Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi and the Prohibitions on Publishing Ukrainian Literature

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Abstract: The impact of the Valuev Directive on Ukrainian literature should, in principle, be measurable quantitatively. But the quality of the evidence, the size of the empirical sample, and other factors make any such measurement practically meaningless. The only way to gauge the impact of Valuev is to examine the personal and creative reactions of the persons most directly affected by the decree. Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi was the most prominent Ukrainian writer in the Russian Empire, and his response to the Valuev Directive offers a revealing picture of the circumstances in which Ukrainian literature was developing in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi, quantitative measurement, Kyiv Theological Academy, Siedlce, Hromada, *Pravda*.

The most important question arising from the prohibitions on the use of Ukrainian in the Russian Empire concerns the impact of these measures on the development of Ukrainian literature. Despite its obvious significance, this question has not been answered. Indeed, it has only rarely been posed. There are very good reasons for this. To begin with, the question is not easily construed as a practical assignment. On its face, the issue appears to be quantitative—an unattractive challenge for many humanist scholars for whom numerical data are somewhat foreign. But the numerical problem is more complicated than it appears. It is a simple matter to count all the Ukrainian-language publications in the Russian Empire before and after the Valuev Directive (1863) and the Ems Ukaz (1876). Indeed, Johannes Remy has done just that for the Valuev Directive on the basis of the data in V. Iu. Omel'chuk's *Ukrainomovna knyha*, *1798-1916* (*Ukrainian Language Books, 1798-1916*), and produced a table that shows a sharp decline in Ukrainian publications in the years immediately following the Directive (Remy 97). But the numbers on this table are very small, and it is very difficult to gauge their significance, although clearly the Valuev Directive had a negative effect. Moreover, the numbers tell an ambiguous story. For 1862, just before the Directive, Remy has counted 33 Ukrainian publications. For 1874 the equivalent number is 32. So after the bleak years between 1865 and 1868, when the number was never larger than 2, is it safe to say the trend was

Volume IV, No. 2 (2017) DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21226/T2RW51

again pointing upward? The number for 1875 is 22. The conclusions, if any, that can be justifiably drawn from this numeric data are extremely limited.

But there is another factor complicating the interpretation of the numeric data. Between the death of Shevchenko (1861) and the publication of the first Ukrainian-language daily newspaper in the Russian Empire (1906), Ukrainian culture reached and passed, with many bumps and hurdles along the way, a great many significant milestones in its development. None of these was more significant than the intangible growth of public acceptance, of the realization among many Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians that, for better or worse, Ukrainian culture and particularly Ukrainian literature not only existed but were gaining credibility and influence to such an extent that their further development could only be arrested by explicit measures undertaken for that purpose. At some point in the second half of the nineteenth century, Ukrainian literature reached the cultural equivalent of critical mass, where a process becomes self-sustaining. This development is certainly quantifiable, just like the sum of all the books listed in *Ukrainomovna knyha*, but the multitude of factors involved in its measurement and the absence of reliable polling data from those years make an actual measurement practically impossible. Without this measurement, however, we cannot gauge the impact of the Valuev Directive and the Ems Ukaz on the growth and acceptance of Ukrainian literature. Did the Valuev Directive actually delay the growth and acceptance of Ukrainian literature?

If direct quantitative measurement is out of the question, another practical approach might be to evaluate the preponderance of factors affecting the development of Ukrainian literature under the rules established by the Valuev Directive and Ems Ukaz. The goal is to enumerate the various consequences of the prohibitions as fully as possible and then to quantify or to quantitatively estimate their effects. The key to an effective analysis with this approach is to identify, as correctly and completely as possible, the range of factors affecting the development of Ukrainian literature that experienced an influence from the Valuev Directive or the Ems Ukaz. Among these factors are the obvious and intended consequences of the restrictions: literary works that were denied publication as well as literary works that were never produced because their potential authors were discouraged by the restrictions. It should be possible to quantify the first of these two factors by scouring the records of the various censorship offices during this period, but I am not aware of any attempt to compile such a list. The second factor, which might be understood as the unborn children of a literary genocide, is far more complicated. How can we estimate what might have or should have happened? With numbers as small as those we saw above for published books in the 1860s, it is impossible to establish a "normal" birth rate for Ukrainian literary works in the 1860s or the 1870s. And yet by 1905 the fertility of Ukrainian literature will look very different.

The slope and acceleration of its growth curve are clearly significant realities, even if our ability to measure them is limited.

This unmeasurable and somewhat invisible growth raises a number of interesting questions. Was the presumed weakness of Ukrainian literature at the time of Shevchenko's death a misleading illusion? This seems unlikely, as most of the scholarship describing the run-up to the Valuev Directive presents a weak Ukrainian movement that hardly justified the minister's action. What, then, stimulated the growth of interest in Ukrainian literature and culture? Why was this growth largely invisible? Was the Valuev Directive (and later the Ems Ukaz) ineffective in preventing this growth? The nature of these questions and the nature of the underlying historical problem do not allow for easy solutions. The available research on these matters is clearly insufficient, and far more elementary work of a historical and archival type needs to be done. Yet even with more research, there is no real likelihood that the growth and development of Ukrainian literature and culture can be documented and measured in a comprehensive and quantitative description.

The only approach that will yield an accurate, if non-comprehensive, picture of the developments in this period is one based on exploring individual figures and understanding their reactions and responses to the events they experienced. An amalgam of these portraits could produce a nuanced general image of the cultural developments in this period, provided a wide enough range of individuals were described. In this essay I propose to present one such portrait. The subject is Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi.

On July 18, 1863, when Minister Valuev signed the secret instructions to the censorship committees of Kyiv, Moscow, and Petersburg, Ivan Levyts'kyi, whom I shall call by his pen-name Nechui, was a twenty-four-year-old student at the Kyiv Theological Academy from which he would graduate with a Master's Degree in Theology in the spring of 1865. The students in this conservative religious academy, like young intellectuals throughout the Russian Empire, were to some degree under the influence of new liberal (and sometimes even radical) ideas. No doubt they were involved in various activities that could be deemed subversive by the authorities. For example, in 1861, the year that Nechui arrived at the school, Pavlo Zhytets'kyi, the future compiler of a Ukrainian dictionary, was dismissed from the Kyiv Theological Academy for his involvement with a group of Academy students who, influenced by the ideas of Charles Fourier, produced a written expose of the corrupt practices at the school, which was published in Herzen's *Kolokol* (*The Bell*) (Iefremov 25).[1] No doubt, there was also some enthusiasm for Ukrainian culture and literature among the students of the Academy. This

[1] See also Mandryka 35.

is, in particular, the thesis of Serhii Iefremov, who, like Nechui, was a priest's son and a product of the same religious school. Iefremov sees the entire Ukrainophile movement of the 1860s and 1870s as the personal struggle of devoted martyrs living in a world divided between their private, instinctive, deterministic commitment to the Ukrainian cause and the hostile, public, day-to-day world of Imperial reality, where they transformed themselves, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, into different beings. Iefremov likes to see ironies, and so he underscores the Academy's conservative multinational religious atmosphere as a breeding ground for Ukrainian patriotic sentiments:

> We must conclude that it was precisely at this time that the seeds sown in his earlier life germinated and the national problem arose before him in all its immediacy. It was precisely the Theological Academy that provided the appropriate grounds for its formulation. Here, one found an indescribable mix of "clothes and faces, tribes, dialects, and social orders." Here, members of various nationalities and cultures met eye to eye. Here, as Levyts'kyi himself recounted in his novel, *Khmary* (*The Clouds*), Ukrainian, Great-Russian, Bulgarian, Serb, and Greek students lived together in one home . . . . Against this background of tribal distinctiveness in customs, language, and other factors, it was most natural for the Ukrainians to ask themselves the question: "Who are we? Whose sons? Of what parents?" with all of its logical consequences (Iefremov 26).[2]

There is little doubt that the years Nechui spent at the academy were formative, if for no other reason than because he emerged from the school as an adult with a clear path for his future—he would be a teacher. Iefremov's speculation that the Academy provided some stimulus for Nechui's ideas on Ukrainian culture is partially borne out by Nechui's own words about his novel *Khmary* (*The Clouds*), which is self-evidently a product of his experiences at the school. Writing to Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi on February 9, 1905 (before he began demonizing Hrushevs'kyi for destroying the pure Ukrainian language with Galician vocabulary and orthography),

[2] All translations are my own. "Треба думати, що саме тепер у Левицькому сходить насіння, засіяне його попереднім життям, і перед ним устає у всенькій своїй невідкладності національна проблема. Саме духовна академія для її постановки давала догідний ґрунт. Тут панувала несказанна мішанина 'одежд й лиц, племен, наречий, состояний'; тут стикалися віч-на-віч заступники всяких національностей, різних культур; тут в одній хаті, як розповів сам Левицький у 'Хмарах', доводилося часто жити студентам — українцеві, великоросові, болгаринові, сербові, грекові . . . . На тлі племенної окремішности, звичок, мови й инших умовин натуральніше всього було для українців загадатись питанням — 'хто ми? чиї сини, яких батьків?' — з усіма його логічними наслідками."

Nechui discusses a Lviv edition of his works and adds a postscript regarding the real-life models for his most prominent fictional Ukrainophile characters:

> Back when I was still a student in 1862 these models secretly founded two Ukrainian schools in Kyiv and taught in Ukrainian. They also established the first Sunday schools both in Poltava and in Kyiv. In Poltava they even wanted to establish a [*narodnyi*, i.e. Ukrainian] theatre. Of course, for these theories some of them were sent off to Vologda and Arkhangelsk gubernias, although only for service [i.e., not incarceration]. I copied the character of Radiuk [in the novel *Clouds*] from two such activists: one was my friend Aleksii L'vovych Hulak-Artemovs'kyi, now deceased, a doctor and the nephew of the author of "Pan ta sobaka" ("Master and Dog"), and the second was from Poltava and is still alive.[3] (Nechui 10: 441)

The testimony of Nechui's letters and memoirs, the speculations in Iefremov's biography, and common sense deductions based on his biography all point to the importance of Nechui's experiences at the Theological Academy in formulating his lifelong devotion to the cause of Ukrainian culture and literature. However, this devotion was formulated in private without any external markers of his inclinations or evidence of his participation in activities or groups that would help confirm or explain his thinking. The administration of the old-fashioned religious school was at odds with the sentiments of those among its students who felt inclined to use their education for the benefit of society, particularly of the newly-liberated but still impoverished and oppressed Ukrainian peasants. Such was the young Radiuk, whom Nechui depicts in *Clouds*. The degree to which this fictional character actually reflected the qualities of Nechui's Academy friends on whom he was modelled is not clear. In later years, Nechui was criticized for the feeble energy and political confusion of Radiuk's activism. These traits might have been the actual qualities of the student activists, but they are probably also evidence that the writer was not personally involved in these rebellious activities. Had he been politically active, he likely would not have earned commendations from the Academy's principal and faculty, not only for his good grades but also for his exemplary good behaviour and

[3] "Ще я був студентом в 1862 році, ці моделі секретно завели дві українські школки в Києві і викладали науки по-українській, й вони ж позаводили перші недільні школи і в Полтаві і в Києві. В Полтаві хотіли навіть заснувати народний театр. Само по собі, що декотрих їх за ці теорії запровадили в Вологодську та Архангельську г[убернії], правда, на службу. Тип Радюка списаний мною з двох таких діячів: один мій товариш Алексій Львович Гулак-Артемовський, вже небіжчик, доктор, небіж автора 'Пан та собака', а другий, полтавець, ще й досі живе."

modesty (Mandryka 40). The Valuev Directive specifically focused on the use of the Ukrainian language and its role as a tool in educating the general population. The Russian professors and students who set the tone at the Academy were generally hostile to the idea of education or literature in Ukrainian, according to Nechui (10: 268). He quotes one professor as telling the students that in the interest of the state it would be best to burn all Ukrainian literature (10: 16). Naturally, in such an environment, it would not have been prudent for a career-minded student to advertise the fact that he aspired to become a Ukrainian writer.

Judging by his surviving epistolary and memoiristic works, Nechui was likely a very private man. He reveals very little of himself in any of his writing. There are very few personal recollections of him, and those that exist are mostly from his later years in Kyiv. We know very little of his relations with his parents and siblings. There is no record of close friends. The bulk of his correspondence concerns practical matters, most often in relation to the publication of his works. Aside from his belletristic writing, Nechui did not leave a large footprint in the world. There seems to have been no great emotion or passion in his life. The only exception is his fanaticism with regard to linguistic purity in the decade before World War I, and that seems largely an age-related aberration in his character. Personal reticence was surely a feature of his personality. But had he been a man with something to hide, a criminal avoiding detection by the authorities, his way of life might have been the same. In his characteristic personal reticence, as in so many other qualities of his life and personality, Nechui embodies and exemplifies the impact of the Imperial Russian government's war against Ukrainian cultural identity in the late nineteenth century. Whether through direct cause, ancillary consequence, or accidental convergence, his life story, his personality, and his public activity all seem to be a reflection of the specific policies adopted by the Tsarist government to restrict the growth of Ukrainian culture. For better or worse, the impact of the Valuev Directive and later the Ems Ukaz can be gauged—quantitatively, psychologically, aesthetically, and symbolically—on his person.

The Valuev Directive, in its specific injunctions, banned the publication of books in Ukrainian with the exception of those "that belong to the realm of fine literature" (Miller 264). In principle, then, inasmuch as he was destined to be primarily a writer of fine literature, Nechui might have remained unaffected by this decree. But that was not the case. Valuev's instructions identified the Ukrainian language with subversion, thus branding it a marker of political dissent and protest in Russia. In effect, it turned an otherwise conservative and loyal citizen like Nechui into something approaching a criminal. What is more, the text of the Directive clearly identified education, specifically the education of the masses, as a problematic issue inextricably tied to the same politically dangerous ideas

as the use of the Ukrainian language. So Nechui was doubly damned, first as a promoter of the Ukrainian language and then as an educator. Finally, the minister also saw fit to mention the Ukrainian translation of the New Testament (recently submitted to the censors for approval) as another undesirable manifestation of this politically suspect interest in the Ukrainian language. Although not a particularly religious man, Nechui was the product of a clergy family and was completing an entirely religious course of education. That, too, was seen in less than benevolent terms if combined with Ukrainian sentiments.

Despite all these foreboding indicators, Nechui was ready to make his way in the world. His education had prepared him for a career as a teacher in Orthodox seminaries. He hoped for an appointment in Kyiv but was given an assignment at the seminary in Poltava, as a teacher of Russian language and literature. Here he was well-liked by his students, and one memoirist recalls his emotional readings of Shevchenko in class (Zubkovs'kyi 3). But the salary earned by teachers in Orthodox seminaries was very small, and Nechui realized that if he stayed, he would be condemned to terrible poverty. There was another factor as well. In Poltava Nechui began to write. There, he wrote his first work, entitled *Dvi moskovky* (*Two Soldiers' Wives*). In the aftermath of the Valuev Directive, this was an activity that could not be comfortably pursued within the bounds of an Orthodox religious institution in Russia. Nechui needed a position that paid better and offered more personal freedom. Ironically, the opportunity arose as a result of the same Polish uprising (1863) that led to the Valuev Directive. Russian imperial authorities took a number of repressive steps following the uprising to prevent a recurrence in the future. One step was to inculcate loyalty to the Empire by better controlling the education Polish children received in their schools. Of course, teachers in these outlying and potentially hostile provinces (from a Russian perspective) would be paid better than those who enjoyed the comforts of home territory. Moreover, each year of service in these areas would count for 1 and 1/3rd years for pension calculations, which is why Nechui retired as early as he did (Plokhy 436). But not all the children living in what was considered Polish territory were Poles. Many were Ukrainians. So here was an opportunity for Ukrainian teachers to exploit the Russificatory policy to their own advantage. Nechui asked two of his former Academy professors, Teofan Lebedyntsev, the historian and future editor of the journal *Kievskaia starina* (*Kyivan Antiquities*), who was serving as the supervisor of the Kholm school district, and Ievhen Kryzhanovs'kyi, who was also taking up a position as a supervisor of the school administration in Podlasie (Podlachia), to find him a position in the town of Bila (Biała Podlaska), 147 km east of Warsaw, in an area with a significant Ukrainian population. Lebedyntsev did manage to place Serhii Hrushevs'kyi, the father of the future historian Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, in the

Kholm schools, but Nechui did not get the position he wanted and was appointed to a girls' high school in Kalisz, 207 km west of Warsaw (Iefremov 31). This was not even remotely a Ukrainian area, and Nechui found himself in the heart of Poland teaching Polish girls Russian language, literature, history, and geography. Not surprisingly, he asked to be transferred, and in June 1867 after just one year in Kalisz, he took up a similar position at a girl's high school in Siedlce, 89 km east of Warsaw. This was a girls' school for Uniates (Greek Catholics)—that is, for Ukrainian girls. Nechui felt more comfortable here and participated in activities with his students that went beyond his formal duties as a Russian teacher. He even accepted the position of school librarian, which entailed a small salary bonus. Where the salary for a seminary teacher in Poltava had been, according to Nechui himself, 250 rubles (10: 269), in Siedlce he was reportedly earning 1200 (Studyns'kyi 143).[4]

As with much of Nechui's biography, there is no shortage of ironies and uncertainties in this episode. On the face of it, Nechui was the beneficiary (in a financial sense at least) of the repressive policies of the Imperial government. Not only was he to be paid much better than he would have been in Poltava, and would qualify sooner for a pension (which he would collect for a very long time after his retirement in 1885), but he would be teaching Ukrainians. His subjects were Russian language and literature, but we know that his extracurricular activities in the school included participation in a staging of Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi's *Natalka Poltavka*. In keeping with Nechui's general reticence, we have only the scantest evidence for precisely why he wanted to leave Poltava. Money was certainly a strong motive, but in his memoirs he also says "I knew that I could not hold on at a theological seminary if I would be writing in Ukrainian"[5] (10: 16). Was there a real threat, or was Nechui merely reacting to a general sense of the conservative nature of a religious institution? Had the Valuev Directive succeeded in evoking fear even though the specific writing that Nechui was pursuing was explicitly permitted, since it was *belles lettres*? Was the Valuev Directive pushing Nechui into the ethnically mixed, partially Ukrainian territories of Eastern Poland?

Nechui's Siedlce period illustrates another irony, perhaps the most important one, of the Valuev Directive and the Ems Ukaz. Among the officials involved in ratifying the plans that Lebedyntsev and Kryzhanovs'kyi were formulating for schools in Uniate eparchies were former members of the Kyrylo-Methodian Society, Vasyl' Bilozers'kyi and Panteleimon Kulish, who

[4] A letter (no. 128) from Mykhailo Podolyns'kyi to Volodymyr Navrots'kyi dated January 12, 1870.

[5] "Я знав, що мені не вдержатися в духовній семінарії, як я буду писати по-українській."

had been rehabilitated and were now officials on Imperial service in Warsaw (Kryzhanovs'kyi 351). After Nechui transferred to Siedlce, he established contact with Kulish and showed him the stories he had written in Poltava and Kalisz. At this time Kulish was actively promoting contacts with Ukrainians in Austria, and he was specifically involved with the establishment of a Ukrainian journal in Lviv, titled *Pravda* (*Truth*), which became the mainstay of Ukrainian publishing for most of the last third of the nineteenth century. Kulish sent Nechui's works to the journal for publication and encouraged the young author to produce even more, including works specifically targeted at Ukrainians in Austria, such as Ukrainian translations of Russian writers, which made sense in Lviv but would have seemed a waste of time in Kyiv. Eventually Nechui established his own direct links with *Pravda* and with Ukrainian activists in Lviv and published most of his major works in that periodical.

The connection between *Pravda* and Nechui was one of the turning points in the history of Ukrainian literature and culture, not only symbolically but in real and practical ways as well. Ukrainian literature in Russia would likely not have survived in the era of Imperial repressions if it had not been possible to publish in Western Ukraine. Would anyone in the Russian Empire still be interested in writing in Ukrainian in 1899 if there had been no opportunity to circumvent the repressive edicts by publishing in Austria? If there had been no Ukrainian literature to read for twenty-five years? If there had been no Ukrainian writers setting a good, or bad, example for their fellow writers to emulate, or disparage? If there had been no Nechui in print? The connection between *Pravda* and Nechui and, generally, between Ukrainian intellectuals in Austria and those in Russia also created the common cultural space that allowed these two oppressed minorities to recognize each other as members of the same nation. In a delicious irony that cannot help but delight patriotic Ukrainians, the Valuev Directive and the Ems Ukaz, to the degree that they were responsible for establishing this East-West connection, not only failed in their general purpose of preventing the development of a separate Ukrainian cultural identity, but actually helped establish it. The unintended consequences of bad policy can be very surprising!

The existence of this East-West connection, however, was merely an opportunity. The pipeline needed to be filled. This meant that someone needed to provide literary works for publication, financing for the journals in Lviv, and operational support and planning. What was needed was an organization. As we have seen, Nechui established contacts with Western Ukrainians through Kulish. But Kulish himself was something of an outsider in the Ukrainian intellectual community at this time. After the demise of *Osnova* (*The Foundation*) his organizational role in Ukrainian cultural affairs was in decline. Nechui needed a link to the activists in Kyiv who, following

the setbacks of the Valuev Directive, were reinventing themselves as a semi-secret organization that would come to be known as the Old Hromada. Once again, between Nechui's personal reticence and the secrecy required to conduct Ukrainophile activities in Kyiv, there is almost no evidence indicating how Nechui established contact with and eventually joined the Hromada. His publications were certainly attracting attention. His name appears in the correspondence of some key individuals, including Mykhailo Drahomanov, who mentions in November 1871 that he had heard of Nechui a long time before from Kulish (Pavlyk 55). Of course, as a teacher in Siedlce, Nechui was far removed from the activists who were forming the Hromada in Kyiv in the early 1870s. It is well-established, however, that he liked to go home to his native Stebliv and Bohuslav during holidays and vacations, particularly in the summer months. Mykola Taranenko says he visited Odesa during the summers of 1871, 1872, and 1873 (104). Whatever the destination—home, vacation, or both—many of these travels might readily have included or accommodated a stopover in Kyiv. The itinerary he describes in the first paragraph of his later work "Zhyvtsem pokhovani" ("Buried Alive") is precisely such a trip from Siedlce through Kyiv to his native region. One of the few Ukrainian writers actively publishing works of literature must have been a very welcome acquaintance for the expanding circle of Ukrainian activists in Kyiv. No doubt, Nechui reciprocated the interest. Among the few letters from Nechui in this period that have survived is one from April 23, 1872, to Pavlo Zhytets'kyi, a leading figure among the Kyiv Ukrainophiles after his return to Kyiv in 1868 (10: 255). In it Nechui speaks of a virtual acquaintance, indicating that he had not yet met with Zhytets'kyi, but he also expresses his regret that he did not meet with Lev Lopatyns'kyi when he was in Kyiv during the vacation. It is likely, then, that Nechui visited Kyiv and its Ukrainian activists either in the summer of 1871 or during the Christmas and New Year's holidays in January 1872. Whether or not he visited, he had certainly written to Zhytets'kyi earlier. In a letter to Mykhailo Drahomanov (then still in western Europe) of February 7, 1872, Zhytets'kyi reports that he received a letter from Nechui two days before in which Nechui proposed that the Hromada publish his manuscript of over a hundred pages (Smal'-Stots'kyi 122). It is not clear which work this might have been, but Zhytets'kyi praises Nechui as a writer and suggests putting off other works for later in order to publish Nechui. In fact, however, nothing of Nechui's appeared in Kyiv until 1874.

Beyond mentioning an earlier visit to Kyiv, Nechui's published letter from April 1872 offers additional clues of an existing relationship that extended beyond publishing. Nechui is explicitly thanking Zhytets'kyi for his "participation in my case" (in Russian, "*dobroe uchastie v moem dele*") (10: 255). Since the letter is about finding a teaching position in Kyiv, perhaps Zhytets'kyi made some efforts to help in this matter. That there must have

been previous communication on this issue as well, is also signaled by Nechui's specific comments on particular types of teaching positions, as if in answer to suggestions in an unknown earlier letter from Zhytets'kyi. Furthermore, Nechui speaks frankly about money. Considering the possibility of accepting a position that pays less than he currently earns, he says it would have to lead to something better in short order, because "precisely at this time" it would be inconvenient (10: 255). The willingness to discuss finances and the reference to special conditions at precisely this time clearly indicate that Zhytets'kyi knew more about Nechui than what is said in this letter. They had corresponded before this about more than just publications.

Whatever paths were traversed between Nechui and the Kyiv Ukrainophiles, the links were getting stronger. He was in Kyiv again in the summer of 1873. And when the members of the Kyiv Hromada assembled for a group photograph during the Archeographic Conference that they organized in Kyiv in August 1874, a very young-looking Nechui (he was then 35) is among them, seated quite prominently near the centre of the picture.[6] On September 11, 1874, Nechui is formally admitted as a member of the Kyiv Hromada.[7] Since he was not a resident of Kyiv, he cannot have been a very active participant in their ongoing activities, but his membership put him in touch with a very influential group of Ukrainian cultural figures who were involved in a clandestine organization. Once again, the Valuev Directive has an unexpected historical and personal impact. Without the repressive measures and the hostile environment they engendered, the Ukrainophiles could have developed their activities in the open, without need for secrecy and clandestine organizations. Nechui and most other members of the Old Hromada were cultural rather than political activists. They saw themselves as the defenders of noble human principles, as promoters of culture and education, not as revolutionaries battling the government for social change. But the Valuev Directive and the atmosphere of suspicion and repression that accompanied it turned these ordinary intellectuals into lawbreakers. The criminalization of Ukrainophile activities would eventually push the Kyiv Hromada into explicitly political activity, a development so antithetical to some of the older members, like Nechui, that it led to splits and disagreements between the older and the younger members of the organization. But even the conservative old guard in the Hromada had been

[6] The picture is reproduced in Smal'-Stots'kyi 128.

[7] Fedir Savchenko compiled the list of Hromada members and the dates when they were formally accepted into the organization based on the archived minutes of the meetings of the Southwestern (Kyiv) Branch of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society. These were, as he shows, actually meetings of the Kyiv Hromada (Savchenko 95-100, and the list of members, 271-75).

pushed by the repressive policies into an understanding of their own activities that included the necessity to put themselves beyond the law. Coercion had curtailed the development of Ukrainian culture for a time, but it had also emboldened previously timid activists. Through repression cultural patriots were being turned into fanatics, and believers were being converted into jihadists. To the mix of emotions that guided Ukrainophiles like Nechui, a new one had been added—anger.

Nechui left Siedlce in the summer of 1873 and took up a high-school teaching position in Kishinev. The circumstances of his departure have not been explained. Was he pushed out? Was he unhappy in Podlasie? Whatever personal reasons there may have been, the establishment of contacts with the Kyiv Hromada had symbolically undermined his earlier success, or at least reversed its orientation. Having established his reputation by publishing in Galician journals, Nechui now turned his attention back to Ukraine (in the terminology of that day), back to the historical lands of the Cossacks and Orthodoxy, and back to an imperial political and cultural climate that saw all things Ukrainian as heresy, treason, and secessionism. While Nechui was always a loyal patriot of his own half of Ukraine, especially of his own little corner in the southern reaches of Kyiv gubernia, there can be little doubt that this change in orientation came from his contacts with the Kyiv Hromada. This is most evident in his involvement in one of the Hromada's signature projects: short essays on various periods in Ukrainian history published in a pamphlet form that the Hromada members called "*metelyky*" (butterflies). Nechui wrote and published a number of these on various topics. Of course, it is important to note that these works—clearly aimed at a less-educated reader—were still prohibited under the terms of the Valuev censorship rules. The fact that they were passed by the Kyiv censor was not a result of Nechui's diplomatic skills or good luck, but rather of the Hromada's financial muscle and the corruptibility of the censor, who was later dismissed for taking bribes (Remy 106–09). In joining the Hromada, Nechui had moved into a circle of activists who were willing to do what was necessary to advance the cause of Ukrainian culture. With their help, Nechui was even reprinting in Kyiv some of the works he had previously published in Lviv. But then, disaster struck—a complete catastrophe! The fates were merciless to this Ukrainian writer. No sooner had Nechui gained a reputation, established himself with the Kyiv Hromada, published a few works in Kyiv, and settled down in Kishinev than the Russian tsar and the entire machinery of the imperial police state decided to attack the very heart and soul of his existence. Ukrainian literature was to be no more, at least not in the Russian Empire. On May 18, 1876, Tsar Alexander II, vacationing in Bad Ems in Germany, signed a decree that expanded the prohibitions of the Valuev censorship rules. Henceforth, all publications in Ukrainian were prohibited, as was the importing of Ukrainian-language

publications from abroad. And since this regulation was the deliberate work of the enemies of the Kyiv Hromada, the edict included a few other points aimed at destroying this organization. No sooner had Nechui turned his focus back to Kyiv than the Empire had struck back. The brief resurgence of Ukrainian cultural activities was over. For Nechui, whose sedate and contemplative character had earned him the nickname Vladyka (His Holiness, i.e. the customary title of a bishop) among Hromada members (Smal'-Stots'kyi 209, 411; letter 102, note 18), the edict must have seemed a measure aimed squarely at his own person. Gone were the hopes he had cherished of building a career as a Ukrainian writer in Ukraine. His turning away from Lviv toward Kyiv now looked much less promising. Now his career as a Ukrainian writer no doubt seemed questionable and even risky.

Not surprisingly, the years immediately following the Ukaz were lean ones for Nechui. Not one work of his was published anywhere for two years, and after that he was back to publishing in Lviv. No letters of his from these years have survived—perhaps he did not write any. He was teaching his pupils, licking his wounds, and, no doubt, seething in anger. In his biography of Nechui, Iefremov cites information provided to him by a Kishinev resident, D. Shchehlov, regarding Nechui's activities there in the immediate aftermath of the Ems Ukaz (Iefremov 39, note 1). Apparently Nechui was at the centre of a small group of high-school teachers who gathered occasionally, much like the Kyiv Hromada, to exchange ideas and discuss issues. There is no mention and no record of public activity by this group. There is, however, a police report from 1881 indicating that Nechui was under suspicion for being "a rabid Ukrainophile" (*zavziatyi khokhloman*, using a pejorative term for Ukrainians) (Kuz'menko 71). The author of the report knows Nechui's pseudonym and knows about his connections with Drahomanov. He also mentions that this teacher panders to students and speaks Ukrainian to them (Kuz'menko 71). What the police report does not mention, but Iefremov does, is that the meetings of the teachers' group in 1877 involved discussions of an essay Nechui had written entitled "Nepotribnist' velykorus'koi literatury dlia Ukrainy i dlia Slavianshchyny" ("The Undesirability [lit. Unnecessariness] of Great Russian Literature for Ukraine and for All Slavic Lands"), a long-winded and complex treatise about the nature of literature and its relation to a national culture. Here Nechui argued that Russian culture and Ukrainian culture are different and the only literature that is appropriate for Ukrainians is Ukrainian literature. He said much more than that, but that argument alone captures the essence of the piece.

A Ukrainian culture completely independent of Russian culture? For many, the idea was simply unthinkable. The Soviet Ukrainian scholar Oleksandr Bilets'kyi expressed an accurate judgment of the importance of this essay. He did not excuse or accept the ideas in Nechui's essay, but he understood their emotional origins. "It's not a product of critical thinking,"

says Bilets'kyi, "but a product of emotion, deeply scarred by the harsh measures of tsarism, . . . boiling over from the insult . . . . It was a shriek from the 'prison of nations'" (334). On this point Bilets'kyi hit the mark. The ideas in the essay are not quite as irrational as he might think, but the essay was indeed the shriek of a badly injured soul, an angry, vengeful tirade from His Holiness Nechui, the self-appointed keeper of the flame of Ukrainian cultural identity. This, too, was a major consequence of Valuev and Ems, the irrational anger that these measures provoked among some of their victims, particularly Nechui. Furthermore, this anger itself is part of a larger and more pernicious consequence of the prohibitions: the absence of a public discourse.

In the secretive, criminalized world of Ukrainian cultural activity in the Russian Empire in the last third of the nineteenth century, the most glaring absence, the most damaging blight, is the private nature of cultural activity. The Hromada is a powerful force, but their necessarily secretive nature prevents them from conducting direct communication with their audience, from soliciting and listening to feedback openly and publicly expressed. Because of the repressive measures that limit their activity, they are reduced to a form of preaching to the converted. Of course, the members are sophisticated and intelligent social activists and have a reasonably good sense of public feelings, but the absence of public discussion is itself a major obstacle. How can they influence people if they cannot communicate with them? This same circumstance holds doubly true for belletristic literature, particularly prose. While many poets can write in private, as Shevchenko did, without much of an audience and sometimes without much hope of an audience, the same is not true for prose, particularly long prose. How many authors produce a second novel if their first is not published? How many potential authors will write a novel without an example to follow? How will a published author know how to improve his work and attract more readers if there is never any feedback from readers? How can a cultural paradigm undergo an evolutionary shift without an open discourse about culture?

As aesthetic works of literary art, Nechui's novels and stories were particularly susceptible to the deleterious effects of the absence of public discourse about Ukrainian literature. His writing shows the signs of incomplete attention to his craft. The most glaring problem is with plot. Most of his works lack a clear sense of progressive development. Some of this is tied to his penchant for repetition, a stylistic feature that leads him into non-purposeful narrative modes and complicates plot development. But some of his stylistic and intellectual quirks might well have been smoothed out or polished up into refinement if he had had more exposure to a literary discussion with readers, critics, and editors. Nechui's reputation as an anchorite is no doubt based at least partially on his actual behaviour, reflecting his reclusive personality, but the repressive measures that forced

him into secrecy and intellectual isolation were likely also a factor. The legends of Nechui's anti-social nature are largely the invention of a younger generation that no longer saw him as an effective spokesman for the Ukrainian cause, but the fact remains that Nechui had little opportunity for feedback from his readers. Likely he would have been a better writer for such exchanges, building his skills in an atmosphere of professional stimulus, challenges, and competition. This, too, was a legacy of the Valuev and Ems edicts, and it affected all the writers of the day, not just Nechui.

The Valuev Directive and later the Ems Ukaz had a variety of more or less palpable influences on Nechui. As we have seen, they affected his choice of professional placements, his contacts with Western Ukraine, his involvement with the Hromada, and his hostility to Russian culture. They also stymied his professional development as a writer. Perhaps they even influenced his personality. Many turns of his personal life and literary career seem inextricably bound to the specific terms of the repressive edicts. In a final irony, as if to answer Valuev's objection to a translation of the Gospels, Nechui completed a Ukrainian translation of the Bible that had been undertaken by Kulish and left unfinished at his death. The Valuev Directive and the Ems Ukaz played a major role in Nechui's life. This exploration of the impact of these measures on a single writer gives us a small but nuanced portion of the larger picture of the impact of these measures that quantitative data, even if it were available, would likely fail to illustrate completely. The Valuev Directive pushed the development of Ukrainian literature in a number of directions, some, ironically, toward greater geographic diversity and resilience in the face of adversity. As we have seen, a great deal more work needs to be done before the full impact can be understood. Both quantitative and biographical evidence is still lacking. The recent 150th anniversary of the Valuev Directive offers a useful opportunity to focus attention on the process though which Ukrainian literature, culture, and identity overcame the enormous hurdles that were deliberately put in their way.

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