

The "Sophistication" of Soviet Nationality Policy in Ukraine, 1952-59

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One of the boldest contentions of Marxism is that it alone possesses the true formula for the solution of the national question. In 1917, one of the greatest multi-national empires in modern history collapsed and power was assumed by a revolutionary party which drew its ideology from the teachings of Marx and Engels. For the first time, and under the most favorable circumstances, the Marxists were offered an opportunity to prove the validity of their solution to the nationality problem. The supremacy of the proletariat has now existed for almost half a century in Russia. What have been its results in terms of the "inevitable fusion of nations"?

In attempting to analyze Soviet nationality policy, the Ukrainian minority is a suitable subject not only because it is the largest in the USSR, but also because in the past Ukrainian nationalism has manifested itself more emphatically than most. The period 1952-59 has been chosen since it exemplifies best both the continuity and flexibility of the Soviet approach to the national question at a time when the USSR witnessed the death of Stalin, Khrushchev's secret speech, and the attempted coup of the anti-party group.

The situation in the Ukraine in 1945 posed some definite problems for the Soviet leadership. The Nazi occupation shattered the myth of proletarian unity, as subsequently revealed by Khrushchev in the secret speech.¹ What followed was a mass re-education of the Ukrainian people, as well as other minority nationalities who had proven themselves politically untrustworthy and ideologically unreliable. The new course to be followed, as well as its characteristics, was revealed by Stalin in May of 1945 in his toast to the health of the Russian people.² The following year witnessed the official inauguration of *zhdanovshchina* or strict ideological conformity and throughout 1947-48, propaganda, indoctrination, and criticism continued unabated, reaching its climax in 1951 with particularly vehement attacks on Ukrainian "bourgeois nationalism."

That the trend ushered in by Stalin's toast was to be continued can be seen from the pronouncements made at the Nineteenth Party

1. Leo Gruliov (ed.), *Current Soviet Policies II* (New York, 1957), 182.

2. Robert S. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics and the Ukraine, 1917-1957* (New York, 1962), 248.

Congress where the main speaker on nationality policy was L. P. Beria. In addition to the usual barrage of statistics ostensibly verifying the successes of the Leninist-Stalinist nationality policy, Beria reiterated Stalin's toast and unmistakably identified that ubiquitous force which had carried the Soviet Union to its many achievements and victories:

The force which cements the friendship of the peoples of our country is the Russian people, the Russian nation, as the most outstanding of all the nations comprising the Soviet Union.³

The fact that Malenkov, who delivered the report of the Central Committee to the Congress, did not concern himself with nationality policy at any great length seemed to imply that this was to be Beria's task.⁴ In any case, the latter made himself quite clear. Any illusions that may have been held by the delegates concerning a possible shift in the regime's nationality policy were quickly dispelled.

The Ukrainian delegation to the Congress consisted of Melnikov, A. I. Kirichenko, A. Y. Korneichuk, D. S. Korotchenko, and M. M. Pidtychenko.⁵ Of these members, Korneichuk was the most outspoken in his praise of the Russian people and in his warnings against "the slightest manifestations of bourgeois nationalism."⁶ Once again, the dominant theme was the general superiority of the Russian people whose position was that of the elder brother to all the other peoples of the Soviet Union.⁷ Korneichuk's platitudes, however, were not new. More significant was his characterization of the Pereyaslav Rada as the "unification of two fraternal peoples in a single Russian state."⁸ If nothing else, the above statement provides some insight into the state of historical scholarship as it existed at that time. In addition, his promise to "clear the atmosphere" in the Ukrainian cultural organizations suggested that literature and the arts were to continue in their former capacity, i.e. as vehicles of Russification.⁹

Korneichuk's militant tone, however, should not be overemphasized. It can be traced to his own embarrassing position of having been an example of Ukrainian ideological defectiveness. Thus, if one

3. Leo Gruliow (ed.), *Current Soviet Policies* (New York, 1953), 164.

4. *Ibid.*, 215-216.

5. *Ibid.*, 237-241.

6. *Ibid.*, 176.

7. *Ibid.*, 175.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 177.

takes an over-all view of the proceedings of the Congress, it would seem that nationality policy, as such, did not play a major role. The reason for this may have been that this question was dealt with by the individual congresses at the republic level. These were convened immediately prior to the All-Union Congress, apparently in anticipation of forthcoming criticism.¹⁰ The Congress did, however, perform its function. It sanctioned the hegemony of the Russian element, thereby giving formal recognition to a state of affairs which had existed since 1945.

In the Ukraine, the result of this legalization of Soviet nationality policy was a further intensification of the campaign to instill ideologically correct attitudes in the population. At the regular plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPU held in December, 1952, Melnikov once again lamented the "shortcomings and mistakes in the activities of many professional organizations, schools, universities, publishing houses, and cultural-educational institutions."¹¹ The journal *Kommunist Ukrainy* was severely criticized for not having "shown a militant and acute spirit in exposing the reactionary ideology of imperialism and its despicable agents, the Ukrainian bourgeois-nationalists and cosmopolitans."¹²

Melnikov's use of the term "cosmopolitans" presents an interesting problem. It should be pointed out that the period immediately following the Congress was characterized by an increased emphasis on vigilance against a variety of saboteurs, plotters, and foreign agents. Surprisingly enough, most of the names mentioned in the Soviet press in this connection were distinctly Jewish.¹³ That an anti-Semitic campaign was indeed developing became fairly obvious from the proceedings of the Slansky trial. One of the charges against the former Secretary General of the Czech Communist Party was the transmission of military secrets through Jewish and Zionist channels.¹⁴ It is under these circumstances that Melnikov's reference to "cosmopolitans" acquires significance. As Barghoorn points out, terms such as "homeless cosmopolitanism" and "passportless tramps" have usually been associated with Jews.¹⁵ Yet, Melnikov's

10. G. D. Embree, *The Soviet Union between the Nineteenth and Twentieth Party Congresses, 1952-1956* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 5.

11. "For New Advance in Ideological Work," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, IV, No. 52 (February 7, 1953), 24.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Embree, *The Soviet Union . . .*, 14.

14. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

15. Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism* (New York, 1956), 218-219.

motives for linking Ukrainian nationalism with the current anti-Semitic drive remain unclear. One Ukrainian scholar's interpretation is that Stalin created the formula of "Ukrainian-Jewish nationalism" in order to "kill two birds with one stone."¹⁶ Perhaps the only thing that can be said with any degree of certainty concerning Soviet developments toward the end of 1952 is that events were moving towards a climax. The climax came in January, 1953, when *Pravda* announced the discovery of the so-called Doctors' Plot.¹⁷ What followed in the period between January and March can only be described in terms of the acute sense of insecurity which pervaded all levels of Soviet society. Although any attempt to shed light on exactly what was happening during this period must remain hypothetical, there is considerable agreement that a major purge was in the making. If so, Stalin's death put a sudden halt to the process.

Stalin's death had ramifications influencing every aspect of life in the Soviet Union. During his lifetime, he had fostered the growth of a messianic Russian nationalism which ultimately constituted the core of Soviet nationality policy. As was to be expected, his successors initiated new policies and modified old ones. Among the many revisions carried out, none are perhaps as dramatic as the shift in the regime's nationality policy. The years 1953-54 were marked by a distinctly liberal attitude, especially in the Ukraine where it was highly reminiscent of the Ukrainization of the twenties. Needless to say, this was in large part a direct result of the death of a dictator who embodied the monolithic structure which he himself had created. A contributing factor, one that was to play an increasingly significant role shortly after Stalin's death, was the developing struggle for power among his heirs. The chain of events in the Ukraine in the Spring of 1953 must be viewed not only within the framework of a general liberalization, but also as reflections of conflicts within the collective leadership itself.

One of the first indications of a general relaxation was a decree issued by the USSR Supreme Soviet on March 28 amnestying minor offenders, including those who had committed economic crimes.¹⁸ Within a few days, the fiction of the Doctors' Plot was exposed. An MVD communique revealed that the accusations brought against the doctors were entirely false and "without foundation."¹⁹ The

16. Iurij Lavrinenko, "Moscow Centralism on the Defensive," *Prologue*, I, No. 3 (Summer, 1957), 86.

17. Embree, *The Soviet Union . . .*, 19.

18. John A. Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1961), 241.

19. Gruliov, *Current Soviet Policies*, 259.

source of the communique, as well as the subsequent arrest of M. D. Riumin, deputy security minister, and the demotion from the Central Committee of the former head of the MGB, S. D. Ignat'ev,²⁰ seemed to show that Beria had taken the initiative. Similar changes were effected in the MVD apparatus in Georgia and Ukraine. T. A. Strokach, head of the Ukrainian MVD, was replaced by P. Ia. Meshik, Beria's close adherent, and a certain Menshtein assumed control of the Lviv apparatus.²¹ Thus far, Beria's machinations were confined to a distinct sphere, namely the secret police, over which he had assumed complete control. The objective, of course, was to create a source of future support upon which he could rely if the need arose.

Subsequent developments indicate that Beria attempted to broaden his base, i.e. to enlist general support which would transcend the limited realm of the MVD. It soon became evident that the support he was seeking was none other than that of the non-Russian nationalities. That he should have made this choice is not surprising. As John Armstrong points out, Beria was in a very unique, if not undesirable, position. For fifteen years he had been the Chekist par excellence, thereby becoming the object of universal fear and hatred. To preserve his power, perhaps even his life, he decided to rehabilitate himself, as it were, by posing as the champion of "hitherto submerged forces in Soviet society."²² This, in turn, necessitated the removal of certain Party and government officials who had been previously identified with Russification measures in the various republics. Thus, A. I. Megladze and M. D. Bagirov, First Secretaries of the Georgian and Azerbaidzhanian apparatus respectively, were ousted early in April.²³ A similar personnel change occurred in the Uzbek Republic where on May 7, N. A. Mukhitdinov was dropped from his post as Prime Minister.²⁴

Purges are not an uncommon phenomenon in Soviet politics. However, if one examines the content of the Soviet press during this period, this purge acquires special significance. A common characteristic of most of the topics under discussion was that they were either directly or indirectly concerned with nationality policy. Thus, one

20. Armstrong, *The Politics . . .*, 241-242.

21. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics . . .*, 281.

22. Armstrong, *The Politics . . .*, 242.

23. F.F., "The Fall of Beria and the Nationalities Question in the USSR," *The World Today*, IX, No. 11 (November, 1953), 491.

24. Jaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic* (New Brunswick, 1964), 394.

of the feature articles of the April 17 issue of *Pravda* emphasized the various aspects of Soviet law which served to protect the rights of its citizens. The author's tone was suggestive, to say the least:

Any direct or indirect limitation whatever of rights . . . of citizens on the basis of their race or nationality, just as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and scorn, are punishable by law.²⁵

A few days later, the *Literaturna gazeta* carried an article which not only stressed "equal rights among nations" and "complete destruction of national oppression," but also reinterpreted Stalin as having placed the dangers of "deviation toward great-Russian nationalism" on an equal footing with the dangers of "deviation toward local nationalism."²⁶ This simultaneous process of purge and propaganda forms the immediate background within which the dramatic events in Ukraine were to unfold.

Beria's role in the Strockach-Meshik exchange has already been mentioned. During this period, he also made an unusual trip to western Ukraine, most likely in connection with the Menshtein installment.²⁷ A significant event followed on May 7 when H. I. Petrovsky, Ukraine's former President, purged by Stalin in 1938, was suddenly rehabilitated and awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor.²⁸ The honor was bestowed in connection with Petrovsky's seventy-fifth birthday in recognition of his "services to the Soviet State." The fact that his birthday had occurred four months earlier,²⁹ however, raises some pertinent questions concerning timing. Petrovsky was certainly a prestigious figure and, as such, could prove very useful. Indeed, he was the only *living* symbol of the Ukrainian national communism which flourished in the twenties. At any rate, his rehabilitation was soon overshadowed by an even more significant development.

On June 13, 1953, it was revealed that at a plenum of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party held the day before, Melnikov had been removed from his post as First Secretary "for failing to provide leadership and for committing gross errors in the

25. K. Gorshenin, "Socialist Law on Guard over the People's Interests", *CDSP*, V, No. 15 (May 23, 1953), 6.

26. N. Matyushkin, "Great Principles of Internationalism," *CDSP*, V, No. 16 (May 30, 1953), 18-19.

27. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 394.

28. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics . . .*, 281.

29. R. Conquest, *Power and Policy in the USSR* (New York, 1961), 211.

selection of personnel and in carrying out the Party's national policy."³⁰ The substance of the charges was that he

had committed distortions of the Lenin-Stalin national policy of our party, distortions expressed in the harmful practice of advancing to leading Party and Soviet work in the western provinces of Ukraine officials predominantly from other provinces of the Ukraine Republic and in converting to the Russian language the teaching in Western Ukraine higher educational institutions.³¹

Melnikov's removal was in itself significant. What is more astonishing, however, is the nature of the charges brought against him. They were undoubtedly grounded in fact as Melnikov had long been identified with Russification policies in Ukraine.³² Yet, the paradox is that the policies employed by Melnikov were the same that had been used in the administration of western Ukraine ever since its incorporation into the Ukrainian SSR. Indeed, Sullivant points out that there was hardly any alternative, given the unreliability of that area.³³ Thus, the drama of the whole affair lies in the unprecedented act of conducting a purge in the name of Ukrainian nationalism. Furthermore, as if to underscore the central theme behind Melnikov's ouster, a native Ukrainian, A. I. Kirichenko, assumed the Party leadership for the first time in the history of the Ukrainian Communist Party.³⁴ Concomitant with Melnikov's fall was Korneichuk's appointment to two important posts within a two week period—on May 31 he was appointed First Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers and on June 12 he replaced Melnikov in the Bureau of the Central Committee.³⁵ This was certainly an impressive achievement for a former "bourgeois deviationist."

There is little doubt that Beria was a central figure behind the changes that were occurring simultaneously throughout the Soviet Union. Yet, this does not preclude the possibility that he enjoyed the support (as far as nationality policy was concerned) of some members of the Presidium.³⁶ One analysis traces the emergence of

30. "Plenary Session of Central Committee of Ukraine Communist Party," *CDSF*, V, No. 21 (July 4, 1953), 3.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Embree, *The Soviet Union . . .*, 387.

33. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics . . .*, 282.

34. Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism*, 45.

35. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics . . .*, 389.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 283-284; Armstrong, *The Politics . . .*, p. 245; Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 241.

two opposing groups shortly after Stalin's death—the “semi-liberals” represented by Beria and the “Stalinist die-hards.”³⁷ By the end of June, Beria's position had been seriously undermined. The decisive factor resulting in his downfall seems to have been the East Berlin uprising of June 16-17 which, among other things, served to crystallize an anti-Beria opposition within the army.³⁸ Within two weeks of the uprising he was arrested and, shortly thereafter, executed.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the Beria episode in relation to Soviet nationality policy. Perhaps the most important observation regarding the events of March-June, 1953, is that they served to show that despite Soviet pronouncements the nationality problem was far from being solved either at that time or any other time before.³⁹ Totalitarian systems, irrespective of outward appearances, are not perfect models of absolute unanimity, either in politics or in any other aspect of life. Issues are always at hand, and those who consider themselves contestants for power must acknowledge their existence. Lenin certainly took a stand on the national question prior to the Revolution. Beria's attempt to utilize the nationalistic sentiments of the non-Russian minorities attests not only to the existence of a nationality problem, but also to its significance as both a contemporary (1953) and potential issue in Soviet politics.

The accusations against Beria ranged from attempts to “undermine the collective farms” to “a policy of capitulation” aimed at the “restoration of capitalism.”⁴⁰ His subversive activities among the non-Russian nationalities were likewise exposed:

By various cunning methods, Beria sought to undermine the friendship of peoples of the USSR—the foundation of foundations of the multinational socialist state . . . to sow friction among the peoples of the USSR and to activize bourgeois-nationalist elements in the Union republics.⁴¹

These charges amounted to nothing short of treason. Under these circumstances one could rightly assume that Beria's rivals for power,

37. Isaac Deutscher, “The Beria Affair,” *International Journal*, VIII, No. 4 (Autumn, 1953), 230-232.

38. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 238.

39. Vernon V. Aspaturian, *The Union Republics in Soviet Diplomacy* (Geneva-Paris, 1960), 203-204.

40. “Indestructible Unity of Party, Government, and Soviet People,” *CDSP*, V, No. 24 (July 25, 1953), 10.

41. *Ibid.*

by denigrating the policies which he had sponsored, *ipso facto* favored an entirely different approach. This would seem to be the logical conclusion based on the nature of the charges against Beria. The incalculable factor, however, is the degree of sincerity, if any, with which the accusations were made. In view of these seemingly conflicting points of view, the question arises as to what exactly was the regime's nationality policy after Beria's demise.

G. D. Embree's history of the Soviet Union from 1952 and 1956 is the only account which maintains that Beria's nationality policy was reversed.⁴² He bases his conclusion on the *Pravda* editorial of July 10 cited above. Yet, if that editorial is examined closely, it contains little indication that either Malenkov or Khrushchev were prepared to revert to Stalinist methods. The consensus of opinion is that it was decided to continue the trend initiated by Beria, albeit in a diluted form.⁴³ Moreover, if one accepts the assumption that Beria was not alone in favoring concessions to the non-Russian nationalities, how can this be reconciled with an immediate reversal of that position?

Perhaps the source of confusion concerning the fluctuations in Soviet nationality policy during this period (post-Beria) can be traced to the adroit manner in which it was implemented, especially by Khrushchev. Before attempting to evaluate what is termed the "Khrushchev method," a few points need to be clarified. A comparison of the policies of Stalin and Beria reveals two extreme approaches to the nationality problem. Needless to say, Stalin's methods relied heavily on the regime's terror apparatus. Beria, in turn, attempted to rectify some of the worst excesses of the Stalinist system. Yet, the changes wrought by the latter can only be interpreted as changes in degree, rather than in kind. Suffice it to say that Russian chauvinism was never directly attacked. Furthermore, a liberal attitude toward the non-Russian nationalities did not automatically preclude attacks on "bourgeois nationalism" as can be seen from the following excerpt from *Izvestia* dated April 17, 1953:

Constant and merciless exposure of the people's worst enemies, bourgeois nationalists, is an important task of the satirists of the Ukraine But very little has been done in this field. In these works the Ukrainian satirists do not unmask nationalists and cosmopolitans vigorously enough,

42. Embree, *The Soviet Union* . . . , 59.

43. Armstrong, *The Politics* . . . , 256-257; Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism*, 43; Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 18.

they disclose poorly the antipopular nature of bourgeois-nationalist ideology.⁴⁴

The point is that Beria's policies constituted what might be termed a negative approach. They were not designed to substitute non-Russian nationalism for Russian nationalism, but rather to elevate the former from its negligible position. Taken absolutely, the alterations effected were minor. It is only when they are contrasted to Stalin's policies that it is possible to place Beria and Stalin at opposite ends of the continuum. Thus, it is fair to say that during Beria's brief ascendancy and, as will be shown below, during the Khrushchev period as well, there was no *fundamental* change in Soviet nationality policy.

It has already been intimated that although one of the major factors in the attack on Beria centered around his nationality policy, that policy in its general outline was in fact continued. How can this be explained? Wolfgang Leonhard provides the answer when he argues that the question of liberalization was "a question not of whether certain reforms should be carried out, but rather of who should be responsible."⁴⁵ As it turned out, Beria decided to assume that responsibility which in the end led to his downfall. Thus, the attack on Beria's policies was merely a facade for an attack on Beria and the secret police which he represented. It was made easier because he was the first to deviate from the Stalinist line. The result was that Khrushchev was able to adopt Beria's program with minor modifications and pursue what was ostensibly a middle course.⁴⁶

Yet, the term "middle course," is misleading. Above all, it implies that the traditional emphasis on Russian nationalism was abandoned or at least de-emphasized. The following excerpt from *Uchitelskaia gazeta*, dated April 7, 1954, casts doubt upon this assumption:

Ukrainians and Belorussians . . . Yakuts and Evenks, in fact all the great and small peoples of the USSR study with love the language of their elder brother, the Great Russian people, which marches in the vanguard of contemporary mankind. By mastery of this language they ob-

44. Novinchenko, "On Collection of Works by Ukrainian Satirist and Humorist," *CDSP*, V, No. 16 (May 30, 1953), 7.

45. Wolfgang Leonhard, *The Kremlin Since Stalin*, trans. Elizabeth Wiskemann and Marian Jackson (New York, 1962), 70.

46. Aspaturian, *The Union Republics . . .*, 205-207.

tain access to the treasury of the most advanced culture and science of our age.⁴⁷

A more accurate evaluation of Khrushchev's nationality policy can be made only if one recognizes that it was subordinated to his general policy. In attempting to analyze the nature of the "Khrushchev method," two landmarks in Soviet nationality problem have been chosen. Both testify to Khrushchev's skillful handling of the nationality problem. On the other hand, both retain their peculiar characteristics which serve as reflections of two different time periods.

One of the most spectacular propaganda campaigns in the Soviet Union was staged during the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav (1654). In early December, 1953, the Central Committee of the CPSU, the USSR Council of Ministers, and the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet issued a decree calling for a "widespread observance of the 300th anniversary of the Ukraine's reunification with Russia, as an outstanding historical event and a great national holiday."⁴⁸ Between January and June, 1953, celebrations were conducted throughout the USSR⁴⁹ as well as in the satellites and even in Peking.⁵⁰ On January 12, *Pravda* and *Izvestia* had published twenty-one theses, approved by the Central Committee, which set the tone for the festivities. Among other things, the theses stressed the progressive nature of Ukraine's "reunification with the Russian people in a single Russian state."⁵¹ In the following month the Crimean oblast which had been a part of the RSFSR was attached to the Ukrainian SSR. This was, Voroshilov noted, "evidence of the further strengthening of the unity and indissoluble friendship between the Russian and Ukrainian people" ⁵²

Two aspects of the tercentenary celebrations are especially relevant as far as nationality policy is concerned. The first was the re-

47. *Uchitel'skaia gazeta*, April 7, 1953, cited by Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism*, 27-28.

48. "On 300th Anniversary of Ukraine's Reunification with Russia," *CDSP*, V, No. 49 (January 20, 1954), 10.

49. Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism*, 52.

50. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 18.

51. "Theses on the 300th Anniversary of the Reunification of the Ukraine and Russia (1654-1954)," *CDSP*, V, No. 51 (February 3, 1954), 3-8.

52. "In the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet," *CDSP*, VI, No. 9 (April 14, 1954), 24.

habilitation of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the reinterpretation of Ukrainian history. Whereas in the early Stalin period Khmelnytsky was portrayed as a "traitor and sworn enemy of the rebellious Ukrainian peasantry,"⁵³ the theses emphasized the political foresight of this "outstanding statesman and soldier" who realized "that the Ukrainian people's salvation lay only in unity with the great Russian people."⁵⁴ The rehabilitation of Khmelnytsky was a by-product of the reinterpretation of both Ukrainian and Russian history. Prior to 1937, Russo-Ukrainian relations before the October Revolution were depicted as those of exploiter and exploited. Thus, Pokrovsky wrote in 1935 that "Khmelnytsky was in the service of Polish and Russian feudal lords. . . ."⁵⁵ Two years later, with the demand that Soviet historians take into consideration "concrete historical conditions," the "lesser evil" theory was formulated.⁵⁶ By 1954, however, the absolute evil, which had evolved into a relative one, was now a positive good!⁵⁷

The second aspect of the 1954 celebrations was the elevation of the Ukrainians to what Barghoorn has termed the status of "junior elder brothers."⁵⁸ In other words, the Ukrainians were now pictured as partners with the Russians in a curious combination which was to personify Slav brotherhood. Of course, the partnership was not completely equal since the Ukrainians "were the first after their Russian brothers to take the path of the October socialist revolution"⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the partnership was there. Furthermore, according to the theses, it had been there since 1654.

At first glance, it would seem that the regime had finally realized that not all Ukrainians were necessarily "bourgeois nationalists" or "enemies of the state." Yet, if one considers the practical implications inherent in the tercentenary propaganda, it becomes evident that the principles of Soviet nationality policy did not undergo any fundamental change. On the other hand, it also became obvious that the traditional methods of implementation were being abandoned.

53. *Bolshaia sovetskaia entsyklopedia* (Moskva: Ogyz RSFSR, 1935) LIX, 816-818, cited by B. Krupnytskij, "Bohdan Khmelnytsky i sovetska istoriografia," *Ukrainskyi Zbirnyk*, III (1955), 94-95.

54. "Theses on the 300th Anniversary . . .," *CDSP*, 4.

55. M. N. Pokrovsky, *Ob Ukraine: svornik statei i materialov*, ed. N. N. Popov (Kiev: 1935), p. 165, cited by Andrii Moskalenko, *Khmelnytsky and the Treaty of Pereyaslav in Soviet Historiography*, trans. and ed. John A. Armstrong (New York: Research Program on the USSR, 1955), 7.

56. *Ibid.*, 10-11.

57. Konstantin F. Shtepa, "The 'Lesser Evil' Formula," *Rewriting Russian History*, ed. Cyril E. Black (2d ed., New York, 1962), 112.

58. Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism*, 56.

59. "Theses on the 300th Anniversary . . .," *CDSP*, 6.

Whereas Stalin simply attempted to eradicate any meaningful exposition of Ukrainian history, the "collective leadership" was able successfully to use the Ukrainian national heritage to serve current Soviet needs.⁶⁰ As Robert S. Sullivant points out, the result was that the Ukrainian Communists by accepting responsible positions in the Party and government become ever more vehement in their attacks on Ukrainian nationalism.⁶¹

In the five years between the tercentenary celebrations and the opening of the Twenty-First Party Congress in early 1959, certain developments, both external and internal, resulted in still another shift in the regime's nationality policy. The theory most frequently advanced is that the Hungarian and Polish uprisings in the fall of 1956 served to remind the Kremlin of the possible consequences of pursuing an unwise nationality policy.⁶² Khrushchev's strengthened position after his victory over the Anti-Party Group in 1957 may have been a contributing factor. Whatever the exact reasons, suffice it to say that by 1957-58 the conciliatory mood which predominated throughout 1954-56 was no longer in evidence. Yet, it must be emphasized that this did not mean that Khrushchev envisioned a return to Stalinism. Among other things, this would have been unwise so soon after the anti-Stalin speech. On the contrary, the "Khrushchev method" was continued, albeit highly intensified. As one author has so aptly phrased it, this was the period of the "frozen thaw."⁶³

The formal initiation of the new trend has been traced to an article appearing in the August issue of *Kommunist*, authored by the Tadzhik Scholar, B. Gafurov.⁶⁴ The article's main theme is the forthcoming "fusion of nations." For our purposes, what is most interesting are Gafurov's ideas on the "development of a single language":⁶⁵

The future fusion of nations presupposes the development of a single language for all nations. Already at the present time the languages of the people of the USSR mutually enrich each other, resulting in a firm interchange of linguis-

60. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 222.

61. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics . . .*, 289-290.

62. Elliot R. Goodman, *The Soviet Design for a World State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 106-107.

63. Vasylyl Markus, "Current Trends of the Nationalities Policy in the USSR," *Prologue*, V, No. 1-2 (Spring-Summer, 1961), 90.

64. *Ibid.*, 92.

65. Gafurov, "Uspekhi natsionalnoi polityki KPSS i nekotorye voprosy internatsionalnogo vospytaniya," *Kommunist*, No. 11 (August, 1958), 16.

tic, cultural values, thereby forming preconditions for the amalgamation of grammatical structures and lexicographical composition of the languages of the peoples of the USSR.⁶⁶

Gafurov then goes on to state that some comrades are mistaken in thinking that this will be a quick and straightforward process. On the contrary, and here he refers to Stalin, this will be achieved through the formation of zonal languages; and after that, the formation of one international language which will be neither English, nor Russian, nor any other, but will draw upon the finest points of each of those.⁶⁷ Gafurov's allegations concerning the Russian language as the "mighty vehicle of communication among the peoples of the USSR" and the "second native language of all of the nationalities inhabiting the land of socialism"⁶⁸ made toward the end of the article raised doubt as to the egalitarian and scientific method by which a single language is to be developed.

That Gafurov's article was not merely verbiage soon became evident on November 12, 1958. The Central Committee of the CPSU and the USSR Council of Ministers approved 48 theses embodying a radical reform of the Soviet ten-year school system.⁶⁹ As far as nationality policy was concerned, the most significant proposal was Thesis 19 which suggested that parents be given the right to choose the language of instruction used in the schools of their republic. If a child attended a school where the native language of the republic was the language of instruction, "he may, if he wishes, take up the Russian language" and vice versa. The qualification was also added that "this step could only be taken if there is a sufficient number of children to form classes for instruction in a given language."⁷⁰

At first sight, this would seem to be a great boon for the non-Russian nationalities. Whereas previously children in the nationality schools were required to study three languages (native, Russian, and one foreign),⁷¹ it was now possible to exclude both the Russian and the foreign, concentrating on one's own native language. There is one significant drawback since most Soviet higher educational institutions require that candidates for admission pass comprehensive

66. *Ibid.*, 17.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, 23.

69. George S. Counts, *Khrushchev and the Central Committee Speak on Education* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1959), 1-2.

70. *Ibid.*, 46.

71. *Ibid.*

examinations in both Russian language and literature.⁷² Of course, one could still choose Russian as an optional language while receiving instruction in one's own language. Soviet schools, however, tend to slight optional subjects even though Russian may be one of them.⁷³ Precisely because such a high premium is placed on the Russian language, the concerned parent would be ill-advised to send his child to a school where a non-Russian language was the language of instruction.

The minority nationalities recognized the inherent dangers posed by Thesis 19 to the status of the non-Russian languages. This was evident in the numerous discussions reported by the Soviet press in the period between November 12 and December 24. These discussions indicated that a majority of the republics favored the retention of the status quo.⁷⁴ On December 24, the USSR Supreme Soviet enacted the proposed reform into law without, however, making any specific reference to Thesis 19.⁷⁵ Thus, it would seem that the republics prevailed in ensuring the continued obligatory study of the native languages. Curiously enough, in the Spring of 1959, every republic except Azerbaidzhan and Latvia incorporated Thesis 19 in one form or another into its own body of republican law.⁷⁶ As a result, the continued existence of the non-Russian languages in the curricula was, at best, precarious.

What have been the results of the adoption of Thesis 19 in Ukraine? In the first place, it should be pointed out that the Soviet government has not seen fit to reveal the necessary statistical data relating to the educational reforms which, in itself, may be significant. The only information comprehensive enough to be meaningful relates to the school year 1955-56. Nevertheless, bits of indirect evidence are available. Shortly after Thesis 19 went into effect, Ukrainian Central Committee Secretary S. Chervonenko revealed that "the network of schools with Russian as the language of instruction is growing."⁷⁷ Only in 1961 was it revealed that the ratio of schools

72. Jacob Ornstein, "Soviet Language Policy," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, XVII, No. 1 (Spring, 1958), 10-11.

73. Volodymyr Derzhavyn, "School and Russification," *The Ukrainian Review*, VI, No. 3 (Autumn, 1959), 18.

74. Jaroslav Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-1959 and Soviet Nationality Policy," *Soviet Studies*, XIV, No. 2 (October, 1962), 140-143.

75. Derzhavyn, "School and Russification," 17.

76. Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws . . ." 138.

77. "Close Ties with Life—Indispensable Condition of the Success of Ideological Work," *Digest of the Soviet Ukrainian Press*, III, No. 9 (September, 1959), 10.

using the Ukrainian language as opposed to Russian was "more than 30,000" and "approximately 6,000," respectively, in the school year 1959-60.⁷⁸ To be sure, the Ukrainian language schools far outnumbered their Russian counterparts. The numerical advantage of Ukrainian schools is rather meaningless in lieu of statistics indicating the percent of the total student population in each of the two types of schools.

Information on the percentage of students attending each type of school is available for some years prior to the 1958 reform. It clearly shows that since 1930, although there has been a progressive *increase* in the number of *schools* using Ukrainian as the language of instruction (1930—69.5% ; 1956—85.1%), there has been a corresponding *decrease* in the number of *students* receiving instruction in Ukrainian (1930—83.2% ; 1956—72.2%).⁷⁹ Translated into figures, this meant that in the school year 1955-56, the average enrollment in the Russian language schools was 341.6 in contrast to a mere 152.7 for the Ukrainian language schools.⁸⁰ In light of what has been said thus far, it is safe to assume that this trend will continue—there is no reason to believe that it will not. Furthermore, the fact that, according to the 1959 census, 45.8% of the Ukrainian *citizenry* resided in the urban centers⁸¹ where Russian influence has traditionally been strongest (according to the same census, four-fifths of all the Russians in Ukraine resided in the cities),⁸² tends to reinforce the original assumption.

Viewing Soviet nationality policy in retrospect, the changes which it has undergone appear significant. Stalin attempted to beat "proletarian internationalism" into the people of the Soviet Union—especially the non-Russian nations. It is paradoxical that in attempting to obliterate nationalism, he resorted to Russian nationalism as his basis for support. Stalin's successors, it must be admitted, have been far more successful. Soviet nationality policy after Stalin has been stripped of its "rudeness" and characterized by more tactful enforcement. Yet, despite the change in means, the ends remain the same.

78. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 173.

79. *Ibid.*, 166-167.

80. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics . . .*, 296.

81. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, 82.

82. *Ibid.*