

Introduction

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Over 150 years ago, on 30 July (Old Style 18 July) 1863, the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs Petr Valuev issued a secret directive stating that henceforth, “the approval of books in the Little Russian language that have religious content as well as those of a pedagogical nature or that are intended for mass consumption” was to cease, while “only those works which are in the category of belles-lettres” were permitted. Under the name “Valuev Circular” (henceforth, Valuev Directive) this decree soon became a symbol of Russian imperial oppression of the Ukrainian language and nation, as did the name of Valuev himself. Thirteen years later, on 30 (Old Style 18) May 1876, in the little German town of Bad Ems, Tsar Aleksandr II signed an even more rigorous ban of the Ukrainian language, the “Ems Ukaz,” which, (with minor amendments) stayed in force until the Russian Revolution of 1905. The consequences of these decrees were disastrous: at a time when a number of European nationalities actively developed their languages, literatures, and cultures, Ukrainians were denied to do so because Russian imperial forces simply argued that, as the Valuev Directive put it, “a [distinct] Little Russian [i.e., Ukrainian] language did not, does not and cannot exist” (Miller 240-41).¹

In the history of the Ukrainian language, culture, and nation, the Valuev Directive plays an eminent role. Notwithstanding any due skepticism vis-à-vis various “national martyrologies,” the assumption that the effects of this document are visible even today can hardly be refuted out of hand. Precisely in the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of European nationalities established, developed further, and disseminated the use of their languages in schools, in the press, in the judiciary, etc. In the meantime, the Ukrainians of the Russian Empire were denied to do so because according to Russian imperial ideology, “Little Russian” was nothing but a local variety of Russian. The language of instruction at “Little Russian” schools was thus Russian, as Russian was the language of the media and administration. Ukrainian, by contrast, was doomed to largely remain a “peasant language.” Even the best authors of fine literature could not

¹ All quotes from the Valuev Directive are from Russian originals, found in Miller 240-41. All translations are mine.

effectively change that status as long as they had no opportunity to change the social reality of Ukrainian-language communication.

The 150th anniversary of the Valuev Directive thus deserves to be commemorated, as a caveat, not only by speakers of the Ukrainian language, but by anyone sharing the conviction that no one should be allowed to ban, deny, or impose any language or identity. The present volume aims to present a visible scholarly fruit of this commemoration. In a sense, it is our intention to measure up to another, very impressive academic achievement—Hennadii Boriak's edited volume *Ukraiins'ka identychnist' i movne pytannia v Rosiis'kii imperiii: Sproba derzhavnoho rehuliuвання (1847-1914)* (*Ukrainian Identity and the Language Question in the Russian Empire: The Attempt at Regulation by the State [1847-1914]*), which, on more than 800 pages, offers an excellent collection of documents reflecting Russian imperial efforts to prevent the development of the Ukrainian language.

Our volume presents a collection of five original studies and the first English translation of a text that was initially published more than 100 years ago. This latter study, "A Brief Outline of the History of the Treatment of Ukrainian Literature by the Russian Censorship Laws," requires a short comment. It initially appeared in Russian in the journal *Rusaskaia mysl'* (*Russian Thought*) in 1905, as a study by a certain "Nik[olai] Fabrikant." While I and several other people were still trying to find out precisely who hid under this obvious pseudonym, David Saunders, an eminent expert on the Valuev Directive and its context, pointed out in an e-mail correspondence in the summer of 2013 that an earlier Ukrainian-language study which had appeared in the *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* (*Literary Scientific Herald*) in 1904 and which "Fabrikant's" text refers to, had been published under the real name of its author, the renowned Galician philologist Ivan Krevets'kyi. The fact that Krevets'kyi's study was not only published in important Ukrainian and Russian journals of the early twentieth century, and that it is still frequently quoted in scholarly literature (though usually under the pseudonym "Nik. Fabrikant," without any further attribution) confirms that this well-researched text is still of considerable relevance. My special thanks thus go to Frank Sysyn from the Toronto office of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, who encouraged me to include the first English translation of this "classical" text in the present volume. He also helped me contact Serhiy Bilenky, who agreed to write an introduction to Krevets'kyi's text. All other articles in this volume are original contributions, written between 2011 and 2013. Their order of appearance largely follows chronological principles.

Taras Koznarsky, in "'Neither Dead Nor Alive': Ukrainian Language on the Brink of Romanticism," examines statements about and attitudes toward the Ukrainian language in the cultural discourse of the Russian Empire in

Ukrainian texts since 1798, including classifications and conceptualizations of the language. Koznarsky emphasizes the significance of Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi's *Eneida* (*Aeneid*) and offers an interesting interpretation of Oleksii Pavlovs'kyi's *Grammatika malorossiiskago narechiia* (*Grammar of the Little Russian Dialect*) and its role in the history of Ukrainian culture. Koznarsky's discussion of Mikhail Kachenovskii's reaction to the views of the then prominent Polish intellectual Jerzy Bandtkie and his assessment of Aleksei Levshin's *Pis'ma iz Malorossii* (*Letters from Little Russia*) of 1816 confirm that many crucial problems discussed in the context of the Valuev Directive had already been raised half a century earlier: was it possible or desirable to create a "cultivated" Ukrainian language? Ukrainian writers increasingly tried to prove that this question should be answered in the affirmative.

In my own contribution titled "*Osnova* and the Origins of the Valuev Directive," I first introduce the regulations of the Valuev Directive and then discuss the historical relations of the Ukrainian and the Russian languages from their beginnings up to the 1860s. I ask whether "Little Russian" has ever *not* been distinct from "Great Russian," and I highlight the question of how "imperial Russian" was created and how it penetrated into Ukraine. Finally, I offer an assessment of how Ukrainian activists attempted to gradually forge "Little Russian" vernacular varieties into a standard language and assess the progress they had made by 1863. I emphasize that precisely the sphere beyond fine literature was of special importance for the development of the Ukrainian language during that period, and that the protagonists had a very reasonable understanding of their historical mission, as reflected, *inter alia*, in the texts of the Ukrainian journal *Osnova* (*The Foundation*).

Valentyna Shandra describes the Kyivan intellectual *milieu* on the eve of the Valuev Directive. Based on rich archival sources, she thoroughly analyzes the ideological background of Ukrainian intellectuals and their adversaries and demonstrates to what extent Russian officials felt alarmed by the rising "Little Russian" movement in the early 1860s. Shandra points out the strategic role of the city of Kyiv, where Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish national interests clashed, and analyzes the national debates on the eve of July 1863. Problems regarding Ukrainian orthography and the Ukrainian language in general were debated in a lively manner in the Kyivan press. Russophile ideologists of various ethnic backgrounds (many of them were in fact "Little Russians") blackened Ukrainian national aspirations and gradually paved the way for the Valuev Directive.

Johannes Remy, in his article titled "Despite the Valuev Directive: Books Permitted by the Censors in Violation of the Restrictions Against Ukrainian Publishing, 1864-1904," continues his research regarding books that were published despite the imperial bans of the Ukrainian language. As Remy

emphasizes, Russian censorship organs often paid little attention to the content of the Valuev Directive or later decrees; they frequently prohibited the publication of manuscripts merely because of their Ukrainian language, although they were obviously not “intended for mass consumption.” Regarding the books that were published in violation of the Valuev Directive during the 1870s, Remy confirms his earlier conclusions that they were a result of the corruption of Russian censorship organs. As for books that were published in violation of the Ems Ukaz (and later decrees) in the 1880s, Remy emphasizes that this happened precisely at a time when several Russian officials considered dismissing the imperial language bans. As for the turn of the twentieth century, Remy points out that the restrictions “gradually eroded before they were repealed, although their impact continued right up to the revolution.”

Maxim Tarnawsky, in “Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi and the Prohibitions on Publishing Ukrainian Literature,” asks whether the Valuev Directive actually delayed the development and acceptance of Ukrainian literature. Tarnawsky argues that in the second half of the nineteenth century, a considerable growth of Ukrainian literature took place, but it largely remained invisible owing to the specific situation of Ukrainian-language publishing in the Russian Empire. Tarnawsky underscores that one of the consequences of the imperial bans of the Ukrainian language was the strengthening of Ukrainian national identity across the borders of the Russian and Austrian (since 1867: Austro-Hungarian) Empire.

I would like to thank all contributors and all persons who either translated or edited the papers of this volume, particularly Iko Labunka, Vitaly Chernetsky, and Olena Ivanenko. Concluding, I would like to express my gratitude to Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj and Svitlana (Lana) Krysz, the former and the present editors-in-chief of *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, as well as to Volodymyr Kravchenko, the former director of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. It is a great honour for me to publish this collection in this particular intellectual context.

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