural and political links with the centre¹³.

According to Terry Martin, another element that allows us to understand the complexity of Soviet national policy lies in the fact that it was a soft-line policy, which served to make the hard-line policies acceptable (collectivization, industrialization, etc.): “this did not mean that the policy was insincere or purely decorative, but simply that it was a secondary consideration and would be implemented only to the extent it did not conflict with hard-line policy goals”¹⁴. The two approaches often coexisted and their apparent contradiction is explained by their different levels of importance: the party officials with their soft-line policies were compelled to continue to implement them while taking into account the signals coming from developments in the hard-line policies (especially repressive ones). According to Francine Hirsch, the difference between the regime’s short-term goals and long-term goals should also be considered: from an initial differentiating themselves from colonialism and imperialism and “welcoming” the peoples in the new regime, to a fostering of the evolution of nations and ethnic groups in national socialist cultures, ready to converge in a ready-made communist state¹⁵.

The contradictory nature of the Soviet policy towards nationalities is also explained by the modernist prejudices of the Bolsheviks, for which classifying and providing populations with a sense of nationhood meant taking them a step further in the direction of their historical development (the Bolshevik leader Mikojan said in 1925 that they were “creating and organizing new nations”¹⁶). Often it was precisely the demands of ethnographers, party officials and people conducting the surveys that guided individuals’ choices; in this way, they somehow learned about national distinctions which had previously been unknown to them¹⁷. This happened especially in areas such as western Ukraine, where coexistence between communities of different origin had significantly weakened ethnic barriers. Anxiety over making classifications and modernistic prejudices made the border peasants seem treacherous in the eyes of the Bolshevik officials, who believed that ignorance and religion made them incapable of self-determination and subject to being manipulated by the “counter-revolution” and by foreign powers; promoting national culture and deporting members of minority groups came to be part of the same design for the remediation of boundaries¹⁸. However, in the early 1930s, the Bolshevik efforts towards classification obtained the desired effect: the majority

¹³ Blitstein 2006: 288.

¹⁴ Martin 2001: 21.

¹⁵ Hirsch 2005: 8-9.

¹⁶ In Aliev 1926: 9.

¹⁷ Hirsch 2005: 14.

¹⁸ Brown 2003: 87.

of the population recognized themselves in the principle of national identification, while the Census consultants of 1926 noted that they were often linked to local identification criteria¹⁹.

In general, the linguistic policies of *korenizacija* were successful in the West during the 20s, but were abruptly withdrawn in the early 30s. The opposite happened in the Soviet East, where there was a strong need for modernization; here, while many local cadres were actually promoted to top political positions, the problem of the formation of a sufficient number of technical cadres remained unsolved²⁰. Ukraine played a key role in *korenizacija*, due to its strategic position in economic and geopolitical terms and the sheer size of the country. In many regards, *korenizacija* is still considered a “golden age” of Ukrainian culture and language, and its ambiguity and tragic end are little known.

2. Up to 1922, there were two positions among the Bolsheviks on the national question, although both sides shared suspicion towards the national idea: Lenin and Stalin (the latter in moderate form) believed that it was necessary to support the national movements, because the principle of nationality was a natural stage of historical development which was foolish to oppose and indeed was seconded to eliminate “bourgeois” influences; it also constituted a factor of modernization for those Soviet people who were in a condition of backwardness. Moreover, according to Lenin, the nationalism of the peoples belonging to the Russian Empire was often a reaction to Tsarist oppression²¹. Stalin, who from 1917 to 1924 was Commissar of Nationalities, supported Lenin’s position, but already in 1917 had supported the internationalists’ thesis concerning Ukraine, in favour of proletarian, non-national sovereignty²². At the Party Congress in 1923, Stalin distanced himself from Lenin’s excessive criticism of Russian nationalism, but in the end, he was one of the main supporters of the policy of aiding the national principle, adopted at the Twelfth Party Congress. On the other side there were internationalists such as Bucharin and Pjatakov. In particular, in respect of Ukraine, Georgij Pjatakov (a member of the independent Ukrainian Rada for a few months) said in June of 1917:

“Russia cannot exist without the Ukrainian sugar industry, the same can be said for coal (the Donbas), grain (the belt of black soil), etc. These industries are closely linked with the rest of Russia’s industries. Indeed, Ukraine does not constitute a distinct economic region”²³.

¹⁹ Hirsch 2005: 145.

²⁰ Martin: 2001: 25-26.

²¹ One of the main writings of Lenin on the question of nationality is: *O prave nacij na samoopredelenie*, 1914.

²² J. Stalin, *Ovčet tovariščam ukraincam v tylu i na fronte*.

²³ “Kyivs’ka orhanizacija” 1934: 126.

But the failure of two Bolshevik regimes introduced in Ukraine in 1918 and in 1919 (the latter led by Pjatakov) led Bolsheviks to understand that they had to recognize that Ukraine was a separate country²⁴. One Bolshevik goal was to create a link between the Russian-speaking cities and the countryside (where Ukrainians were the great majority), in order to better manage the Ukrainian agricultural resources²⁵.

In March 1920, Moscow had agreed to the entry of the Borot'bysty²⁶ (who were a faction of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries) in the Ukrainian Communist Party after the Eighth Congress approved Lenin's strategic document "On Soviet Rule in Ukraine" and after the publication of a "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of Ukraine" on December 28, 1919, which announced that the Borot'bysty would have a significant role in Ukrainian communism²⁷. In a proclamation to the Red Army, Trockij even declared that "only the Ukrainian worker and peasant possess the sole right to rule their own country"²⁸.

However, the Soviet Constitution of 1924 gave the centre many powers, even though Stalin's proposal to federate the national Republics (including Ukraine) in the Russian Republic had been shelved, and the Soviet Republic had the same powers as the Russian regions, while the party remained centralized. The use of national languages in the educational system was favoured, but not in the universities. The central Soviet government worked in Russian. In Ukraine, the Bolshevik Party was dominated by the Russians and it was thanks to Lenin - who rejected the proposal - that the emergence of an autonomous Republic in the Donbas was prevented. 80% of the members of the KP(b)U (Communist Party of Ukraine) and 95% of government officials were Russians or Russified²⁹. In 1921, the head of the Ukrainian Soviet government, the Bolshevik of Bulgarian origin Christian Rakovskij (who in 1923 criticized Soviet centralism in order to escape the control of Moscow), stated that "the triumph of the Ukrainian language would mean the rule of the Ukrainian petit-bourgeois intelligentsia and the Ukrainian kulaks"³⁰. In March 1923, Dmitrij Lebed', the second secretary of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U spoke of "two cultures" locked in a deadly struggle: the reactionary Ukrainian culture and that of the Russian Bolsheviks³¹.

The period 1923-1925 was that of "Ukrainization by decree", which favored the use of the Ukrainian language in all areas and the access of Ukrainians to

²⁴ Mace 1983: 40.

²⁵ Liber 1992: 46.

²⁶ Mace 1983: 62.

²⁷ Lenin 1959: 403-410.

²⁸ Vynnyčenko 1920: 494-495.

²⁹ Liber 1992: 12.

³⁰ RSASPH 17, 26, 1.

³¹ Lebed' 1923: 1.

state and party jobs; bilingualism was imposed on officials and courses of Ukrainian were set up for civil servants. The first decree was issued by the Central Committee of the KP(b)U on June 22, 1923³². On July 16, 1923, the Ukrainian Vlas Čubar replaced Rakovskij as chairman of the Ukrainian government. Between 1924 and 1929 29 national districts were also created in Ukraine: 7 German, 4 Bulgarian, 3 Greek, 1 Polish, and 2 Jewish; the 9 Russian districts were only introduced in 1927. There were also 66 Jewish and (from 1928) 41 Russian national cities, as well as a thousand Soviet national villages³³.

The leaders of the KP(b)U, Emmanuel Kviring (an ethnic German, who had been in favor of the secession of the Donbas) and his deputy Lebed' (a Russian), were still hostile to *korenizacija*; among civil servants who were party members, only 18% knew Ukrainian, while only 15% of those enrolled concluded the semi-compulsory Ukrainian language courses. Only 10-15% of the documentation of the central government was in Ukrainian³⁴. There were, however, developments in primary education and in the press in Ukrainian.

To strengthen Ukrainization, in March of 1925 Kaganovič was sent to Ukraine by Stalin - as part of his policy of alliance with nationalism - as the first secretary of the KP(b)U. He created a special office of the Party for the Ukrainization, which was developed in all fields, even in the use of movie subtitles. Between 1925 and 1928, there was almost a doubling of the percentage of the press, and a 65% increase of publications in Ukrainian, while books in Ukrainian increased from 40 to 54% of total publications. Areas in which developments were minor were oral communication, the environment of managers and "specialists", and the Komsomol; passive resistance and resentment on the part of the Russians remained the main problem³⁵. Urban workers (most of them Russian speakers), state and party officials, industrial specialists, branches of all-union enterprises were those who were opposed to the linguistic *korenizacija*. Stalin did not subject trade unions and industrial workers to the policy of forced Ukrainization; Stalin saw Ukrainization as a social policy primarily to acquire the consent of the Ukrainian peasant world but he was afraid of losing control of the Donbas, where the Ukrainian industrial proletariat (mostly Russophone) was concentrated.

3. A U-turn occurred as early as 1926, caused by the return to power of Piłsudski in Poland and by fears of a new Polish-Ukrainian alliance. The first official expression of the "Russian question" in Ukraine was proposed in 1926 by Jurij Larin, a representative of Komzet (Committee for the Settlement of Working Jews on the Land) in the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet

³² *Kulturne budivnyctvo* 1929: 229-232

³³ Martin 2001: 40. See also Brown 2003.

³⁴ RSASPH 17, 85, 4.

³⁵ Martin 2001: 92-95.

Union (the Soviet of Nationalities was one of its two chambers), backed by Erukidze, the secretary of the Central Executive Committee³⁶. The majority of party members were by then opposed to *korenizacija*. On the other hand, opposition to *korenizacija* was condemned by the organs of the party and of the state, but without resort to serious measures such as arrest and execution³⁷.

In March 1926, a major controversy broke out within the KP(b)U on the sensitive issue of the industrial proletariat. Šums'kyj, the Ukrainian Commissioner for Education, strongly criticized the position taken by Kaganovič, according to which the proletariat were not to be forcibly Ukrainianized. The controversy was also an opportunity for the Ukrainian communists to have direct access to political power in the party and get rid of Kaganovič, as in 1925 Kviring had been dismissed. Previously, Šums'kyj had asked Stalin to replace Kaganovič with a Ukrainian leader³⁸. Šums'kyj's request, however, was inconsistent with a rule imposed by Stalin, which - in order to avoid an excess of nationalism - stated that the position of secretary of the national Parties (with the exception of Georgia and Armenia) should be held by leaders of non-national origin, while the leadership of state bodies was entrusted to members of their own national exponents³⁹. In fact, until June 1953, the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Party had not been a Ukrainian.

Kaganovič's self-defense before Stalin was a success, mainly because of two sensitive issues: Šums'kyj was a Borot'byst and was now being accused of wanting to reconstitute that group inside the Bolshevik Party; moreover, Kaganovič brought to Stalin's attention the brilliant young Ukrainian writer Mykola Chvył'ovyj, who advocated the Ukrainization of the proletariat and the de-Russification of Ukrainian literature, suggesting that a dangerously anti-Soviet chauvinism⁴⁰ was gaining ground in Ukraine. Stalin, in his reply addressed to the Ukrainian Central Committee, rejected the idea of a "Ukrainization of the proletariat from above" and condemned "Chvył'ovyj's anti-muscovite extremism", while "the West European proletariats are full of sympathy towards Moscow as a citadel of the International proletarian movement and Leninism"⁴¹.

In June of 1926, strong in his political victory, Kaganovič read out a proud report to the Central Committee: "On the Results of Ukrainization", which outlined the correct ideological foundations (that guided Ukrainian *korenizacija* in subsequent years), according to which Ukrainization was a weapon to fight Russian and Ukrainian nationalism, while it would have been unacceptable to oppose Ukrainian culture to any other culture of the peoples that made up the USSR; on the other hand, he appreciated the efforts to promote knowledge of

³⁶ *Vtoraja sessija CIK SSSR 1926: 460-500.*

³⁷ Martin 2001: 76.

³⁸ Radziejowski 1983: 118.

³⁹ *Tajny nacional'noj politiki CK RKP 1992: 83.*

⁴⁰ RSASPH, 558, 11, 738.

⁴¹ The letter was published in Stalin 1934.

the Ukrainian language by those workers who had been previously Russified and spoke a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect (*suržyky*), but did not accept the excesses of those who wanted a total Ukrainization of the workers. Kaganovič then highlighted the successes of *korenizacija*: the amount of state documentation in Ukrainian had increased from 20 to 65%, the Ukrainian press had reached 60% of the total, while there had been significant developments in education and in the presence of Ukrainian party members (which was now 47%, with a peak of 61% in the Komsomol)⁴².

In March 1927 Šums'kyj was deposed (in 1933, he was arrested and exiled in Siberia and died, poisoned, in 1946); as Trockij had not yet been defeated, Skrypnyk, one of the few old Bolshevik leaders who was Ukrainian was appointed in his place. As late as June 1924, Zinoviev accused Stalin of the excesses of Ukrainization and of "supporting a *Petljurovščina* and not fighting true chauvinism"⁴³. For this reason, the removal of Šums'kyj was also an act which politically strengthened Stalin before the Bolshevik United Opposition⁴⁴. In 1928, the Comintern dissolved the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, which had supported Šums'kyj (many members of that party were Borot'bysty)⁴⁵ and the Communist Party of Ukraine declared that Šums'kyj and Chvył'ovyjism were the doctrines of Ukrainian fascism⁴⁶. It was the end of the two roots theory of Ukrainian communism, Bolshevik and Borot'byst, which had also marked the first official history of the party, written in 1923 by Moisej Ravič-Čerkasskij⁴⁷. Chvył'ovyj committed suicide in May 1933.

An appendix of the clash between Šums'kyj and Kaganovič was the position taken by the economist of Russian origin Mychajlo Volobujev, who was an official of the Ukrainian Commissariat for Education, and who published in 1928 an article on the organ of the Communist Party (*Bil'šovyk Ukraïny*), in which he demonstrated the existence of an unequal exchange between Ukraine and Russia. A few years before, statistics had been published which showed how Soviet Ukraine was involved in the budget to a greater extent of its wealth⁴⁸ and research that had calculated a figure of about 20% representing the reversal of Ukrainian capital invested outside Ukraine between 1924 and 1927⁴⁹. Volobujev took up these surveys which showed a continuity - between the Tsarist and Soviet eras - in the colonial exploitation of Ukraine and put forward a series of proposals for favoring the self-management

⁴² *Budivnyctvo Radjanskoï Ukraïny*: 1928: 58-65.

⁴³ Martin 2001: 236.

⁴⁴ Mace 1983: 97.

⁴⁵ Mace 1983: 114.

⁴⁶ RSASPH, 17, 26, 15.

⁴⁷ M. Ravič-Čerkasskij 1923: 165.

⁴⁸ Popov 1925: 59-67.

⁴⁹ Holubnychy 1956: 6.

of the economy of Ukraine (Ukrainian full control on the national economy, curtailment of the powers of the State Planning Commission, exceeding of Russo-centric Soviet industrial planning, etc.).⁵⁰ Criticism of Volobujev's thesis was violent, and Skrypnyk, likening Volobujev to Šums'kyj and Chvyľ'ovyj, stated that "this *petite bourgeoisie*, ideologically fascist, says that we have a Ukrainian colony in the Union"⁵¹. In the spring of 1930, Volobujev was forced to write a humiliating recantation entitled "Towards a Critique of Volobujevism"⁵².

4. Skrypnyk was Lenin's man in Ukraine and participated in the Bolshevik Ukrainian governments during the Civil War; at the XIIth Congress, he had supported Lenin's position and then contrasted sharply with Stalin's position⁵³; he represented Ukraine in the Soviet of Nationalities and in 1926 had established for himself a chair of studies on nationality in the Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism. After 1927, he became the most important political figure in Ukraine, despite the appointment, in 1928, of Kosior as First Secretary (a Pole from Donbas, who never learned Ukrainian)⁵⁴ in place of Kaganovič. Indeed, after the replacement of Kaganovič, which Stalin agreed to in exchange for his support in the fight against Bucharin, "Skrypnyk came to see himself as a virtually independent national leader"⁵⁵. From the theoretical point of view, Skrypnyk thought of Ukraine as "a large social laboratory for the Leninist solution of the National question"⁵⁶.

Skrypnyk implemented *korenizacija* and tried to extend it to those areas that were unaffected. It increased the number of Ukrainians living in cities: according to the 1897 census, Ukrainians accounted for only 32.5% of the urban population, which decreased to 15.9% for cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. The Russians accounted for 33.7% of the total urban population and the Jews 27.4%. Already in 1926, the Ukrainians represented 47% of the urban population (33% of those with more than 100,000 inhabitants)⁵⁷. The number of Ukrainian immigrants in the industrial cities (Donbas and south-eastern Ukraine) also increased: in 1933, Ukrainians accounted for almost half or more of the inhabitants in Luhans'k, Zaporiz'ja, Charkiv and Dnipropetrovs'k; only in Stalino (now Donec'k), they accounted for 31% of the population (but in 1923, they were only 7% of the population)⁵⁸.

⁵⁰ Volobujev 1962: 228-229.

⁵¹ Skrypnyk 1928: 46.

⁵² Volobujev 1930.

⁵³ Mace 1983: 198-199.

⁵⁴ Majstrenko 1985: 227-228.

⁵⁵ Mace 1983: 304.

⁵⁶ Skrypnyk 1974: 380.

⁵⁷ *Korotki pidsumky* 1926: 204-209.

⁵⁸ Liber 1992: 57.

As a result, ethnic Ukrainians became the majority of industrial workers: in 1929, they reached 50% and in 1934 far exceeded 60% of the total⁵⁹. For industrial workers, however, there were no required courses and Ukrainian immigrants from the countryside accepted the dominance of the Russian language in the factories: although a larger percentage than in 1926, in 1929 still only 32% of industrial workers used Ukrainian in conversation⁶⁰. On the other hand, one of the most important effects of *korenizacija* was that a number of Russified workers began to identify with the Ukrainian nationality and many urbanized Ukrainians passed from forms of regional identity to identify with the Ukrainian national identity, which they encountered for the first time. In many respects, it was an intended strategy pursued by the policy of Skrypnyk (according to an idea already put forward by Stalin), who had theorized a parallel with what had already happened in the Czech cities of the nineteenth century with German culture⁶¹.

However, the growing Ukrainization of the cities and the use of Ukrainian in entertainment, in the media and in collective activities, reversed the previous trend which had made them a vehicle for Russification; but it was an uneven process that varied depending on the region, the city, the proximity to Russia, jobs and trades⁶². In general, “the Ukrainization of the proletariat, then, appeared to be moving in the direction of a territorial Ukrainian identity that was bilingual and open to both ethnic Ukrainians and Russians”⁶³.

The action of Skrypnyk in the field of education led to results: in 1930, Ukrainian schools were attended by almost all Ukrainian-speaking children and about 20% of Russian-speaking⁶⁴; also the general school data were favourable: the rate of literacy in 1929 in Ukrainian (71%) was higher than the Soviet average (50%)⁶⁵. The percentage of publications in Ukrainian increased, but the same Skrypnyk noted that in 1929, only 15% of the literature was sold in the Ukrainian language⁶⁶. On the other hand, in August 1929, it was possible to Ukrainize the newspaper of Odessa and get good results in the Ukrainization of the city⁶⁷; before the war, only 6% of Odessa’s inhabitants were Ukrainians, a percentage which fell to 3% in 1920⁶⁸. These figures should be seen in relation to others of a clearly opposite nature: in 1929, a decree (not published) of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of

⁵⁹ Asatkin 1935: 386.

⁶⁰ Liber 1992: 82-83.

⁶¹ Skrypnyk 1928: 18.

⁶² Liber 1992: 110-112.

⁶³ Martin 2001: 105.

⁶⁴ Skrypnyk 2005.

⁶⁵ *Visti VUCVK*, 15.5.1929: 6.

⁶⁶ SARF 374, 27s, 1709.

⁶⁷ M. Skrypnyk 1974: 142-145

⁶⁸ *Mis’ki selyšča USSR*: 2-17.

the Soviet Union established that the internal documents of the branches of all-unions institutions could be written in Russian⁶⁹; in this way, all previous efforts of Ukrainization of non-local companies were thwarted. Public transport also suffered from the tendency to restore Russian and, for example, in 1931, all Ukrainian insignia in Charkiv station were eliminated⁷⁰. From 1928 on, the work of the Party Committee for Ukrainization practically ceased, while dismissals due to resistance to the use of the Ukrainian language became very rare - in 1927, there had been several hundred⁷¹. According to Terry Martin, Ukrainization led to a kind of bilingualism, with the dominance of Russian in the economic and industrial fields, and of Ukrainian in political and cultural life, in rural areas and in the soft-line political spheres⁷².

In 1926, there was also the decision on the part of Kaganovič to set up a secret commission on the activities of Ukrainian intellectuals⁷³, many of whom, like Hruševs'kyj, had agreed to return to Soviet Ukraine and do their job in the service of cultural *korenizacija*; in particular, at the Eight Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party (1924), the Declaration of the Sixty-Six was presented, which was very favourable to the policy of Ukrainization, and was signed by prominent Ukrainian intellectuals and former members of the Ukrainian independent government (such as Chrystjuk, close to Hruševs'kyj, and Šrah)⁷⁴. Thus began a policy contrary to *korenizacija*, which grew over time and had the GPU as protagonist with its reports on the activities of the "chauvinist circles"⁷⁵. In addition, the position taken by the Communist Party of Western Ukraine led to a growing suspicion that Poland could exploit Ukrainian nationalism in its favour, as Kaganovič said in a speech in March 1928. In Moscow, even Stalin was convinced that the application of *korenizacija* could have dangerous implications.

At the end of 1928, the first explicit Russian interference in the cultural life of Ukraine began with the attack by the secretary of the All-Union Society of Marxist Historians, Pavel Gorin, on the Marxist historian Matvij Javors'kyj, the chief representative of the regime's historiography in Ukraine; the accusation, also published in *Pravda* on February 10, 1929, was that Javors'kyj overestimated the national historic factor and treated the history of Ukraine separately from the general historical dynamics⁷⁶. The attack was caused by disagreements about the structure of the All-Union Society of Marxist Historians and the role of national history. Javors'kyj and Skrypnyk

⁶⁹ SARE, P3316, 24, 643.

⁷⁰ CSAPOU 1, 20, 4172.

⁷¹ Martin 2001: 119-120.

⁷² Martin 2001: 122-123.

⁷³ CSAPOU, 1, 6, 102.

⁷⁴ *Visti VUCVK*, 18.5.1924: 2.

⁷⁵ Martin 2001:225.

⁷⁶ Plohhy 2005: 383-397.

favoured a federal structure, while Russian historians wanted to control the national branches of the central Society, in which to place scholars and impose their own research programs; they minimized the national factor intended to crush the national paradigms, as was evident in the closing speech at the Congress of Marxist historians (where the attack against Javors'kyj started) by the President of the All-Union Society, Michail Pokrovskij⁷⁷. Even Skrypnyk eventually had to take a stand against Javors'kyj and in June 1931, the entire Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism, where Skrypnyk also taught, was dissolved.

Collectivization and industrialization were then mechanisms objectively directed against the national principle and *korenizacija*, because they strengthened economic planning based on non-national economic regions and affected the territory which had been segmented into national districts and villages⁷⁸. Nevertheless, Stalin continued to attack the internationalist positions and confirmed the *korenizacija* line several times. In June 1930, at the Sixteenth Party Congress, he stated that indeed "the construction of socialism in the USSR is the period of the flowering of national culture"⁷⁹. In Stalin's speech, Russian chauvinism and internationalism were identified, probably in the context of the fight against "specialists" - i.e. engineers and scientists trained in Tsarist era - which the regime had been conducting since the NEP had been liquidated. The defence of *korenizacija* was, however, associated with a most intense fight against nationalism - in the words of Stalin. In the previous months, several show trials were held against groups of intellectuals in Ukraine, Belarus and other Republics or national regions. The most publicized trial was the Ukrainian one, organized against some of the leading Ukrainian intellectuals, accused of having founded a mysterious independent organization (SVU, Union for the Liberation of Ukraine). It was also meant as a clear signal to Poland of the intention on the part of the Soviet power to eliminate all possible support for Polish ambitions in Ukraine. Starting in July of 1929 with the arrest of Serhij Jefremov (the most prominent Ukrainian literary critic) and the SVU show trial, a decade of harsh repression began; in 1930, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was also suppressed, accused of Petljurism⁸⁰. Since 1926, the GPU, as mentioned, considered the political and cultural situation in Ukraine to be dangerous. In May 1928 the Politburo of the KP(b)U had ordered to investigation into Jefremov and the entire Ukrainian intelligentsia⁸¹. Moreover, at the beginning of 1929, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR was also hit by a series of arrests because its members had refused to elect several candidates proposed by the Party.

⁷⁷ *Trudy Pervoj* 1930: 451-456.

⁷⁸ Martin 2001: 243-244.

⁷⁹ *XVI s'ezd* 1930: 56.

⁸⁰ Bociurkiw 1979-80: 8.

⁸¹ CSAPOU 1, 16, 6.

Jefremov had criticized the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine because, with the election of Party members such as Skrypnyk and Zaton's'kyj he considered it to be too faithful to power, and he was then expelled from the Academy in February 1929⁸². The show trial against the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine was then part of the struggle against the “specialists” hired by the regime (so, perhaps, Skrypnyk interpreted it), but was also uniquely Ukrainian. Of the 45 defendants, there were Autocephalous priests, two historians, 3 linguists, 3 medical researchers, several academics, teachers, professors and activists of rural cooperatives⁸³. “The trial was also a blow aimed at Skrypnyk, just as the Shakty affair had been directed against Bukharin”⁸⁴.

The SVU trial showed, indirectly, the growth of a Soviet xenophobia, which was primarily ideological and not ethnic, as tsarist xenophobia had been, but it had also inherited something of the latter. Great importance was given, in this context, to the Special Administrative Regions of the border. In Ukraine, 2-3 million people, mostly Poles, Germans and Ukrainians lived in these regions. Fears of a wave of emigration of Poles from Ukraine led therefore to the first ethnic Soviet deportation, after the mass demonstrations of February 1930 against collectivization in the border regions of Ukraine. The Politburo's decree of deportation hit “in the first line, those of Polish nationality”⁸⁵. A new phase began in the Soviet nationalities policy, which targeted “non-Soviet” nationalities, i.e. those who had their own homeland outside the borders of the USSR, and therefore also qualified as “enemy nations”.

5. Though Stalin in 1930 had attacked Russian chauvinism, at the end of that same year he began to reevaluate in his writings the tradition of the Russian state, according to a line which, in the mid-thirties, led the Soviet regime to place Russian nationality at the center of political discourse. For example, in a letter of December 1930, he wrote to Dem'jan Bednyj that “the Russian working class is the vanguard of the Soviet workers” while strongly criticizing the negative treatment Bednyj reserved to the historical Russian past⁸⁶.

Several factors enabled this direction: economic centralization strengthened the existing Russian state tradition, and in 1927 the Ukrainian government controlled about 80% of the Ukrainian industry, a share which in 1932 had dropped drastically to 37.5%⁸⁷. On the other hand, collectivization met with the greatest resistance in Ukraine and the other non-Russian republics. After defeating his opponents at home, Stalin became more sensitive to the dangers linked to the resentment of Russian speakers towards Ukrainization,

⁸² *Visti VUCVK* 15 February 1929: 1.

⁸³ *Visti VUCVK* 11 Mars 1930: 3.

⁸⁴ Mace 1983: 276.

⁸⁵ RSASPH 17, 162, 8.

⁸⁶ Stalin 1953: 24-25.

⁸⁷ Holubnychy 1982: 818.

which he began to see as encouraging dangerous nationalist, anti-centralist, pro-Western tendencies⁸⁸. The majority of Russian speakers were, in fact, hostile and cold towards Ukrainization, especially due to the language; a worker complained, for example, in 1926: “they turned me from a literate person into an illiterate one”⁸⁹. In a speech of 1933, a senior member of the KP(b)U complained that the cases of Russian officials dismissed because they refused or were unable to learn Ukrainian were not few⁹⁰.

Another factor that led to the crisis of *korenizacija* was represented by requests to extend Ukrainization to the large Ukrainian minority in Russia and in the Kuban’, associated with claims for territorial changes in favor of the Republic of Ukraine, as had already taken place between 1924 and 1926 for Belarus, which had increased its population by two million inhabitants (many were Russians). Ukraine had instead had to cede eastern Donbas and the region of Taganrog on the Azov Sea, receiving in the north (in the regions of Kursk and Voronež) only half of the Russian territory inhabited by Ukrainians; this was the only case in which the territorial modifications did not penalize the territory of the Russian Republic. The subsequent pressure to prevent the Russification of nearly eight million of Ukrainians living in the Russian republic (census 1926), led, at the end of 1928, to the beginning of a vast campaign of Ukrainization of Ukrainians in Russia, spurred by the Soviet of Nationalities of the Central Committee⁹¹.

The outbreak of the serious issue of grain requisitions eventually led to the final turning against Ukrainization. In March of 1928, Kaganovič had already associated nationalism with resistance to grain requisitions in a speech at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party⁹². *Korenizacija*’s formal cancellation in Ukraine was ratified by two secret decrees of the central Politburo of December 14 and 15, 1932, at the height of the campaign of grain requisitioning. The Politburo issued the decrees after the return of Molotov and Kaganovič, who had been sent to Ukraine and Kuban’ to guide the operations of grain requisitioning. The decree of December 14 connected the severe agrarian crisis to the “lack of vigilance” over Ukrainization, which had allowed “kulaks, former officers, Petljurites (...) to penetrate collective farm leadership”⁹³; the decree did not abrogate Ukrainization altogether, but its “mechanical” application which was not assigned to “Bolshevik cadres” The decree of December 15 abolished Ukrainization in the Federal Russian Republic⁹⁴.

⁸⁸ Martin 2001: 271-273.

⁸⁹ *Bol’shevik*, n. 23-24, 31.12.1926: 55.

⁹⁰ Ljubčenko 1933: 2.

⁹¹ Martin 2001: 279-291.

⁹² RSASPH 17, 26, 15.

⁹³ RSASPH 17, 3, 911.

⁹⁴ RSASPH 17, 3, 911.

After the decrees of December 1932, a wave of repression began in Ukraine that struck the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the community of western Ukrainians (mostly members of the Communist Party), and the national-communists. The most important victim was Skrypnyk. Since January 1933, compulsory courses of Ukrainian culture in the universities had been abolished. After months of criticism and arrests of his close associates, Skrypnyk committed suicide in July 1933. At the XVIIth Party Congress, Stalin drew the consequences of all this: “the vestiges of capitalism are much more vital in the realm of nationalities policy than in any other”⁹⁵. It was the tombstone of the *korenizacija*, which continued in Ukraine, but within very narrow limits, juxtaposed by repression and a growing appreciation of Russian culture. Ukrainization, however, had achieved significant results. For example, in 1930, almost 90% of all primary school students were enrolled in Ukrainian-language schools; 60% of industrial and technical schools were Ukrainianized⁹⁶; according to a 1933 survey of the new Education Commissar, Zaton’skyj, only half of Russian-speaking children attended a Russian school in Ukraine⁹⁷. The Ukrainian members of the Communist Party had grown significantly, from 23% in 1922 to 60% in October 1933; however, less sustained growth took place in the presence of Ukrainians in the Central Committee, increasing from 16% in 1924 to 43% in 1930. Finally, many members of the party claimed to be Russian-speaking Ukrainians (in 1927 it was almost 40% of registered Ukrainian), which made the Ukrainian speakers a minority in the Party⁹⁸: On the other hand, the decrease in the numbers of Russians in the Party was a worry for Moscow because of the loyalty of the Ukrainian apparatus and the reliability of Ukraine in case of war. Stalin said explicitly in the famous letter to Kaganovič on August 11, 1932, the one that started the attack on Ukraine:

The most important thing now is Ukraine. The current situation in Ukraine is terribly negative. It is negative in the party. (...) About 50 district committees have spoken out against the plan of stocking grain after judging it to be unrealistic. It is no longer a party, it is a parliament, a caricature of parliament. (...) Kosior was put in a corner. Things go wrong with the Soviets. Čubar is not a leader. The situation is not good with the OGPU. Redens is not leading the fight against the counter-revolutionaries in a republic so great and special as Ukraine. If we do not act immediately to resolve the situation in Ukraine, we risk losing Ukraine. Keep in mind that Pilsudski does not give up, his ability to spy in Ukraine is much greater than what Redens and Kosior understand. And remember also that in the Communist Party of Ukraine (500,000 members, ha ha!),

⁹⁵ XVII s’ezd 1934: 31.

⁹⁶ KP(b)U 1930: 276.

⁹⁷ CSASBPGU 539, 11,1112.

⁹⁸ Liber 1992: 82, 94, 226.

there are quite a few (yes, quite a few!) rotten subjects, conscious or unconscious Petliurists and direct agents of Pilsudski. As soon as things get worse, these elements will waste no time before they open a front inside (and outside) the Party, against the Party⁹⁹.

The terrible winter of 1933 that followed brought heavy requisitions which caused a man-made famine in the Ukrainian countryside with millions of deaths: the Holodomor.

By November 1933, thousands of office workers, teachers and academics had been arrested or removed from their posts. There was condemnation of the introduction of the Ukrainian alphabet, promoted by Skrypnyk in his important 1928 reform including the standardization of spelling which included the letter *g* already used in Galicia (to be used for the corresponding sound in foreign languages). Kosior accused him of favoring the introduction into the Ukrainian lexicon of foreign words in place of Russian ones¹⁰⁰; its spelling system (*Skrypnykivka*) was therefore abolished, but remained in use in Galicia and in the Ukrainian diaspora¹⁰¹. After 1933, national-communism became a condemnable ideology, the ties between Ukraine and Russia were increasingly emphasized and, unlike before, the assimilation of national minorities was encouraged.¹⁰² In those months, in addition, there was a wave of spontaneous de-Ukrainization, especially in the areas mostly inhabited by Russians: the journal of the province of Luhans'k came to be written in Russian, as did the documents of the city government of Donec'k, and the University of Odessa became once more Russian-speaking¹⁰³. There was also a radical change in the distribution of newspapers: if in 1932, 90% of them were in Ukrainian and 4% in Russian, in 1938 the ratio went to 68-30% (and sometimes the content of newspapers was in Russian, even though the title was in Ukrainian)¹⁰⁴. In December 1937, there was a decree of the Central Committee of the Party (Orgbjuro) that explicitly condemned as "incorrect and politically erroneous (...) the lack of newspaper in Russian" and ordered the creation of Russian newspapers in the major Ukrainian cities¹⁰⁵.

At the November 1933 KP(b)U plenum, Kosior and his deputy Postyšev (Stalin's emissary sent in January to lead the requisitioning of grain) stated that Ukraine was now a mature industrial nation, no longer threatened by Russian chauvinism, and that the greatest danger now was Ukrainian nationalism; a "Bolshevik Ukrainization" would still be brought forward by the

⁹⁹ Published in Chlevnjuk 2001: 273-274.

¹⁰⁰ Kosior 1933.

¹⁰¹ Mace 1983: 226.

¹⁰² Martin 2001: 356.

¹⁰³ CSAPOU 1, 1, 421; 1, 20, 6634.

¹⁰⁴ Martin 2001: 369.

¹⁰⁵ RSASPH 17, 114, 633; 17, 21, 4685.

party¹⁰⁶. After 1933, “Bolshevik *korenizacija*” was much less linguistic and more inclined to promoting ethnically Ukrainian cadres in the State and Party¹⁰⁷. There was also an effort to maintain and develop productive investment in the non-Russian Republics. The end of the original *korenizacija* provincialized Ukraine, which often found itself relating to the world through the mediation of Russian language and culture¹⁰⁸.

6. National repression in Ukraine and fears of an impending war were the main factors that led Stalin to launch, from the mid-thirties onwards, the Russo-centric politics of National Bolshevism, which was synthesized by the famous editorial in the *Pravda* of February 1, 1936. It proclaimed the Russian people “first among the equals” of the Soviet peoples. Between 1935 and 1938, at least nine nationalities were affected by ethnic cleansing and classified as “enemy nations”. But the Stalinist regime did not try to create a Soviet nationality or to force assimilation to Russian nationality¹⁰⁹; *korenizacija* had been implemented without emphasis, not to touch on Russian sensitivity and because a Russian problem had been provoked both in the West and the East of the Soviet Union. Along with the large decrease in *korenizacija*, there was a general change in the role played by Russia in the Soviet system that “settled upon a Russo-centric form of etatism as most effective way to promote state-building and popular loyalty to the regime”¹¹⁰. This was based on three perspectives: the Russification of the Russian Republic, the elevation of Russian culture to a unifying culture of the Soviet Union, the new rhetoric (Russian-centric) of the Friendship of the Peoples¹¹¹, which was introduced by Stalin in December 1935 with the aim of shoring up the new Russian centrality while maintaining the multinational structure of the USSR¹¹². On the other hand, in 1926, Russians accounted for 52% of the population of the USSR, they were the majority of the working class and 9 million of them lived outside the Russian Republic, mostly concentrated in the most important non-Russian cities. They therefore constituted the main force which could be mobilized to “strengthen the fortress” which the USSR appeared to have become due to alleged threats of war from outside¹¹³.

One of the consequences was that the percentage of those who declared themselves Ukrainian collapsed between the censuses of 1926 and of 1937: from 8 to 3 millions in the Russian Republic and from 4 million to 250.000

¹⁰⁶ *XII z'izd KP(b)U* 1934: 66-67.

¹⁰⁷ Martin 2001: 367-368.

¹⁰⁸ Szporluk 1979-1980: 846.

¹⁰⁹ Martin 2001: 312.

¹¹⁰ Brandenberger 2002: 2.

¹¹¹ Martin 2001: 394.

¹¹² Martin 2001: 432.

¹¹³ Liber 1992: 148-152.

in the North Caucasus and Kuban' (where repression and famine had been harsh); in general, national minorities in the Russian regions of the Russian Republic went down from 15 to 4%, while in the same regions in 1938, practically all non-Russian schools had been closed¹¹⁴. In the 1930s, there was a strange phenomenon: the Soviet and Western colonial policies passed the baton; while the USSR walked toward the western colonial practices of exclusion, in the Western empires something akin to the Soviet policies of nationalizing took place¹¹⁵. In the USSR, even the central institutions of the politics of nationality suffered a sharp decline, with the abolition of Nationalities Department of the Central Committee and the near cessation of the works of the Presidium of the Soviet of Nationalities. "This process led to the division of the Soviet Union into a central Russian core and a non-Russian 'national' periphery"¹¹⁶. Stalin's new Russo-centrism, however, was more pragmatic than ideological and did not intend to encourage ethnic Russians, but to make accessible and popular the political objectives of the regime by presenting them in the guise of a Russian patriotism¹¹⁷. This is why *korenizacija* continued its course, albeit with the limitations described above.

On the other hand, the Great Terror was closely connected with the issue of nationality: the diaspora nations (whose motherland was outside the borders of the USSR) became enemy nations to decimate and deport, while Ukraine and Belarus were made bi-national and the Russian Federative Republic was russified. Finally, traditional Russian culture, history, literature and language were placed at the center of Soviet life¹¹⁸. The Friendship of the Peoples' ideology was also a formula that loosened class solidarity linked to the previous classist metaphors and strengthened the wartime alliance between the Soviet peoples around the Russian nucleus. In fact, Stalin said in a speech in 1935: "As long as this friendship exists, the peoples of our country will be free and unconquerable"¹¹⁹. This turn, according to Francine Hirsch, was consistent with the long-term goal of a communist "evolution" and merging of the nations¹²⁰.

But the transition from the class to the people, together with the anxiety regarding national classification that had characterized the Soviet regime from the outset, according to Martin, produced from the end of the 1930s onwards a crystallization of the concept of nation and the emergence of a primordial, semi-natural conception of its essence. From the historicist conception which was typical of the national theory that animated *korenizacija*, Stalin passed to a semi-natural vision, which was associated with the opposite trend that

¹¹⁴ Martin 2001: 405-410.

¹¹⁵ Blitstein 2006: 289-291.

¹¹⁶ Martin 2001: 412.

¹¹⁷ Brandenberger 2002: 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Martin 2001:423.

¹¹⁹ *Pravda*, n. 335, 6.12.1935: 3.

¹²⁰ Hirsch 2005: 9.

pragmatically enabled and facilitated assimilation into the Russian nation of the minorities within the Russian Federative Republic or the minorities that populated regions and Republics (such as Ukraine) in which there was a Russian presence; this primordialism is also associated with the emerging category of “enemy nations”¹²¹ and was greatly strengthened and made to look like racism (despite the fact that the Soviet regime made considerable ideological efforts to fight biological determinism)¹²² by the NKVD’s Decree of April 2nd, 1938. This imposed on individuals the nationality of their parents¹²³. This semi-racism was not, according to Martin, a deliberate project, but the cumulative effect of a series of administrative and political trends in Soviet life¹²⁴. Eric Weitz spoke of “racial politics without the overt concept and ideology of race”¹²⁵, similar (but with much more serious effects in the USSR) to what had happened in Western countries in the first half of the 20th century, where eugenics, immigration policies and war internment promoted racist policies, albeit in liberal regimes¹²⁶.

7. The irreconcilable contradictions of *korenizacija*, which Francine Hirsch defined to be “*by its nature both a creative and a destructive process*”¹²⁷, had de-Ukrainization effects after World War II. In 1958, an important educational reform desired by Chruščëv was launched, giving parents freedom of choice regarding the language of the education of their children, and then forbidding in practice the individual republics to impose their own language in schools, making a huge contribution to Russification: at the end of communism, in Kyïv only 300,000 out of 790,000 pupils attended a Ukrainian school¹²⁸. At the beginning of the seventies, with the emergence of the rhetoric of the Soviet people and Russian as a lingua franca, all Ukrainian dissidents were subjected to harsh repression with heavy prison sentences or hard labour, and were sometimes interned in asylums. The campaign of Russification under Brežnev had important results: the periodicals published in Ukrainian went from 46 to 19% between 1969 and 1980, while books went down from 60 to 24% between 1958 and 1980. The share of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and those who were bilingual increased. Thus, Milan Kundera wrote in 1984: “One of the largest European countries (there are nearly forty million

¹²¹ Martin 2001: 449-450.

¹²² Hirsch 2005: 231-271.

¹²³ SARF 9401, 12, 37.

¹²⁴ Martin 2001: 451.

¹²⁵ Weitz 2002: 3.

¹²⁶ Perri 2013.

¹²⁷ Hirsch 2002: 42.

¹²⁸ Subtelny 2102: 536.

Ukrainians) is fast disappearing. And this huge, incredible event is happening without the world noticing it”¹²⁹.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, it can be said that *korenizacija* represented an important milestone in the tortuous and dramatic process of Ukrainian nation-building. Not only that: *korenizacija* aided the historical recognition of the actual existence of a Ukrainian nation, the existence of which cannot be seriously questioned by anyone anymore without falling into absurd anachronisms, like those of people who hark back to the ancient geographical Tsarist categories to justify today’s questioning of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and of the entire post-Soviet space. On the other hand, *korenizacija*’s ambiguous character, which we have extensively documented, and its abrupt halt, which took place in 1932, greatly diminish its importance for the development of Ukrainian culture. Indeed, in the 1930s, giving vent to what Sacharov once called Stalin’s ukrainophobia, the Soviet regime began the process of a widespread Russification of Ukraine which occurred mainly in the Brežnevian age. Moreover, as we have said, the end of *korenizacija* provincialized Ukraine for a long time.

From the point of view of its significance for the history of communism, *korenizacija* is an exemplary illustration of some of the contradictions of international communism in the twentieth century; it was unable to untie the knot between the internationalist social project and the hegemonic role played by the Russian element. Similarly, *korenizacija* is a major case of the contradiction that was at the heart of the very existence of the Soviet Union, namely that between wanting to be both the “Motherland of Socialism” and being *de facto* the heir of Russian imperialism’s historical expansion lines.

In particular, the dramatic story of Ukrainian *korenizacija* allows us to understand both the feelings of suspicion, past and present, felt by a part of the Ukrainian population and Intelligentsia towards their overbearing Russian neighbor, and the desire and ability which Russia has to interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine.

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¹²⁹ Kundera 1984.

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XVI zs"ezd vsesojuznoj kommunističeskoj partii VKP/b. Stenografičeskij otčet, Moscow 1930.

XVII s"ezd vsesojuznoj kommunističeskoj partii/b. 26 janvarja-10 fevralja 1934 g. Stenografičeskij otčet, Moscow 1934.

Archives

CSASBPGU - Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (Central'nyj deržavnyj archiv vyščych orhaniv ta upravlinnja Ukraïny).

CSAPOU - Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (Central'nyj deržavnyj archiv hromads'kych Ob"jednan' Ukraïny).

RSASPH - Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj archiv social'no-političeskoj istorii).

SARF - State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvennyj archiv Rossijskoj Federacii).