

Russia Learns to Write: Slavistics, Politics, and the Struggle to Redefine Empire in the Early 20th Century

Juliette Cadiot

▶ **To cite this version:**

Juliette Cadiot. Russia Learns to Write: Slavistics, Politics, and the Struggle to Redefine Empire in the Early 20th Century. Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, 2008, 9, pp.135 - 167. 10.1353/kri.2008.0003 . hal-03903048

HAL Id: hal-03903048
https://hal.science/hal-03903048

Submitted on 19 Dec 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

PROJECT MUSE®

Russia Learns to Write: Slavistics, Politics, and the Struggle to Redefine Empire in the Early 20th Century



Juliette Cadiot

Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, Volume 9, Number 1, Winter 2008 (New Series), pp. 135-167 (Article)

Published by Slavica Publishers
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2008.0003*

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/232852

[Access provided at 16 Dec 2022 09:53 GMT from CNRS BiblioSHS]

Russia Learns to Write

Slavistics, Politics, and the Struggle to Redefine Empire in the Early 20th Century

Juliette Cadiot

At the end of the 19th century, a group of language specialists—philologists, Slavists, Orientalists—participated in the birth of modern linguistics. In retrospect, as Roman Jakobson has shown, these changes occurred not just in Geneva (where Ferdinand de Saussure was working) but also in Kazan and Moscow, where the concept of the phoneme was being elaborated at the same time.[1] The debate about developing national "literary" languages had been transformed by new studies and new projects. The idea of simplifying written languages also was part of the movement for democratization and nationalization in the countries of Eastern Europe. Moreover, the spread of education had become a major issue, for the abolition of serfdom in Russia was expected to produce peasants who were self-aware, moral, and cultured. The study of speech and dialects was expected not only to identify linguistic borders but also to unify peoples through the creation of an accessible literary language. The impulse to modernization that emerged from the Great Reforms thus took shape as a series of measures affecting the schools. It was hoped that literacy across the empire would create peasants, subjects of the tsar—Russian citizens, even—who were capable of modernizing the economy and making the country more governable. The conclusion that literacy was necessary on a vast scale was expressed in a series of resolutions in the 1870s, but it was during the Duma period and within the Duma itself that the idea of universal education was discussed and then decided in 1911.[2]

---

[1] Roman Jakobson, "The Kazan′ School of Polish Linguistics and Its Place in the International Development of Phonology," in his *Selected Writings,* 2: *Word and Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 394–428.

[2] Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861–1914 (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1865–1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 9, 1 (Winter 2008): 135–67.

In this article, I study how Russian linguists positioned themselves on the question of linguistic standardization at the beginning of the 20th century by using two examples: the simplification of Russian spelling and the official recognition of a norm for the Ukrainian literary language. I propose to show how "language specialists" interfered in the question of recasting the empire, notably by encouraging the project of a transition to literacy for the population and defending either Russification or the right to speak, publish, and teach in the vernacular languages. In political expectations as well as technical matters, the supporters of language simplification chose their positions based on experiments conducted outside Russia. Nevertheless, in this article I do not study just the importation of the slogan "write as you speak." Certainly, the linguists studied here thought comparatively, situating themselves in an imaginary community (particularly with the other Slavic countries) and thereby sharing in the history of cultural transfers. But what interests me most is to show how much the history of Russia is necessarily part of a transnational history.[3] The issues of simplifying Russian and standardizing Ukrainian had characteristics specific to the administration of an empire and to anxieties linked to its future. For instance, some of the linguists discussed here had no specific nationality but instead navigated between empires. The disputes about the definition of written Ukrainian can be understood only in their connection to the question of Russian identity and in an international context of geopolitical tensions that made speakers of Ukrainian, who lived between empires, into key figures on essential national and political matters—especially when they acknowledged that Ukrainian had the qualities of a literary language, linguists were actively helping to reconfigure the empire. Questions about the future of the empire—as a nation-state or a federation, and with what place for Russians and non-Russians in its imperial structure—are essential to understanding scholarly conflicts that seem *a priori* technical.[4] It is this politicization of scholarship, so characteristic of troubled political times, that I want to study by examining one particular form of transfer—the transference of scientific questions into the political sphere and political questions into the scholarly. In both of the scholarly polemics under discussion here, the scholars put forward their arguments as impartial experts who had placed themselves in the service of political reform and social renewal. In a context of more or less strong political control, they fought to impose a scholarly truth (about the origins of the Russian language) or a conception of the written language (as capable of responding to artificial and changeable norms). As they defended their positions, scholars

[3] Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[4] Juliette Cadiot, *Le laboratoire impérial: Russie–URSS (1860–1940)* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007).

acted out their ideals of patriotism and of professionalism in the service of scholarly truth. Yet they also used the Russian political context of autocracy and revolution to explain why it was impossible for them to remain neutral. They thought politicization to be all the more necessary as their assertions about Ukrainian or about the reform of Russian—which they believed to be strictly scholarly—were violently criticized as ideological by representatives of the government. In this moment of extreme doubt through which Russian society was passing, when both instability and political hopes were intense, some linguists finally decided to launch themselves into politics, not so much to become like professional politicians (for whom they exhibited a degree of scorn) but to make clear their understanding of the world and their hopes for change.

Moreover, this article shows how the very fact of being an empire could have unexpected consequences that injected themselves into questions involved in standardizing the national language that, so the romantic ideologues prevalent in these regions believed, revealed a people's genius and unique national structure. These debates over the writing of languages show how necessary it is to construct a holistic history that links events in the borderlands with the politics of the capitals and vice versa. Efforts to try more effectively to tell the history of the metropole and the colonies simultaneously have recently been undertaken by historians of the French and British empires. Such efforts are also appearing in Russian imperial studies, even if a tendency persists to write the history of Russia without taking into account the non-Russian regions. Thinking about the implications of these relationships seems even more indispensable for this period, as Russia entered the 20th century and the question of the boundary between Russians and non-Russians acquired a new visibility and a new centrality for the project of renewing the state and for its basic nature as an empire or a nation.

Simplify in Order to Teach Better

The question of simplifying written Russian had been discussed at the end of the 19th century in a variety of pedagogical societies and forms part of a broad movement—of phonetic study and analysis of spoken languages, and of efforts to bring the norms for writing closer to the living language—that also spawned the creation of alphabets and grammars for certain non-Russian languages.[5] More specifically, the project for simplifying Russian spelling was worked out in the pedagogical societies of Kazan and Moscow universities. Reflecting a Europe-wide movement to simplify writing, the discussions among educators, primary-school teachers, linguists, and ethnographers,

[5] The best archivally based narrative of this polemic was published in the 1940s in a long article by one of the young members of the Commission on Spelling Reform: V. I. Chernyshev, "F. F. Fortunatov i A. A. Shakhmatov," in *A. A. Shakhmatov, 1864–1920*, ed. S. P. Obnorskii (Moscow: Izdatel′stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1947), 167–252.

along with dialectological surveys conducted among the population, permitted these two pedagogical societies to work out rules for simplifying Russian.[6] Their work then became the basis for a discussion about spelling that was held by the Academy of Sciences in April 1904 and brought together more than 50 representatives from the worlds of scholarship, the press, teaching, and government.[7] The brainchild of Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov, president of the Academy of Sciences, the assembly was supposed to outline a future simplification based on the elimination of certain letters of the alphabet (the *iat'*, *fita*, and *izhitsa*, and one of the i's) and simplified spelling rules. The April meeting created the Commission on Spelling Reform, under the direction of the Slavist Filipp Fedorovich Fortunatov (1848–1914).

The effort to develop new rules was partly the result of criticisms of the spelling rules as currently taught, especially in the secondary schools and from textbooks by Academician Ia. K. Grot. The Academy of Sciences established its Commission on Spelling Reform in response to inquiries from the Kazan Pedagogical Society (which wanted to know whether the academy recognized as scientific the spelling recommended by Grot or saw internal contradictions in it) and from the central administration of military schools (did Grot's rules, they wondered, constitute an official and mandatory textbook, or could the question of spelling simplification be raised?). The principal proponents of radical spelling reform—Fortunatov, P. N. Sakulin, Roman Fedorovich Brandt (1853–1920), Jan Baudoin de Courtenay (1845–1929), E. F. Budde, A. S. Arkhangel'skii, L. V. Shcherba, V. I. Chernyshev—were those who attacked Grot's precepts, which they criticized as irrational, too complex, and insufficiently "scientific." The issue of simplification was linked to concerns about science but also about pedagogy and eliminating illiteracy. The goal was to make students' work easier (by reducing the number of rules that had no etymological or phonetic explanation) and to reduce publishing costs by eliminating certain letters of the alphabet. The scholars presented their project as stemming, above all, from the necessity of listening to teachers and helping pupils. They framed it in the context of a modernity that consisted of technical progress and faster communications, and likened the benefits of easier spelling to those of the Remington typewriter or the telegraph.[8]

---

[6] On the importance of the linguistic experiments carried out in the Kazan region, see Boris Gasparov, "Boduen de Kurtene v Kazane," in *Kazan', Moskva, Peterburg: Rossiiskaia imperiia vzgliadom iz raznykh uglov,* ed. Gasparov (Moscow: OGI, 1997), 302–24.

[7] *Protokol zasedaniia Komissii po voprosu o russkom pravopisanii, sostoiashchei pod predsedatel'stvom avgusteishogo prezidenta Imperatorskoi akademii nauk* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1905).

[8] Sankt-Peterburgskii filial Arkhiva Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (PF ARAN) f. 90 (Fond Fortunatova), op. 2, d. 15, l. 50 ob.

The question of spelling reform quickly became the object of intense polemics, and while scholars continued to work on the project, any hope of seeing it come to fruition evaporated before the end of 1904. Right after the April 1904 meeting, the Slavist Academician Aleksei Ivanovich Sobolevskii (1856–1929) took action. Himself a member of the spelling commission but hostile to the simplification project, which he thought too radical, he had it bruited in the press that the commission was neither serious nor really academic since it contained few true academicians. A series of articles, especially those appearing in *Novoe vremia* at the direct behest of its editor-in-chief A. S. Suvorin, harshly criticized the reform. Pan-Slavists, Slavist academicians, and influential members of the court proffered a variety of arguments—scholarly and political as well as emotional—against the reform.[9] The editor-in-chief of *Novoe vremia,* his counterpart at the official journal *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik* (P. A. Kulakovskii), K. P. Pobedonostsev in his publications, and even Lev Tolstoi in his interviews with the press, all denounced the reform project. Attacked simultaneously in the press and within the academy, the reformers published excerpts from the minutes of the April meeting,[10] as well as their reform project, which they circulated so it could be discussed in the provinces by those responsible for Russian-language instruction.[11] The reformers tried to make their approach clear and to represent themselves as listening to and serving a nascent civil society. In the newspapers, they explained that they were not trying to create mandatory new official norms; on the contrary, they were proposing a new, more economical way of writing that anyone could choose as he saw fit. They denounced the censorship that had just recently prevented the publication of books without the *iat'*. While their expertise should allow them to propose solutions, the members of the commission rejected the idea of imposing norms. Above all, they asserted that in proposing to change the spelling rules, they were not in any way modifying the free and natural development of the language. While their ideas should be debated, they should be imposed by neither scholars nor legislators but should instead be submitted to society (*obshchestvo*) for its verdict on their simplicity. Using clearly democratic rhetoric, the partisans of reform believed in the "impartial judgment of society" and that their reform would prevail on its own after a fair confrontation of the arguments of both sides.[12] They declared themselves convinced that their simplified spelling would gain the "right of citizenship"

[9] The advocates of reform essentially responded to their opponents with scholarly arguments; see, for example, R. F. Brandt, *Mneniia o russkom pravopisanii* (Voronezh: V. I. Isaev, 1904).

[10] *Protokol zasedaniia Komissii po voprosu o russkom pravopisanii*.

[11] *Predvaritel'noe soobshchenie orfograficheskoi podkomissii* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1904).

[12] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 842, l. 266, text presenting the reform published in the official journal in 1904.

and, once adopted, would prove its social utility. Teachers' congresses, pedagogical societies, petitions, and parents' associations played an important role in this story, their participation testifying to the involvement of civil society in the debate.[13] For its advocates, the reform—by bringing the written language closer to the people—would permit a wider opening of the public space that was composed, as it should be, of those who read.

In fact, reform was quickly deferred. Although he had taken the initiative in launching the discussion, Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich now maintained that he, too, was in favor of a slow, moderate reform. Influenced by the turn that the polemic had taken and by the declared opposition of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Kirsheev, a Slavophile close to the court, the grand duke decided that the reforms as envisaged were excessive. Nonetheless, the scholars continued to work.[14]

To understand both the conservatives' attack and the project of the spelling commission, in addition to other considerations specific to the generational and scientific tensions within the Academy of Sciences, we should pause here to consider one of the principal arguments mustered against the reform. The linguists of the Academy of Sciences were accused of wanting a radical reform, basing their changes on phonetics and taking up the principle enunciated by the Serb Vuk Karadžić: "write as you speak." The Italian and Spanish, but also the Serbian, Croatian, Romanian, and even Kalmyk models—that is, the attempt to make the written and spoken languages match each other—seemed absurd to opponents of the reform in the context of an empire as vast as Russia. R. F. Brandt recognized *a posteriori* the difficulty of building on phonetic principles for Russian because of the diversity of vocalizing systems, especially between northern and southern Russia.[15] In reality, the proposed reform was not dictated by phonetics, for the proposal was much more limited, but the whole polemic focused on the phonetic aspect. As we will see, the spelling debate crystallized around issues that went far beyond linguistics and involved the delineation of the country's boundaries and Russia's redefinition as a nation-state.

Several days after the first meeting in 1904, Sobolevskii, as an academician and member of the spelling commission, opened the public polemic

[13] On the role of associations at the beginning of the 20th century, see Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West, eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[14] New spelling rules were proposed in 1912, but despite pressure, the linguists refused to make concessions, especially on dropping certain letters of the alphabet, and continued to argue for a coherent new spelling regulation.

[15] N.A. Kondrashov, *R. F. Brandt* (Moscow: Izdatel´stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1963), 44.

in the columns of *Novoe vremia*.[16] In particular, he asserted that "in carrying out a spelling reform, we should remember that our literary language is the same for all Russians, whatever their dialect or speech, be they Great Russian, White Russian, or Little Russian, [and] that it is our duty not to invent spelling novelties that could make it harder for any part of the Russian people to read Russian books."[17] The Slavist Anton Semenovich Budilovich (1846–1908) took up this argument in turn. He explained that the Russian literary language should be as all-encompassing as possible, to satisfy all those who spoke the different Russian, Belorussian, and Little Russian dialects.[18] Budilovich cited the authority of one of the first men to conceive of standardizing a pan-Russian literary language, Mikhail Lomonosov, who had intentionally decided to retain the *iat´* to satisfy the Little Russians, who pronounced it like an i and not like an e.[19] By contrast,the Academy of Sciences' project replaced the *iat´* with an e. More generally, to defend the status of Russian and of a single pan-Russian literary language, opponents of the reform firmly criticized any attempt to use phonetics to simplify spelling. Reformers were accused of wanting to make the Moscow dialect the norm, and thus to distance the literary language from other Russians and even from other Slavs in general.

To save its project, the commission at the Academy of Sciences decided to put it up for general discussion, in particular by sending it to a large selection of schools all over Russia. Asked to give their opinion, and under the influence of the public polemic, the curators and teachers at these schools reacted to the reform project in a variety of ways. Some feared that too rapid a reform would create disorder and new pedagogical difficulties, and would place students out of synch with the press and books already in print.[20] Echoing the arguments of Aleksandr Ivanovich Tomson (1860–1935), a professor at Novorossiisk University in Odessa and an unflinching opponent of the reform, they worried about the cost of the reform and the future of libraries.[21] The head of Khar´kov's Fourth Gymnasium, Maksimovich, asked that the reform be carried out prudently and slowly and commented that the opposition expressed in the press could lead one to fear that newspaper publishers

[16] He was harshly criticized for this by Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich.

[17] Chernyshev, "F. F. Fortunatov i A. A. Shakhmatov," 188.

[18] A. S. Budilovich, *Akademiia nauk i reforma russkogo pravopisaniia, ottisk iz "Russkogo vestnika,"* 1904, vii.

[19] Ibid.; A. S. Budilovich, *O edinstve russkogo naroda, rech´, proiznesennaia v torzhestvennom sobranii S.-Peterburgskogo Slavianskogo blagotvoritel´nogo obshchestva, 14 fevralia 1907 g.* (St. Petersburg: V. D. Smirnov, 1907), 22.

[20] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 842, l. 4 ob., conclusions from a discussion of the 1904 reform project organized by the Khar´kov curator.

[21] PF ARAN f. 90, op. 2, d. 15, ll. 38–39, letter from M. Zapol´skii, an instructor at the teachers' institute in Kazan.

and editors would reject the innovations and leave children alone in using the new spelling. He emphasized that the living language as spoken in any one region should not be used as the basis for new spelling rules.[22]

The architects of Russification in the western regions in particular picked up on the arguments furnished by the press and took umbrage at any simplification that was driven in part by phonetics. The slogan of the language reformers—their determination to bring the written language closer to the spoken one—seemed to them directly to contradict the effort to unify the empire around a single dominant language through the attempt at Russification in which they were active.[23] The imperial stakes played out differently depending on the region. Often passionate supporters of Russification, a majority of secondary-school curators from the western provinces rejected any modifications at all. They made the *iat′* into a symbol of Russian identity, and the complexity of Russian spelling rules into a product of Slavic history that linked the center with the regions that they governed. In a letter dated 21 June 1904, the principal of the Third Gymnasium for Boys in Warsaw criticized the reform as too radical. He believed that "for schools working in the borderlands, bringing spelling closer to the phonetic principle and distancing it from the principle of etymology cannot fail to make spelling more difficult to teach.… Such a deviation from the principle of etymology is particularly undesirable in secondary schools with Polish children, since this deviation separates Russian still farther from the common Slavic base."[24] As his colleague at the Fourth Gymnasium for Boys in Warsaw explained:

> the literary language is not and cannot be a direct reflection of the living language, even that of the most numerous group among the Russian people. It is not the Muscovite, nor even the Great Russian, but the Russian language, the mother tongue of all Russians no matter the ethnographic group of the Russian people to which they may belong. When the Great Russian, the Little Russian, and the White Russian read a Russian book, each pronounces the words in his own way, but each sees in them his mother tongue.… If we based ourselves on the speech of one particular place, all other Russians would have to learn literary Russian as a foreign language.[25]

By contrast, teachers in Kazan province, charged with teaching Russian not only to Russians but also to speakers of non-Slavic languages (*inorodtsy*), were inclined to want a simplification that would allow easier access to

[22] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 842, l. 5.

[23] Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1864–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996).

[24] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 842, l. 161.

[25] Ibid., ll. 162–63.

education. Here one senses the influence of the discussions held around the Pedagogical Society of Kazan University, as well as of Orthodox missionary activity, which was undertaken in the vernacular languages according to Nikolai Il′minskii's precepts.[26] N. Bobrovnikov, who was director both of the Kazan seminary that trained ethnic minorities to become teachers of Russian and of the Guri Fraternity that Il′minskii had founded, made himself the spokesman for the Congress of Teachers in Indigenous Schools that was held in Kazan in 1903. There, the excessive complexities of Russian spelling were condemned.[27]

The fundamental distinction between "Russification" as carried out in the East, where the otherness of non-Russians was seen as self-evident, and in the West, where the Slavs of the empire and especially the other members of the extended Russian tribe (Great Russians, Little Russians, and Belorussians) were not recognized as different, was also reflected in the project to simplify Russian spelling. The argument that simplification would allow students of Russian more time to learn the language in general, and not just its spelling rules, was used not only in 1904 but again in the Duma in 1907 and when the Congress of Teachers met in 1912 and again in 1917. The period between 1904 and the October Revolution was in fact rich in projects for making education in Russia universal. From then on, simplifying Russian was seen as a means to disseminate education among Russians as well as *inorodtsy*. The letters that were sent by teachers and preserved in the Academy of Sciences Archive show how important this concern was in a period when interest in spoken languages, phonetics, and morphology was strong. The Academy of Sciences also received letters from simple teachers who proposed their own rules for simplification.[28] Some complained that they spent too much teaching time just on spelling, when they would prefer to teach their students about the

[26] The linguist E. F. Budde (1859–1929) was prolific in publishing Russian-language textbooks and conducting research among Russians and *inorodtsy*, all with an eye to simplifying spelling (PF ARAN f. 90, op. 2, d. 15, l. 95). The Russian teacher of a Kazan school remembers the pedagogical society's activities and his participation in them (ibid., ll. 184–85). V. Loginov (teacher in the Second Gymnasium of Kazan) argued that reform was essential (ibid., ll. 199–200).

[27] Ibid., ll. 201–5. On Bobrovnikov and Il′minskii, see Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga–Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[28] From Harbin, one author demanded that his simplification project be returned to him, since it had been rejected (PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 842, ll. 22–30). The teacher V. I. Rudakov and the Odessa teacher Georgii Mutskin offered their own plans for simplification (ibid., ll. 7–17).

fatherland (*otechestvo*) and the beauty of the Russian language.[29] The dictation examination that concluded one's secondary education and required a good knowledge of spelling was criticized, with everyone remarking on the torrents of tears shed by students who suffered as they memorized the too-numerous rules. Some asked what use, in the end, the *iat′* could possibly be to soldiers.[30] The military schools administration, responsible for much of the effort to make the country literate, repeatedly called for spelling to be simplified.

Some teachers, by contrast, opposed any modification and laid stress on their pedagogical abilities. Each acknowledged using other languages besides Russian to help in teaching Russian; especially for the Belorussians and Little Russians, using their dialects permitted them to move from their maternal speech to Russia's great language of culture.[31] Thus the discussion about the Russian language turned on the imperial situation, especially after the Fundamental Laws of April 1906 officially recognized Russian as the sole language of the state.

Having quickly lost the "media battle," the scholars were surprised when 315 deputies of the Duma addressed the commission in 1907, reopening the question of spelling reform and the need to retire the *iat′*. Various congresses representing teachers of Russian, including those of the cadet corps and the miliary schools, expressed their determination to have a system of rules and a simplification of Russian spelling adopted.[32] In 1910, the director of military schools wanted to know what point the academy had reached in its spelling reform project. Faced with this movement, the imperial authorities openly sided with the opponents of reform: in 1912–13, Ministry of Education circulars prohibited dispensing with the *iat′* and the hard sign. The scope of the controversy and the regime's nervousness about the Academy of Sciences' project created the appearance of a sharp line between conservatives, who defended Grot's rules and the *iat′,* and liberals. The linguist R. F. Brandt made this explicit in a text from 1917, in which he asserted that "although spelling in and of itself is unrelated to political parties, still the conservatives were inclined to see any departure from the usual system (such as the absence

[29] In a letter to the grand duke, a teacher expressed his profound discontent at having to spend his time teaching the very complex spelling rules at the expense of other topics. Describing himself as of peasant origin, he testified to his constant devotion to the people and his wish to teach them the love of tsar and fatherland and the glorious history of Russia, not an obsolete spelling (ibid., ll. 106–7).

[30] In an article published in a Tver′ newspaper, N. Alianchikov explains: "we don't only need to increase the number of schools, … but also, in each one, to use the children's strengths to [the children's] maximum advantage, with the fewest possible tears and needless moral torments and the least waste of time" (undated clipping from *Tverskaia gazeta*, no. 279, in PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 842, l. 260).

[31] Budilovich, *O edinstve russkogo naroda*, 35.

[32] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 1058, l. 117.

of the hard sign) as freethinking, and along with their other idols they felt they should also defend the old letters."[33] This political polarization explains why reform had to wait until the 1917 Revolution. Through war and revolution, calls for spelling simplification continued to pour into the Academy of Sciences—from the *zemstva*, the heads of military schools, the All-Russian Congress of Russian-Language Teachers in Secondary Schools (which assembled 2,000 members in January 1917), and committees of secondary-school parents.[34] A new meeting was organized at the Academy of Sciences on 11 May 1917 at the direct urging of the Provisional Government's minister of education, A. A. Maniukov, who wanted the reform to take effect at the beginning of the 1917–18 school year. Aleksei Aleksandrovich Shakhmatov (1864–1920), who had succeeded the deceased Fortunatov, proposed a slightly different simplification project, one less radical, for he was fearful of frightening the public again. But the assembly decided to return to the original 1904 project, judging the reform long since overdue, and Shakhmatov drew back, explaining that he would not fight for the *iat′*.[35]

A Language between Empires

The refusal to simplify Russian spelling, and the tensions over the existence of Ukrainian and Belorussian nationalities distinct from the Russian, were part of the same movement toward a nationalist redefinition of the empire. The question of the Ukrainian language can be understood only as an interaction between geopolitical issues and problems of national identification. The battle waged by certain members of the Academy of Sciences (particularly Shakhmatov and Fedor Evgen′evich Korsh [1843–1915]) in favor of recognizing the Ukrainian language operated on both the scholarly and the political levels.[36] Interior Minister P. A. Valuev's Circular no. 1 of 1863 and the Ems Decree of 1876 (amended in 1881) had banned the publication of books in Ukrainian in the Russian empire (except for *belles-lettres* and historical compendia) and the circulation of works in that language, especially from neighboring Habsburg-ruled Galicia.[37] The momentum of the Great

[33] He concluded that he would have had to wait for the formation of a liberal ministry to bring about the reform. See R. F. Brandt, *Demokratizatsiia russkoi gramoty* (Moscow: O. L. Somova, 1917), 13.

[34] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 1058, ll. 31–38; d. 842, l. 40.

[35] Ibid., l. 122.

[36] The academy distinguished itself by its defense of Ukrainian at the very moment when it was discussing the project of simplifying Russian. It is noteworthy that the advocates of simplifying Russian never responded to the criticism that the new spelling risked splitting the languages of the Russians, since according to their own studies and findings these were already separate.

[37] Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003) includes

Reforms in the 1860s had resulted in a growing number of popular books, readers, grammars, geographies, and religious books. Meanwhile, the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Ukrainian had been forbidden in 1863. One reason invoked was that Little Russian was not a full-fledged language but a poor dialect incapable of expressing great ideas; and besides, Little Russians were supposed to be able to understand and learn Russian with no problem. The intellectual and political effervescence of the region, the multiplication of works in Little Russian, and the formation of a "Ukrainophile" movement had drawn the attention of the Russian authorities. The governor-general of these regions in the Russian South—like the Synod and the Ministry of the Interior—understood that the intellectuals supported by the Academy of Sciences who wanted to translate the Bible were affirming a separatist spirit; trying to recognize the uniqueness (*samobytnost'*) of the language would in turn validate the existence of a Little Russian nationality distinct from the Russian.[38]

Nevertheless, in the liberal context of the revolutionary era after 1904, discussions about lifting these prohibitions proliferated. There were two key issues: would recognition of the Ukrainian language imperil the unity of the empire, and was Ukrainian, as a written language, capable of becoming a true literary language? Questions about the literary language—that is, a language both learned and written and capable of expressing rational ideas and spirituality—at first revolved around the translation of the Bible into Little Russian. Although broached as a question of philology, the real issue was still the unity of the Russian language and its role as the only pan-Russian literary language through which Ukranians, Belorussians, and Russians would access the written culture. But the Ukrainian question must also be understood in the context of a geopolitical rivalry between the Habsburg and Romanov empires, with Ukrainophone territories extending along their common frontier.

As early as 1900, the grandson of Filipp Semenovich Morachevskii (d. 1879) had approached the Academy of Sciences to ask that the translation of the four Gospels completed by his grandfather in the 1860s—and ultimately banned from publication by Valuev's circular—finally be published.[39] In 1904, Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich agreed to reconsider the question. He not only appealed to the authority of the Slavists of the Academy of Sciences to judge the spiritual qualities of the translation, but he also, more generally, asked Minister of the Interior V. K. Plehve and his

Valuev's Circular in an appendix.

[38] PF ARAN f. 9 (fond Kantseliarii Vtorogo otdeleniia A.N, po izdaniiu evangeliia na ukrainskom iazyke, 1900–16), op. 1, l. 20.

[39] Rikarda Vul′pius (Ricarda Vulpius), "Iazykovaia politika v Rossiiskoi imperii i ukrainskii perevod Biblii (1860–1906)," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2005): 191–224.

successor P. D. Sviatopolk-Mirskii if they thought that the prohibition of 1863 remained politically relevant.[40] The Academy of Sciences had already praised the qualities of Morachevskii's translation back in the 1860s. On the initiative of the grand duke, a commission was assembled that notably included Shakhmatov and Korsh.[41] Asked by Konstantin Konstantinovich to evaluate the political significance of the debate, Plehve and Sviatopolk-Mirskii opined that the risk of separatism prevalent in the 1860s had since disappeared; the question was now only one of philology and religion, of being certain that Morachevskii's language was capable of rendering the profundities of the Gospels. Konstantin Konstantinovich acknowledged the existence of a Little Russian literary language when he asserted that the prohibitions did not apply to *belles-lettres,* which had continued to develop. As to the translation of the Bible, he rejected the argument that Ukrainian was weak; it was more developed than Aleut, Permian, and Chuvash, into which the Bible had already been translated. Finally, he rejected the idea that Little Russians understood Russian, arguing instead that the Russian language presented the same difficulties to a Ukrainian as Church Slavonic did for Russians.[42] He thus acknowledged the complete legitimacy of their request for access to the Holy Scriptures in their mother tongue. In his letter of February 1905, he also mentioned the political liberalism that lay beneath the revolutionary troubles. The grand duke nonetheless tried to differentiate between the general issue of recognizing the Ukrainian language, a problem discussed in parallel in the Committee of Ministers, and the translation of the Gospels, which he linked directly to the recognition of religious liberty.[43] Konstantin Konstantinovich pointed out that there existed a real thirst on the part of the population, since the version translated by P. A. Kulish and published in Galicia with funds from the British Bible Society was circulating in the Russian empire in thousands of copies despite being banned.[44] It seemed to Russian statesmen that it would be much better to release their own translation than to authorize the circulation of the Galician Bible.

The Academy of Sciences, whose opinion about the regulations forbidding the use of written Ukrainian was solicited by the Committee of Ministers on the eve of the 1905 Revolution, had already indicated the existence of a Little Russian language distinct from the Russian.[45] As censorship

[40] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 753, l. 19, Plehve's letter to Konstantin Konstantinovich explaining the situation in 1863.

[41] Ibid., l. 7.

[42] Ibid., ll. 66–68, letter from the Holy Synod, 20 Dccember 1904.

[43] Ibid., ll. 35 ob., 37.

[44] Ibid., ll. 66–68. The argument from the Holy Synod's letter of 20 December 1904 is repeated in the decree authorizing the translation; ibid., l. 76 ob.

[45] Oleksander Lotost´skyi-Bilousenko, *Storinky mynuloho* ([Bound Brook, NJ?]: Ukrains´ka pravoslavna tserkva v SShA, 1966; repr. of Warsaw: Ukrains´kiy naukovyi instytut, 1933]),

legislation was being discussed, the question of lifting the interdictions of 18 May 1876 and 8 October 1881 against publications in Ukrainian was raised, and members of both the Academy of Sciences and Khar′kov and Kiev universities, as well as the governor-general of Kiev, were invited to debate the topic. Discussion in the Academy of Sciences lasted several months before a note was produced that was soon printed in a L′vov newspaper and then ratified in April 1905 by a general meeting of the Academy of Sciences. During this time, a decree of the Committee of Ministers of 15 February 1905, proposed by Konstantin Konstantinovich, authorized publication of the four Gospels in Little Russian.[46] Those scholars of the Academy of Sciences who favored recognizing Ukrainian had at first posed their argument from a philological perspective. They based this view on studies by the academician and Slavist Shakhmatov that showed that Little Russian had separated from the common pan-Russian language stock at the same time as White Russian and Great Russian. The Academy of Sciences' commission, with the Slavist Fedor Korsh presiding, brought together members of both scholarly and political societies dedicated to the development of Ukrainian culture (*ukrainovedenie*).[47] The academy's argument for lifting publication prohibitions was thus founded on the practical and scholarly recognition that a language did exist. By placing itself within the reforming tradition and connecting social progress to improved integration of the peasants, the academy linked the revival of written Ukrainian to the spirit of Alexander II's reforms and to participation by new social strata with distinct ideas and knowledge. They referred to the need to develop a civic spirit (*grazhdanstvennost′*). Their argument specified that "undeniably, a scornful attitude to one's mother tongue brings with it a negative attitude toward the family and native milieu as well, and this cannot fail to have the most unfortunate effect on the moral character of Little Russia's rural population."[48] Influenced by a belated Romanticism, they made speech and popular traditions not only into an indication that a separate people existed but also into the basis of its moral qualities. Discussions about the value of the emerging written language had to do both with its development (a literary tradition capable of expressing

2: 365–81 (reproduces in Russian a large part of the Academy of Sciences' note "On the Repeal of Restrictions on Printing in Little Russian" and Khar′kov University's "Note on the Question of Censoring Books in Little Russian").

[46] M. A. Volkhonskii, "Natsional′naia politika i pravitel′stvennye krugi nakanune i v gody Pervoi russkoi revoliutsii" (Candidate of Historical Sciences diss., Moscow State University, 2003, 180–83).

[47] The commission brought together the Slavists Shakhmatov and Fortunatov as well as the Orientalist Ol′denburg and Ukrainian nationalists such as M. A. Slavinskii, F. K. Vovk, and O. O. Rusov.

[48] Lotost′skyi-Bilousenko, *Storinky mynuloho*, 372.

profound and complex ideas) and its purity (its capacity to represent a people in its purest and most distinctive form).

According to the Academy of Sciences, the demographic strength of the 23.7 million Little Russians "discovered" by the 1897 census only underscored the need to control their cultural development, especially given the Habsburgs' policies toward the Ruthenians (who were equated with Little Russians) in neighboring Galicia. The Council of Ministers had received requests from zemstvos, agricultural committees, and even the Moscow agronomists' congress for permission to publish brochures in Little Russian to disseminate basic agricultural knowledge in the countryside of the western provinces. Almanacs and agricultural and medical brochures in Little Russian were multiplying, especially ones written in dialogue form to avoid censorship.[49] According to the Academy of Sciences, the Council of Ministers was obliged "by the facts" to conclude that the prohibition against Little Russian was a brake on the region's economic and cultural progress. Also, the Academy of Sciences took it upon itself to present linguistic data testifying to the Little Russian peasantry's difficulty in understanding even the simplest (Great) Russian books owing to differences in vocabulary for items as common as eye, horse, or forehead. The thinking of the Slavists reflected the desire for linguistic integration that was already apparent, as we have seen, in the parallel grand projects of simplifying Russian spelling and of modernizing and standardizing the Russian language by publishing the first dictionaries.[50] It was also part of a program of liberal political demands that treated the right to speak and publish in one's mother tongue as "one of the elementary rights of the citizen."[51] The final resolution of the academy's April 1905 meeting invoked the decree of 12 December 1904, whose point no. 7 called for a revision of decisions limiting indigenous (*inorodtsy*) rights. Reflecting the new legalism of the revolutionary era, the resolution even invoked the "fundamental principles of Russian law" when it questioned the legality of the orders of 1876 and 1881, which had been submitted neither to the State Council nor to the Senate.[52]

Khar′kov and Kiev universities, likewise approached by the Council of Ministers, resolutely advocated an end to the restrictions and insisted on the importance of promoting literacy in Ukrainian among people of little or no education. Khar′kov University also favored the development of primary education in Ukrainian, which alone could raise the cultural level of the Little

[49] George Y. Shevelov, *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1989), 29.

[50] Michael G. Smith, *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR, 1917–53* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998), chap. 1.

[51] Goriakina, *Golos rosiis′koi inteligentsii*, 135, cited in Volkhonskii, "Natsional′naia politika," 181–82.

[52] Lotost′skyi-Bilousenko, *Storinky mynuloho*, 374.

Russian peasants. These demands included the right for Russian textbooks to incorporate translations and explanations of terms that were hard for Ukrainian children to understand, as well as the publication of educational materials in Ukrainian. But this proposal met with the most resolute opposition from Minister of Education V. Glazov, who treated the Russian literary language as the symbol of state unity. In the course of the discussions, he agreed to revoke the censoring of writing in Little Russian but refused to accord it the status of a full-fledged language, instead defining it as a dialect of Russia's great literary language, namely, Great Russian. In church, schools, the bureaucracy, and the courts, Little Russian was to be strictly forbidden. Keen to establish a hierarchy, Glazov distinguished dialects—fine for popular expression, emotions, and poetry—from the literary language of state that was alone capable of addressing the complexities of contemporary life. From the example of French, German, and Italian he concluded that the peasants in those regions had embarked on the path to education thanks to the imposition of one central language, and he considered that the Little Russians, brought up in Russian schools, did understand Russian. The minister interpreted the success of Little Russian in Galicia as the artificial result of a clever plan by Polish and German internationalists, not as arising from a thirst for knowledge deep within the Little Russian peasantry. He saw it as a plot, as propaganda that was smuggled in from Galicia and Bukovina and aimed at creating a Ukraine that stretched from the Carpathians to the Caucasus. Lastly, he concluded that the development of a Ruthenian (Ukrainian) press, associations, and political parties in neighboring Galicia, as well as the diffusion of knowledge, had merely fueled separatist, social-democratic, and atheistic movements.[53]

In these border regions, a battle for intellectual and political influence pitted Poles against Russians and the Habsburg against the Romanov government. Remarkably making itself the carrier of a pan-Slav nationalism, the Academy of Sciences pursued its defense of Ukrainian by invoking "Russia abroad" and the duty to validate the language of the Russian regions as against that of the regions under Polish influence whose language was full of "Polonisms." While they agreed in opposing any reform of Russian spelling, Korsh, Shakhmatov, and Budilovich also were unanimous in condemning the standardization of a written "Ruthenian" language.

The pan-Slavists in Russia, who were multiplying the number of mutual-aid associations to benefit Slavs abroad, of course also had to bring the "three million" Russians abroad under the aegis of the tsar. This number included the Ukrainophone population in the Polish regions of Austria-Hungary, who were called Ruthenians by the Austrians, but there were also "Russians" in Bukovina and Transcarpathia. The Slavist Budilovich was an

[53] Ibid., 378–81.

active advocate—in these associations, in his articles and pamphlets, and particularly in his lectures to the Russian society of Galicia—of the movement to assert the Russian character of these populations and territories.[54] In a 1905 tract, he demonstrated that the destinies of Galicia and Russia were inextricably linked.[55] He also declared war on the Little Russian spelling that had been adopted by the Austrian government and spread in books, the press, and Galician schools. Budilovich expressed his fear that this "patois" (*zhargon*), which "is to Little Russian what the Jewish patois is to German," would spread into Russia. Because of this, he began to defend the Little Russian dialect and its poets. Budilovich distinguished between local folk literature, for which Ukrainian was appropriate, and "universal" literature that could be expressed only in Russian.[56] He attacked "that patois" and its phonetic spelling, which was obligatory in primary, secondary, and higher education and was taking hold with frightening speed. He reported that 50,000 Galicians had petitioned Emperor Franz Josef against his decision to impose this phonetic spelling.[57] Regulations had, in fact, been imposed in Galicia in the 1890s, with the recommended spelling defined on phonetic principles, and this written Ruthenian had been made mandatory in the schools of these regions. The scholars of the Austro-Hungarian empire, like the Ukrainophile Russians, were accused of instrumentalizing the presence of a Ruthenian population in the Habsburg empire's Polish regions and of trying to separate them from Russia, their mother country. Based on a friend's experience, Budilovich reported that a Russian scholar in the 1900s had to promise to teach "the theory … and dogma of the independence of the Little Russian language" to receive a teaching post at L′vov University.[58]

The fact that Little Russian was not only permitted in the Habsburg empire but was taught and allowed to develop without restraint had reprecussions in Russia, particularly with the rise of insurrectionist movements in the periphery that led to the 1905 Revolution. When preliminary censorship was abolished in Russia in November 1905 and April 1906, the question of unrestricted publishing in Little Russian could be resolved; the translation of the Bible into Ukrainian had been authorized as early as 15 February 1905, even before the October Manifesto and the recognition of religious freedoms.[59]

---

[54] Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi biblioteki (OR RGB) f. 40 (A. S. Budilovich), op. 2, d. 14, "Rech′ na sobranii chlenov Galitskogo russkogo obshchestva o sobytiiakh vnutripoliticheskoi zhizni Rossii, Galitsii, Bukoviny, 1905–1906," 24 December 1906.

[55] Ibid., d. 12, "Russko-galitskie paralleli," 3 April 1905.

[56] Budilovich, *O edinstve russkogo naroda,* 17.

[57] Ibid.

[58] OR RGB f. 40, op. 2, d. 12, l. 15, ""Russko-galitskie paralleli."

[59] "Izvlechenie iz zhurnalov Komiteta ministrov," *Ob otmene ogranichitel′nykh mer po izdaniiu Sviatogo Pisaniia na malorossiiskom iazyke*, 15 February 1905.

The 1876 Ems Circular contained a resolution against the so-called "old Kulishovka" spelling that had spread in the 1860s and used и instead of ы and і intead of и. According to the principle of etymological spelling introduced by Russian censorship in 1875, the few authorized Little Russian publications were to use the Russian alphabet—the Latin characters used in the Habsburg empire into the 1880s having been forbidden by the Valuev decree—and in an old form. From the 1880s on, the alphabet used in Galician publications was the "new Kulishovka," which used Cyrillic and was based on phonetics according to the principle of one sound—one letter advocated by the "Ukrainophile" Mikhail Petrovich Dragomanov.[60] Once Russia lifted the prohibition on Ukrainian, the focus shifted to the normative value of the Bible translation, which was supposed to set the standard for literary Little Russian. The Academy of Sciences had been removed from the project, which had been assigned to the Holy Synod, but the scholars at the academy were nonetheless approached about it once again. A commission composed of Fortunatov, Korsh, Shakhmatov, Kokovtsev, and seven Ukrainians from St. Petersburg was charged with setting the rules for the publication, in cooperation with Bishop Parfenii of Poltava. The Little Russian language as yet had no well-established alphabet, grammar, or spelling;[61] these would be formally standardized only under the Soviets.[62] Contacts were therefore established between the Academy of Sciences and various Ukrainian-language specialists who offered a series of spelling recommendations.[63] In the end, those revising the Bible translation distanced themselves from ideological conflicts and chose their Little Russian spelling for pragmatic reasons. Even as a spontaneous and poorly controlled burst of publication in Ukrainian took place in Russia, they chose to follow the "new Kulishovka," but in the version adopted by the press—that is, without the і.[64] At first, the commission called for the ч and э to be excluded from the Little Russian alphabet, but pronounced itself in favor of keeping the і.[65] Once again, Shakhmatov, Fortunatov, and

[60] A. Miller and O. Ostapchuk, "Latinitsa i kirillitsa v ukrainskom natsional′nom diskurse i iazykovoi politike Rossiiskoi i Gabsburgskoi imperii," *Slavianovedenie*, no. 5 (2006): 25–48.

[61] The period beginning after the 1905 Revolution saw the multiplication of attempts at standardization, especially once *Kievskaia starina* issued a dictionary (ibid., 104–5). Fortunatov, Korsh, and Shakhmatov were in constant contact with its editors and published articles in their journal.

[62] Paul Wexler, *Purism and Language: A Study in Modern Belorussian and Ukrainian Nationalism, 1840–1967* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974).

[63] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 753, ll. 48–51, letter from M. F. Lovodovskii; l. 49, letter from I. S. Levittsii, who had already offered advice for the Bible publication in Galicia that was funded by the British Bible Society.

[64] Vul′pius, "Iazykovaia politika," 219–20.

[65] PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 753, l. 61.

Korsh defended the phonetic principle against the pan-Slavists who clung to the etymological principle that brought Little Russian closer to Russian. One letter, the i, which was withdrawn in the end, again served as a symbol.

From 1900 to 1910, those who opposed recognizing Ukrainian continued their fight against the notion of a Little Russian language or people; they recognized only one Russian language and one Russian people, albeit made up of subgroups. Once censorship restrictions were lifted in the Russian empire, the stakes shifted radically for the defenders of a pan-Russian language. On the one hand, they persisted in their vehement opposition to letting Little Russian become a language of teaching, justice, or administration, even as the Third Duma was discussing ways of introducing universal primary education that was to take place partly in the vernacular languages. At the same time, they attacked the spread in Galicia and Bukovina of an artificial Ruthenian language, a patois whose phonetic spelling had severed the tie between Ukrainian writing and the pan-Russian language.

The notion that Russia should set Little Russian spelling norms was as common among right-wing "patriots" as among the liberals. As the Academy of Sciences was discussing the publication of Morachevskii's translation, the Slavists were insisting that its language came "from the area where the Little Russian language's purity has been best preserved from foreign admixtures"—that is, the Poltava region, whose language differed from the Galician, which "is speckled with Polonisms and filled with artificial words and turns of phrase that are antithetical to the spirit of the Russian language."[66] Shakhmatov also criticized the first Ukrainian dictionary, released by the St. Petersburg journal *Kievskaia starina*. He faulted the dictionary for having designated only the speech used in southern Little Russia, Galicia, and Bukovina as Little Russian, thereby excluding speakers from northern Little Russia (the regions south of Minsk; the province of Grodno; and the speech of Siedlce and Lublin).[67] While in favor of creating a literary language that was "drawn from the lips of the people," he wanted to see no one left out.[68] Moreover, when the dictionary did use texts from northern Little Russia, it corrected them according to southern phonetics. The questions of Ukraine's borders and of cultural domination over the western and southern regions had implications that went far beyond scholarship.

The activity of the scholars from the Academy of Sciences was criticized with increasing violence by the right-wing press. As early as 1907, N. Engel´gardt charged the Academy of Sciences in *Novoe vremia* with using

[66] Ibid., l. 7 ob.

[67] For instance, he complained that the dictionary did not use ethnographic accounts and other documentation of the Academy of Sciences that described in detail the speech of the northern regions of Little Russia (A. A. Shakhmatov, *Otzyv o slovare ukrainskogo zhurnala "Kievskaia starina"* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1906), 5.

[68] Ibid., 8.

public money to finance publications in an artificial Ukrainian "Volapük,"[69] since the Russian Language and Literature Section of its own publications regularly featured learned texts in Ukrainian.[70] The Academy of Sciences was accused of having worked toward the lifting of restrictions on Ukrainian.[71] The question of the existence of a Ukrainian language and nationality violently agitated the political and the scholarly world. A series of polemics pitted "Ukrainophile" scholars against Russian nationalists and even liberals who, faced with mounting Ukrainian demands and international tensions, fretted over the question of "triune Rus′" (*triedinaia Rus′*) and denied the existence of a separate Ukrainian identity.[72]

Articles by the Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) Petr Struve (who was soon expelled from the party for his position on Ukraine) and others attacked the Academy of Sciences' role in the Ukrainian question. In response, Korsh insisted on the concomitance of all indicators—linguistic, anthropological, and ethnographic—and concluded that the differences between Ukrainians and other Slavic peoples were so obvious that there was no point even in discussing them. He wondered ironically why the "Ukrainian question" was being debated if there was no such nationality.[73] In 1915, with war raging, an article was published in *Russkie vedomosti* accusing Korsh and Shakhmatov of fomenting Ukrainian and Belorussian separatism. Forced to explain themselves, the two stood by their scholarly opinions and their fight for the recognition of cultural rights.

Between the Academy Walls and the Arena of Politics: Redefining the Empire

In this section, I try to describe a nebula, a network whose definition was very loose and based only on the fact that these individuals met, debated, and argued among themselves. Although we have focused on two specific polemics rather than on academic milieus, we keep meeting the same actors—the Slavists working in or around the Academy of Sciences, specifically its Russian Language and Literature Section. Far from being primarily of interest to scholars, these questions about the simplification of Russian and lifting of the ban on Ukrainian brought together a large number of social

[69] Volapük is an artificial language, analogous to Esperanto.

[70] Thus Mykhailo Hrushevs′kyi and Ivan Franko had published in Russian Language and Literature Section editions. Vladimir Lamanskii accepted their publications, as he did those in other Slavic languages (PF ARAN f. 9, op. 1, d. 893a).

[71] Ibid., dossier on accusations by *Novoe vremia* against the Academy of Sciences in the matter of lifting the restrictions on Ukrainian.

[72] P. B. Struve, "Neskol′ko slov po Ukrainskomu voprosu," *Russkaia mysl′* (January 1913): 10–11.

[73] Struve's article in *Ukrainskaia zhizn′* is cited in Lotost′skyi-Bilousenko, *Storinky mynuloho*, 343.

actors—from Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich (as president of the Academy of Sciences), the academicians Korsh, Shakhmatov, Fortunatov, Sobolevskii, and Ignat Viktorovich Iagich (Vatroslav Jagić, 1838–1923), and linguists from different universities (Brandt, Budde, Baudoin de Courtenay, Budilovich) to statisticians, professors, teachers, parents, essayists, writers, and notables of the court. It is through a series of dialogues, conferences, and meetings that these different milieus intersected. Although mainly based in St. Petersburg and Moscow in the 1900s, these scholars lived not only abroad, but—especially important for our purposes—on the peripheries of the empire. I focus on these particular linguists for their active participation in the two polemics that I have decided to investigate in their scholarly as well as practical dimensions and that form part of larger political issues of the day—the spread of literacy, democratization through writing, and the law of nations. The heterogeneity of their trajectories notwithstanding, the fact remains that because of my focus on the spelling reform and the recognition of Ukrainian as separate from Russian, the scholars we have observed were mostly liberals. I have sought, however, to redress the balance by also reconstructing the arguments of their opponents.

The project of a spelling reform was in large part driven in the 1890s by the Pedagogical Society of Kazan University before being taken up by the Moscow Pedagogical Society. Meanwhile, the staunchest opponents of reform presented themselves as defending the Russification experiments in the western provinces. From opposing camps, these intellectuals took part in the great debate about redefining the empire, whether as nation-state or federation, the German model for Budilovich or the United States for Baudoin de Courtenay. The political spectrum of the protagonists, as we have been able to recreate it, was broad, ranging from more or less monarchistic Kadets all the way to Octobrists and representatives of right-wing parties. The Slavists' political heterogeneity was also reflected in their positions on the empire, its crisis, and its possible regeneration. Baudoin de Courtenay (who in fact talked a great deal about politics), as well as Korsh, portrayed himself as a political amateur. Baudoin de Courtenay claimed to be a mere dilettante in politics,[74] and Korsh explained that while he was no politician, he was forced by circumstances to become politically involved.[75] They based their intervention in the public debate as much on their knowledge of linguistics and their teaching experience as on their political judgment. Budilovich was nearer the centers of power—he was a journalist and member of the Council of the Ministry of Education, and ended up as the editor of the principal

[74] Ian Boduen de Kurtene [Jan Baudoin de Courtenay], "Pol′skii vopros v sviazi s drugimi okrainnymi i inorodcheskimi voprosami," *Pravo,* nos. 7–9 (1905): 2565.

[75] "I am no politician, so if I lived somewhere in Western Europe, I should never have dreamed of expressing my opinions on questions of how the state is structured and managed" (F. E. Korsh, *Golos iz partii 17-go oktiabria* [Moscow: A. P. Poplavskii, 1907], 3).

monarchist newspaper. Academician Sobolevskii meanwhile, who launched the press campaign against the spelling reform, was an important leader in the right-wing monarchist party, the Union of the Russian People.

Jan Baudoin de Courtenay is the best-known linguist and most original political actor in this study. Born near Warsaw in Poland, where he obtained some of his education, he went to the universities of Prague, Berlin, Jena, Leipzig, and St. Petersburg to complete his work in comparative Indo-European studies, Sanskrit, and Slavic philology. He then lived and taught in different empires—in the Russian empire as a professor at Kazan University from 1875 and Dorpat (Tartu) in 1883, and in the Habsburg empire at Cracow in 1893.[76] In 1898, he returned to St. Petersburg and remained there until his departure after the 1917 Revolution for independent Poland, where he refused a place in the government but enjoyed an exceptional scholarly reputation as a professor at Warsaw University. He had political disagreements in both the Habsburg and Romanov empires; the latter even imprisoned him for several weeks in 1913 for his essay on the national question.[77] In Russia, first at Kazan and later at St. Petersburg, he developed linguistic theories that in retrospect are seen as precursors of structuralism, and he worked out the concept of the phoneme. In Russian universities he trained a number of disciples. They included V. V. Radlov, who helped develop the concept of "Russification" through the recognition of the vernacular languages in the Volga region; E. D. Polivanov, who created a series of alphabets for Eastern peoples in the Soviet era; and L. V. Shcherba.[78] Significantly for our topic, Baudoin de Courtenay was active in the reform of Russian spelling beginning in the 1880s. With his colleague R. F. Brandt, he was an enthusiastic partisan of Esperanto, and his morphological work and interest in phonetics led them to form a group to study the spelling reform that the Pedagogical Society of Kazan University had designed. They later participated in the commissions on spelling reform of the Academy of Sciences, where Baudoin de Courtenay was a corresponding member.

Baudoin de Courtenay's political involvement, which began in the Russian empire as well as in Austria-Hungary, took a fresh turn after the Revolution of 1905.[79] A self-identified Pole, monarchist, and democrat, Baudoin de Courtenay was himself a member of the Kadet Municipal Committee for

[76] On the Kazan school and Baudoin de Courtenay, see Jakobson, "The Kazan′ School of Polish Linguistics and Its Place in the International Development of Phonology."

[77] Ian Boduen de Kurtene, *Natsional′nyi i territorial′nyi priznak v avtonomii* (St. Petersburg: M. M. Stasiulevich, 1913).

[78] On the ties between Radlov and Baudoin de Courtenay, see Geraci, *Window on the East*, 145.

[79] Ian Boduen de Kurtene, *Tsenzurnye melochi* (Khar′kov: author, 1898).

St. Petersburg.[80] During the revolutionary troubles in 1905, Baudoin de Courtenay became one of the leaders of the autonomist federalists, whose program was taken up in part by the Kadet party platform. The movement of "stateless nationalities" or "autonomist federalists" was the result of a convention that met in 1906 to define the specific demands of non-Russians in the context of the future assembly.[81] While declaring their loyalty to a reconstructed Russia, they insisted that any nationality, whatever its size, had the right to a "national life." At the same time, they criticized centralization and demanded that the regions be endowed with significant administrative autonomy. In the First and Second Dumas, some Kadet deputies identified themselves with the ideas promoted by this movement. This solidarity between Kadets and movements with nationality-based agendas was built around protest against discrimination against non-Russians and, partially, around the preservation of the empire in its existing borders.[82]

Baudoin de Courtenay was above all an important essayist, which is how he presented his various opinions on the questions of national autonomy, cultural and linguistic rights, and the rights of individuals. His thinking is classic for the post-1905 empire, where the national question was widely debated, but it differed in tone and sensibility from the writings of jurists. Baudoin refused to let ethnographic makeup serve as the basis for regional autonomy, instead believing that the units on which communities would be based should follow the existing administrative boundaries.[83] For Poland, Baudoin de Courtenay envisaged the creation of ministries of foreign affairs, industry, agriculture, and education.[84] He was thinking in the context of a decentralized state, a "federation of separate territories" for which the model was the United States.[85] He characterized this state as "above nationality" (*vnenatsional'nyi*) and "above [religious] confession" (*vneveroispovedal'nyi*).[86] Interested in cultural rights and in schools, Baudoin de Courtenay acknowledged that each group of individuals—indeed, each individual—should be at

[80] *S"ezdy i konferentsii Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii: 1905–1920 gg.*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997–2000), 1: 161, 699.

[81] Azeri, Armenian, Belorussian, Estonian, Georgian, Jewish, Kirghiz, Lettish, Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Tatar, and Finnish representatives met at this congress.

[82] R. A. Tsiunchuk, *Dumskaia model' parlamentarizma v Rossiiskoi imperii: Etnokonfessional'noe i regional'noe izmereniia* (Kazan: FEN, 2004), 317–25.

[83] Boduen de Kurtene, *Natsional'nyi i territorial'nyi priznak v avtonomii*, 35.

[84] Ian Boduen de Kurtene, *Proekt osnovnykh polozhenii dlia resheniia pol'skogo voprosa* (St. Petersburg: Trud i pol'za, 1906), 14.

[85] Ian Boduen de Kurtene, *Natsional'nyi i territorial'nyi priznak v avtonomii,* 44.

[86] "We refuse to identify the state with only one church or one nationality but insist that the state, as a whole and in all its parts, be above confession, above nationality, in a word, above party. In our view, the foundations of statehood consist only of absolutely real interests—economic and broadly political interests" (ibid., 57–58).

liberty to found his own school in the language of his choice and funded by the state.[87] He also sought to conceive a system of proportional representation that would allow those who did or did not identify with a particular social and cultural group to be represented.[88] Baudoin de Courtenay defined the possibilities for association and representation in terms not only of nationality and religion but also of political parties and professions.[89] Above all, he refused to accept any process of identity assignment. Being himself a native of the periphery, of diverse orgins and languages, and having changed his country and teaching language, he defended each person's right to label himself as of several nationalities or none at all. Choosing as his example the Jews of the western provinces and their Jewish, Polish, or Russian identity, he advocated absolute freedom of individual self-definition. Lastly he did not believe that a "person whose development has not yet arrived at the notion of 'nationality' " could identify himself with any particular nationality.[90] Referring to the pressure from nationalists and the violence of identity redefinition that was shaking the regions where he had lived in the Austro-Hungarian empire and in Russia's western provinces, he denounced patriotism.[91] He spoke out in favor of a scholarship that objectively demonstrated the existence of a language and a people, with its location and history, but he denounced the moral ambiguity of studies that treated people "like undifferentiated beings, like animals or plants," whereas self-definition made them "individuals, citizens."[92] Interviewed by the newspaper *Ukrainskaia zhizn´* on the Ukrainian question, he maintained his rejection of assigned identities by refusing to "allow my blood kinship with this or that people to distort my judgment."[93] According to this linguist, language alone permitted one to differentiate among peoples, and he perceived a specificity in the Ukrainian dialects that united them into a common language and distinguished them from other Slavic languages, including Russian. Such objective knowledge about the language, however, should not lead automatically to a particular policy such as autonomy.[94] Even so, Baudoin de Courtenay welcomed the appearance of "local patriotism" and love for one's "home region" in Belorussia,

[87] Ibid., 52.

[88] Ibid., 50.

[89] Ibid., 21.

[90] Ibid., 20.

[91] "To me, 'patriotism' smells of blood and robbery, of burnt flesh, *trous-de-loup*; the tears of mothers, widows, and orphans; the destruction of cultural treasures; and the lowering of moral standards" (Ian Boduen de Kurtene, " 'Ukrainskii vopros' s vnenatsional´noi tochki zreniia," *Ukrainskaia zhizn´*, nos. 7–8 (1913): 36.

[92] Boduen de Kurtene, *Natsional´nyi i territorial´nyi priznak v avtonomii*, 16–17.

[93] Boduen de Kurtene, " 'Ukrainskii vopros,' " 36.

[94] Ibid., 39.

since he believed that it in no way impeded pan-Russian unity.[95] Espousing a particular philosophy of history, he proposed replacing the system of historical and ethnographic rights for territories with a right to self-determination for the people who lived there as well as the rights of the "particular historical moment."[96] He also acknowledged the role of history, which had not given rise to a general Slavic literary language similar to German or French. In his writings, he rejected any Russian or Polish patriotism, instead presenting himself as a man of logical, non-ideological thought. His thinking combined distrust for violent—let alone fanatical—forms of nationalism with a romanticism that saw people's attachment to their language and traditions as a possible path toward progress and culture.

The philologist, linguist, and Slavophile A. S. Budilovich was also a "man from the borderlands." Originally from the province of Grodno, he was a professor at the Institute of Nizhyn in eastern Ukraine (1875–1881) and moved to Warsaw University in 1881. In 1893, he became rector of Dorpat (Tartu) University, just when the city was renamed Iur′ev. In the same year, Baudoin de Courtenay left Dorpat for Warsaw University. Under Budilovich's guidance, Dorpat University was henceforth to defend the Russian language and especially to fend off the influence of German. Formerly a center for the spread of German culture, the university had grown progressively more Russianized and open to the other languages of the Baltic countries.[97] But 1893 was a pivotal year. Budilovich had already used his authority to support Russification at Warsaw University, where he had resolutely fought the influence of the Polish professors and language. He had been attacked in the Polish press, especially for working against the Department of Polish and actively supporting the new Governor-General I. V. Gurko's policies. Gurko, a hero of the Crimean War, embodied the policy of repressing separatist movements and bolstering the Russian element in the borderlands. When Budilovich arrived, N. A. Lavrovskii was named rector of Warsaw University. At Nizhyn, where he had Brandt for a colleague, Budilovich had already displayed his pan-Slavism and his political convictions, in particular to Lavrovskii, who was then rector. Budilovich thus belonged to a particular milieu whose ideology remained deeply inspired by pan-Slavism. Budilovich had attended the 1867 Slavic Congress in Moscow and was a founding member of the St. Petersburg Slavic Committee; as a member of its editorial commission, he was a particularly prolific writer of articles on the pan-Slavic literary language. He was an archetypal and striking figure not only of late pan-Slavism but also of the Russification project.

[95] Boduen de Kurtene, *Natsional′nyi i territorial′nyi priznak v avtonomii*, 33.

[96] Ibid.

[97] A. S. Budilovich, *Neskol′ko dannykh i soobrazhenii ob uspekhakh russkogo iazyka v Iur′evskom (b. Derptskom) universitete* (Iur′ev: K. Mattisen, 1899).

In 1901, he became a member of the Council of the Ministry of Education; and in 1905, he led the commission charged with redrawing the regulations for "schools for non-Russians."[98] An active polemicist, Budilovich wrote numerous pamphlets on nationality questions in which he attacked the scholarly world. Shortly before his death he became the publisher and editor of the most important monarchist journal, *Moskovskie vedomosti*. Married to the daughter of the well-known Galician politician, writer, and Russophile Adol´f Dobrianskii, and having spent two years visiting "Slavic lands" abroad, he made himself the relentless defender of both the Russians abroad and the Russians of the empire's borderlands.[99] An opponent of liberal movements, Budilovich highlighted the Ruthenians' disillusionment with the Habsburg representative system and the reorientation of some of their political circles toward Moscow. He celebrated the success of pro-Russian sentiments in the region, as indicated by the distribution of books and pamphlets published in Russia. Demonstrations of solidarity by "real Russians abroad or Red Russians [Galicians]" (*korennye russkie zarubezhom ili chervonnorusskie*) with Russian soldiers wounded on the Asian front during the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War, while rare, testified to a form of "tribal solidarity."[100] He attributed present-day difficulties to policies that had preserved certain specific rights for nationalities since the time of Peter the Great.[101] He regarded centralization, the predominance of Russian, and the protection of Russians' position in the borderlands as the only measures likely to preserve a country threatened by ethnic separatism, freemasonry, and socialism. Budilovich repudiated the tradition of imperial tolerance and imagined Russia as a nation-state (albeit without that model's revolutionary and democratic character)—that is, as a homogenous country dominated by a national culture. This right-wing nationalism, strongly tainted with antisemitism, was modeled on Germany—even if Budilovich criticized Germany for the violence of its nationalism and its treatment of minorities—or even England, but certainly not the United States, which he thought was in the hands of the Jews.[102] As a representative of the Ministry of Education in 1904, when the spelling simplification project was proposed, he saw the influence of Ukrainian separatism in the replacement "of our historical spelling with a phonetic one."[103] He systematically

[98] Michael Boro Petrovich, *The Emergence of Russian Panslavism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985).

[99] K. Ia. Grot, "Pamiati Antona Semenovicha Budilovicha," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 105 (1909): 1097–1122.

[100] OR RGB f. 40, op. 2, d .12, l. 3, "Russko-galitskie paralleli."

[101] A. S. Budilovich, *Po voprosu ob okrainakh Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Voeikov, 1906), 6–8.

[102] Ibid., 21; A. S. Budilovich, *Mozhet li Rossiia otdat´ inorodtsam svoi okrainy?* (Izdanie Biblioteki okrain Rossii, no. 4) (St. Petersburg: Izdatel´stvo Biblioteki okrain Rossii, 1907), 65.

[103] OR RGB f. 40, op. 2, d. 12, l. 9, "Russko-galitskie paralleli."

blasted the views of some academicians on the origins of the Russian language. Budilovich contributed vigorously to politicizing these linguistic debates by monitoring his fellow linguists and attacking their political involvement. Thus he presented himself as a patriot while refusing that label to scholars who had signed petitions in favor of university autonomy. He attentively followed the way his colleagues' activism developed through their participation in the Paris Congress for the Defense of Minorities and later in the autonomist federalist movement. He described in detail the different stages in the evolution of the federalists and scoffed at their intention of giving autonomy to Ukraine. He denounced the group's influence before the Duma and emphasized the danger of federalist ideas and of their infiltration into the borderlands.[104] His ideological program was Slavophile and representative of right-wing parties. Budilovich was original because of his "expertise" on the borderlands question, his political activism, and his systematic criticism of the activities of a handful of scholars. He accused Baudoin de Courtenay of being a Polish separatist and even characterized the scholar Mykhailo Hrushevs′kyi of being, "as it were, the Mohammed of separatism" in Russia.[105] In the name of "the unity of the empire," a slogan shared by the right-wing parties, Budilovich ceaselessly denounced the Academy of Sciences for collectively aiding the federalists' political projects by giving credence to the existence of a Great Russian (as distinct from Little Russian and Belorussian) nationality and admitting that term into common usage. He even objected to using "Great Russian" to designate the Russian language and its people. This new appellation seemed blasphemous to supporters of the autocracy and the Russian national project. By dividing the great tribe of Russians—with the Great Russians becoming a statistical minority—the academy's scholars had supposedly done much to weaken the country.[106] For example, granting linguistic rights in university teaching would mean losing the borderland territories.[107] Budilovich took offense when a deputy at the first session of the Duma suggested that the word "Russian" no longer modify "empire" since the latter contained many nationalities.[108] Budilovich even suspected the Octobrists of abandoning their principles.[109] Basic to the Octobrists' political program, the defense of the empire's "unity and indivisibility" was a slogan shared across the right. The example of Austria-Hungary provided grist for his anti-parliamentarism, since the Slavs there were allegedly

[104] Budilovich, *Mozhet li Rossiia,* 61–72.

[105] Budilovich, *Po voprosu ob okrainakh Rossii*, 68; OR RGB f. 40, op. 2, d. 12, l. 9, "Russko-galitskie paralleli."

[106] Budilovich, *Po voprosu ob okrainakh Rossii*, 14.

[107] Budilovich, *O edinstve russkogo naroda*, 6.

[108] Ibid., 5.

[109] Budilovich, *Po voprosu ob okrainakh Rossii,* 19.

in thrall to the Jews and freemasons. He also denounced foreign control over Russian land and capital.[110] He feared that non-Russians would become the majority and dominate the parliament. Budilovich criticized a system of national representation that was based on the census and population counts, instead calling for Russian domination to be firmly established and Russians living in the borderlands to receive privileged representation in the assembly.[111] His voice was indeed heard: as early as the First Duma, the tsar intervened to have seats granted to borderland Russians; and after June 1907, Duma representation for non-Russians was considerably reduced.[112] A supporter of the policy of Russification, Budilovich defended keeping Russian as the language of the entire state as well as the project to create a province of Kholm as a (Little) Russian enclave within the lands of the former kingdom of Poland.[113] His opinions were typical of the right-wing parties, which were close to the monarchist government and tainted with xenophobia and antisemitism. Still, he accepted the Duma and criticized the violence of the extreme Right, so he became the target of a smear campaign by them when he was named as editor of *Moskovskie vedomosti* and they accused him of belonging to the Kadet camp.[114]

Among Slavists and academicians, of whom he was one, Budilovich was far from alone in his opinions. Another opponent of spelling reform, Professor A. I. Tomson of Odessa University, devoted several works to the issue.[115] He feared that it might reopen questions about the unity of pan-Russian writing. In his campaign against spelling reform, he was joined by the Slavists and academicians Ignat Iagich and Aleksei Sobolevskii. Sobolevskii believed that there was only one Russian language. He intervened in the discussion when the Academy of Sciences was debating whether to allow the publication of books in Ukrainian and orchestrated a press campaign to belittle the activities of the Commission on Spelling Reform by leaking information on the April 1904 meeting. Sobolevskii was a representative of monarchist ideology and Russian nationalism. As vice-president of the right-wing Union

[110] A. S Budilovich, *K voprosu o zapiske 342 uchenykh* (Otdel´nyi ottisk "Russkogo vestnika," St. Petersburg, 1905), 21.

[111] Budilovich, *Po voprosu ob okrainakh Rossii*, 24.

[112] Albert Levin, "June 3, 1907: Action and Reaction," in *Essays on Russian History: A Collection Dedicated to George Vernadsky*, ed. Levin and A. D. Ferguson (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1964), 231–73.

[113] Budilovich, *Po voprosu ob okrainakh Rossii*.

[114] Grot, "Pamiati Antona Semenovicha Budilovicha," 1122.

[115] A. I. Tomson, *K teorii pravopisaniia i metodologii prepodavaniia ego v sviazi s proektirovannym uproshcheniem russkogo pravopisaniia* (Odessa: Ekonomicheskaia tipografiia, 1903); *Neobkhodima reforma nepravopisaniia a prepodavaniia pravopisaniia* (Odessa: Ekonomicheskaia tipografiia, 1906); *Reforma v ushcherb gramotnosti i pravopisaniia* (Odessa: Ekonomicheskaia tipografiia, 1904).

of the Russian People, he ran for the Duma several times.[116] His stemwinders blasted the Kadets and "institutions of higher learning" for being the principal breeding ground of revolution.[117] Together with Budilovich, he was also a founder of the Russian Borderlands Society (Russkoe okrainnoe obshchestvo), an offshoot of the Union of Russian Monarchists. With members highly placed in the state hierarchy, the society's goal was to combat separatism and defend the interests of Russians in the borderlands. But the pan-Slavic impulse reached into less right-wing groups as well. Thus the Committee of Slavic Reciprocity formed in April 1906 with a view to bringing the Slavic nationalities closer together; although they usually disagreed with one another, Budilovich and Kadet scholars (Shakhmatov, M. M. Kovalevskii, and V. I. Vernadskii) set aside their differences and rubbed shoulders with the Duma president, state councillors, and even the Miliukov brothers.[118]

The Slavist Fedor Korsh, a member of the academy since 1900, was committed to the slogan of imperial unity and indivisibility yet politically engaged in favor of the Revolution of 1905. Though he joined the Octobrist Party (established to support the tsar's October Manifesto and oppose the autonomist ideas of the Kadets), he soon grew critical of their increasingly active support for the policies of the tsar and Petr Stolypin.[119] In his political analyses, he argued that his scholarship made him a specialist on nationality questions.[120] He firmly supported both equality among nationalities and the right to free cultural development, but he refused to countenance autonomy for Poland or other imperial provinces, instead advocating autonomy for smaller territories of the size not of a region (oblast, krai) but of zemstvos, which could then join together in flexible alliances.[121] Writing in 1907, he worried about the direction his party had taken and urged the Octobrists to move closer to the Kadets, whose leading members he admitted knowing well. While he enlisted all his scholarly authority to gain recognition for the Ukrainian language, he initially refused to countenance too sweeping a reform of Russian spelling. His name is often associated with that of Aleksei Shakhmatov, another academician and a great specialist on Russian morphology and the collection and study of dialectal forms. A defender of the Ukrainian language, Shakhmatov headed the commission to simplify the

[116] In 1906, Sobolevskii ran for office representing the monarchist coalition that united the Russian Assembly and the Union of the Russian People; he ran again in 1907 (Iu. I. Kir′ianov, ed., *Pravye partii: Dokumenty i materialy, 1905–1917,* 2 vols. [Moscow: Rosspen, 1998], 1: 144, 355).

[117] Ibid., 1: 351.

[118] OR RGB f. 40, op. 8, d. 9, l. 1–3.

[119] F. E. Korsh, *Golos iz partii 17-go oktiabria* (Moscow: A. P. Poplavskii, 1907).

[120] "I know rather more about Russia's nationalities (*narodnosti*) and their mutual relations than do many of the officials and citizens who rule the fate of our country" (ibid., 8).

[121] Ibid., 25–31.

alphabet after Fortunatov's death. Shakhmatov was a member of the local Kadet committee in St. Petersburg, as was Baudoin de Courtenay. In May 1906, Shakhmatov was coopted into the Kadet Central Committee, but then left it, only to be reinstated in April 1907.[122] Filipp Fortunatov, professor at Moscow University and member of the academy since 1902, also joined the Kadet Party. An opponent of Russification and a great scholar of pronunciation studies and of Lithuanian, he fought for the recognition of Lithuanian and came under vehement attack as head of the Commission on Spelling Reform. Named chairman of the Commission to Prepare Lithuanian-Language Curricula, he advocated using the Latin alphabet, which had been banned in 1865.[123] These three individuals were representatives of a dialectological school that was interested in popular speech, its cartography, and its detailed analysis. Their interest in contemporary speech was also the root of their support for the cause of Ukrainian and Lithuanian and to a degree, for the simplification of spelling.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance and the complexity of this historical moment, when Russia's passage to writing was taking place just as the empire was redefining itself. Scholars became political in part because they hoped that their expertise could be put to use in recasting the state and modernizing society. Various understandings of language came into play in these debates. The liberal linguists, who favored democratization and change, tried to make writing easier so the written langage could serve as a medium or tool for fast, effective communication. Their adversaries countered with a patrimonial conception of language as an untouchable symbol of Russian culture. Even though it had lost a good deal of its scientific preeminence, especially to the universities, the early 20th-century Academy of Sciences remained a meeting place for scholars. Given the strong normative authority it possessed, it therefore found itself charged by the nascent civil society with telling the truth—that is, setting the spelling norms—even while being violently criticized by the right-wing press.

I chose to begin my study with the scholarly polemics themselves, not a particular institution (the Academy of Sciences or the universities) or a group identified by historians of science (such as the linguists' circles of St. Petersburg or Moscow). My aim has been not only to recreate a network or a milieu but also to show how scholars responded to what we would today call "public demand" and became caught up in politics. We have thus combined the histories of scholarship and politics and argued that the former

[122] *S"ezdy i konferentsii Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii*, 1: 808; F. M. Berezin, *Russkoe iazykoznanie kontsa XIX–nachala XX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 76.

[123] Berezin, *Russkoe iazykoznanie*, 76.

cannot be understood outside the context of the 1905 Revolution and the decade that began in 1910. The omnipresence of ideology in questions as technical as the reform of Russian and the origins of Ukrainian helps us see how deeply polarized the Russian elites were on the nationalities question. The various projects and ideas about political and territorial reorganization within the empire account for arguments that eventually became matters of public debate.

The sharp politicization of scholarship thus antedated Bolshevik power. The aligning of scholarly position, claims to expert status, and involvement in public debate was in place by the early 20th century and partly explains why scholars increasingly rallied to the new regime, which they soon identified as capable of implementing their scholarly projects and as the bearer of the continuity of the state. Shakhmatov helped save the Academy of Sciences through his long friendship with the Bolshevik V. D. Bonch-Bruevich; he also helped the academy's director, S. F. Ol´denburg, when he was arrested and arranged for Ol´denburg to meet with Lenin.[124] Some of the linguists whom I have discussed, and especially their students, placed their scholarship at the new government's service in order to provide various peoples with alphabets, grammars, and orthographies. Their dispersion, from behind the walls of the St. Petersburg Academy to research centers and academies in the new republics, testifies to their ongoing scholarly commitment. Baudoin de Courtenay left Russia and became an intellectual, political, and scholarly figure of the first order in newly independent Poland. E. F. Karskii, also a member of the academy's Russian Language and Literature Section and a specialist in Belorussian, was sent to Minsk to help establish a Belorussian literary language and teaching in that language. The dispersal of these Slavists to the Soviet republics or newly independent states is also evident in the marginalization of Slavistics. The Russian Language and Literature Section was asked for help in attempts to Latinize alphabets but refused to participate. While attempts to create literary languages for the non-Russian nationalities multiplied, this took place in a committee for new alphabets that was attached directly to the Soviet government and located outside the Academy of Sciences.[125]

The 1917 Revolution implied a radical change in political conditions. Not only was new control exercised over science, but in terms of our present interests it also became policy to support the rapid development of literacy and to recognize language rights. Because of the Revolution and its brief period of independence, Ukrainian became the offical language of

[124] Mikhail Andreevich Robinson, "Otdelenie russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (konets 1910kh–1920e gody," in *Histoire de la slavistique: Le rôle des institutions*, ed. Antonia Bernard (Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 2003), 68–87.

[125] Smith, *Language and Power,* 121–41.

Ukraine—a state language used by the press, in signage, and in schools.[126] The form taken by linguistic standardization was decided at a conference organized in 1928 by the Ukrainian Soviet government, which notably included People's Commissar of Education Mykola Skrypnyk, a fervent partisan of Ukrainianization.[127] At the same time, beginning in January 1918, the Bolsheviks imposed the new Russian spelling, which they made into a symbol of their revolutionary ambitions,[128] while loyalty to the old Russian writing became a symbol of opposition to the Bolsheviks among the Whites and émigrés in exile after the Revolution.[129]

Some components of the imperial-era language debates occasionally resurfaced in the USSR. Thus ideas about the basically imperial character of the Russian language as a medium to unite a multilingual population reappeared in the form of concerns about simplifying official Russian. In 1931, a Central Executive Committee commission launched a debate, led by Anatolii Lunacharskii, over methods of writing and translating constitutions and legal texts into the different Soviet national languages. The translators demanded that legal Russian be simplified, not only because the legal language was incomprehensible to the people and full of "bourgeois jargon," but also because as the dominant language, Russian should evolve into a language easy to translate.[130] But over time, the preferred route was to make the non-Russian languages more similar to Russian, especially by imposing the Cyrillic alphabet after 1938 and through increased lexical and even syntactical borrowing from Russian. When a decree of March 1938 required that Russian be taught in all "national" schools, it had clearly been redefined as the language of pan-Soviet communication.[131] A Commission on Russian Spelling was then created to bring order into the spelling and punctuation rules. It was made up of members of the Academy of Sciences—students of the scholars whom we have studied (e.g., Shcherba or Chernyshev) played an important role—but also of representatives from schools and publishing

[126] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 75–122.

[127] Emile Kruba, "Histoire de l'orthographe de l'ukrainien," *Slavica Occitania*, no. 12 (2001): 238.

[128] "Dekret o vvedenii novogo pravopisaniia," in *Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii Rabochego i krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva*, no. 12 (30 December 1917), pt. 1, art. 176, 185–86.

[129] Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); see also Michael S. Gorham, *Speaking in Soviet Tongues: Language, Culture, and the Politics of Voice in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 106–7.

[130] Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 3318, op. 23, d. 1028, l. 17.

[131] Peter A. Blitstein, "Nation-Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in the Soviet Non-Russian Schools, 1938–53," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Terry Martin and Ronald G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 253–74.

houses.[132] While the commission's work, supervised by Iosif Stalin and Viacheslav Molotov, did not put the matter to rest—it would be 1956 before new spelling rules were enacted—it testified to the intrinsic link between the history of Russian spelling and government efforts to make it an imperial language that would unify the entire state.

Translated by Carol B. Stevens

École des hautes études en sciences sociales
54, boulevard Raspail
75006 Paris
France
juliette.cadiot@ehess.fr

[132] GARF f. 5446, op. 23, d. 1786.