

The Valuev Circular and the End of Little Russian Literature

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Abstract

In the summer of 1863 right after the Polish uprising, the Russian Minister of the Interior Piotr Valuev issued a circular that effectively banned the publication of all popular literature, including textbooks and religious texts. The article is an attempt to gauge the impact of the Valuev Circular on Ukrainian literature by comparing book publishing at different periods of the 19th century in terms of the number of books, languages, genres, and geography, as well as its relevance to the contemporary literary canon. The author concludes that the Valuev Circular was an unambiguous manifestation of awareness on the part of the Russian authorities that the Ukrainian cultural revival posed a serious danger to the unity of the Empire. And the detrimental effect it had on all of Ukrainian culture is well documented. The silver lining, if there was any, was that the very name “Little Russian” acquired a derogatory meaning, and since 1863 all “nationally conscious” Ukrainians (*“natsionalno-svidomi,”* a term coined by Borys Hrinchenko) had to radically rethink their attitudes towards the country they lived in. The bilingualism of the previous generation was now considered an act of betrayal. The Circular did not succeed in eradicating the Ukrainian movement. Ukrainian literature, as a repository of national aspirations, survived half a century of external pressure, but it had to pay a high price. By banning the Ukrainian language from school church, and from most other spheres of state and social life the Valuev Circular deprived Ukraine of at least two generations of Ukrainian readers (arguably, one of the two indispensable elements of any literature) and seriously curtailed the ability of Ukrainian literature to create a viable infrastructure.

Key Words: Ukrainian literature, the Valuev Circular, language, impact, book publishing, readers.



Throughout the 19th century what is today known as Ukrainian literature existed under different names — Little Russian, Ruthenian, Galician and finally, Ukrainian. For nearly half of that century it was also viewed as a legitimate part of Russian literature. (Commemorating the death of H. Kvitka-Osnovianenko (1778–1843), the founder of Ukrainian prose, a leading Russian magazine *Moskvitianin*, called him “one of the best Russian writers.”¹) Of all these names only Ukrainian has survived. The paradox is that the person who brought about that change, Russian

1 Mykola Zerov, *Ukrainske pysmenstvo [History of Ukrainian Literature]*, ed. Mykola Sulyma (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2003), 627.

Minister of the Interior Piotr Aleksandrovich Valuev, was in fact aiming at eradicating that very name.

There is no clear cut definition of Little Russian literature. One can claim that with the appearance of Taras Shevchenko on the literary scene in the early 1840s it became clear that Russian and Ukrainian literatures (no matter what name you choose for the latter) had to part ways. Yet Little Russian (*malorusskaia*) continued to be the standard Russian term for that literature up until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. In 1876 in Vienna, émigré Ukrainian historian and political thinker Mykhailo Drahomanov published a brochure about contemporary Ukrainian literature entitled *Po voprosu o malorusskoi literature* (On the Issue of Little Russian Literature). In another article, written in Ukrainian in Lviv,² he claimed that “Ukrainian literature appeared on the European literary map not directly, but as an integral part of Russian literature” (“*ne priamo, a useredyni rosiiskoi*”), and also that “Ukrainian literature is a child of 19th century Russia and that is why it must live and grow until Russia remains Russia.”³ This, of course, could be explained by M. Drahomanov’s political views. Perhaps, against his wish he ended up outside the mainstream of the nationalistic discourse, and fought both “centralists” and the “autonomists.” But the fact remains that for a sizeable segment of Ukrainophiles brought up and educated in the Russian Empire Ukrainian and Russian literatures were connected by a sort of umbilical cord. Another example illustrating this point could be the polemics between P. Kulish and M. Maksymovych in *Russkii vestnik*. While Kulish was advocating the separateness of the emerging new literature, the older historian and ethnographer was adamant in keeping it within the all-Russian (*obshcherusskii*) cultural context.

Yet despite the vagueness of the term, one can argue that Little Russian literature has certain distinct features, as opposed to the Ukrainian literature into which it gradually evolved. One of these features is the language. While most of the Ukrainian writers of the first half of the 19th century were bilingual (Kotliarevskiy, Kvitka, Shevchenko, Kulish, Mordovets, Storozhenko, Kostomarov) for the generation of the post-Valuev writers, their literature started with the Ukrainian language. Cherishing it (*plekaty ridne slovo*) became a part of their creed.

For the Little Russian writers switching from language to language was like putting on different masks. Writing in Russian the author was expected to present the demeanor of a rational, civilized, detached, well-mannered and often ironic raconteur. While in his Ukrainian language works the same writer turned himself into a village wise guy with a smirk glued to his face or into a perennial old man bemoaning, lamenting, and cursing the world around him.

Poet and scholar Mykola Zerov in his 1923 *History of Ukrainian Literature* invokes a typical Ukrainian patriot and amateur writer of that period, who

on the gentry balls, among Russians was a fashion-conscious dandy, while at home — a Zaporozhian Cossack in high boots and baggy pants; outside

2 Yuri Zeldich, *Petr Aleksandrovich Valuev i yego vremia, Istoricheskoe povestvovanie*. [*Petr Aleksandrovich Valuev and His Time, A Historical Narrative*] (Moscow: Agraf, 2006), 144.

3 Zeldich, *Petr Aleksandrovich Valuev*, 143.

his estate — a connoisseur of oysters and truffles, but at home he would overindulge on his pond fish and dumplings.⁴

Zerov observed that the early 19th century

Ukrainian reader, publisher, and the author were members of the nobility (Kvitka, Gogol-pere, Hrebinka), government officials (Hulak-Artemovskiy, Kukharenko, Dumitrashkov), clergy (Pysarevskiy, Oleksandriv, Korenytskyi). All this provincial public were by and large the enthusiastic consumers of Russian literature. However, to fully satisfy their esthetic appetite, they occasionally switch to “the unrefined idiom,” to the local dialect, so natural, juicy, and vibrant that under their pen it becomes a work of art. The Ukrainian language popular anecdote or a play depicting scenes from local life, a romantic song, an ethnographic sketch, historical memoirs become the favorite genres of this community, the embellishments to their seasonal social events that normally coincided with gentry conventions, church holidays and birthdays.⁵

Politically the early Ukrainian (or Little Russian) literary public were both monarchists and Cossackophiles. But this cozy, homey relationship with the imperial authorities did not last very long. For the next generation of Ukrainian writers and political activists the very term Little Russian began to signify the regional, loyal, parochial, provincial, folksy, and ethnographical, while they quickly found themselves in the business of nation-building. And this business required standardizing the language, creating a dictionary, and forming a coherent national concept of history.⁶ This generation of Ukrainophiles that in 1861–1862 rallied around the literary journal *Osnova* were inspired by the example of Czechs and Serbs. In the relatively mild political climate of the late 1850s — early 1860s Ukrainian students and activists especially in the University centers plunged themselves into the study of Ukrainian history, collecting folklore, setting up Sunday schools to educate peasants and factory workers in their language.⁷

“Between 1860 and 1862 Kulish’s publishing house issued in the *Selskaia biblioteka* series, 39 various brochures in Ukrainian, which equaled the total number of all books published during the four previous decades.”⁸

4 Zerov, *Ukrainske pysmenstvo*, 104.

5 Zerov, *Ukrainske pysmenstvo*, 101.

6 Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question. The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2003), 252. (Russian edition: A. I. Miller, “Ukrainskii vopros” v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX v.) (Saint Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000)).

7 Zerov, *Ukrainske pysmenstvo*, 218.

8 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 62.

“At the beginning of 1862 one could buy in Moscow and St. Petersburg up to six Ukrainian primers by different authors including those of Kulish and Shevchenko.”⁹

Although in its program *Osnova* declared that the journal welcomes contributions in both languages, a special consideration, according to the editorial staff, was to be accorded to the “practical significance of the popular language in teaching and preaching.”¹⁰ P. Kulish, the driving force behind *Osnova*, understood that the independent status of the Ukrainian language was crucial to the success of the whole Ukrainian project, and that the first step in that direction was the creation of a literary Ukrainian language.¹¹ Cultivating the vernacular seemed to be the only plausible argument against people like V. Belinsky, who never hesitated to ridicule the aspiring new literature. “What kind of a literature is it, — he famously asked, — that reeks of the simplicity of the peasant’s language and the dumbness of the peasant’s mind.”¹²

And Kulish knew perfectly well how to counter these attacks.

In 1861 he was officially invited to translate the Emancipation Edict into Ukrainian. The translation was not issued, however, since the state secretary V. P. Butkov demanded from Kulish that he adjust the translation to be as close as possible to the peasants’ language. Kulish refused to amend the work because he was dedicated to the idea of creating a standard Ukrainian language.¹³

Around this time the imperial authorities realized the clear and present danger of such a swift transition from Little Russia to Ukraine.

In the summer of 1863 right after the Polish uprising the Minister of the Interior P. Valuev issued a circular that effectively banned the publication of all popular literature, including textbooks and religious texts. At that stage the Russian government considered blocking efforts to emancipate the Ukrainian language and to spread Ukrainian literacy among peasants, the easiest way of strengthening their Empire.

By the standards of mid-19th century Imperial Russia, P. A. Valuev (1815–1890) was a moderate conservative. It appears that he sincerely believed that

the Russian people must be at the head of the civilizational movement and must lead the Poles. To achieve this goal the monarchy must accept the changes, brought forth by history. Before it’s too late, it must allow the educated classes to participate in the discussion and solve the problems of the emerging civil society.¹⁴

9 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 63.

10 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 77.

11 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 87.

12 S. O. Yefremov, *Literaturno-krytychni statti* [*Critical Essays on Literature*] (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1993), 17.

13 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 65.

14 Zeldich, *Petr Aleksandrovich Valuev*, 233.

In national issues he supported “moderate, reasonable policy which showed respect for Polish achievements in culture (in order) to persuade the Poles of the advantages of belonging to the Empire. While in the Baltic provinces and in Ukraine where the nationality movements were not as strong as in Poland Valuev advocated a more aggressive policy of Russification.”¹⁵ He was very critical of contemporary Russian literature for “abandoning the path of free development.” “Our literature, — he wrote, — strayed from its traditional purposes towards a one-sided service to temporary political ... questions”¹⁶ and was preoccupied with “unjust criticism of the government and its officials.”¹⁷

The true motives behind his famous Circular are laid out in a confidential letter which P. Valuev wrote to Minister of Education Count Alexander A. Golovin, who opposed this measure. This is how Valuev justified his actions.

First, he argued, this was the most effective way to prevent the Ukrainian intelligentsia from allying itself with the Ukrainian peasant masses in pursuance of a political goal.

Second, he maintained that the Ukrainian peasants should not be educated in a language whose usefulness as well as whose very existence was doubtful, since “the dialect used by the common people in Ukraine was nothing but Russian language that had been distorted by Polish influence.”

Third, he insisted that Ukrainian peasants understood Russian better than they did Ukrainian, and consequently had no need to learn a new language.

Fourth, he felt that beneath the drive for a distinct Ukrainian language was really a desire to separate Ukraine from Russia. And finally, he contended that publications in the Ukrainian language of any materials, whether of secular or religious content, were harmful to “Russian interests.”¹⁸

An American scholar of Ukrainian descent, B. Dmytryshyn in his introduction to Fedir Savchenko’s book *The Suppression of Ukrainian Activities in 1876* argues that the Circular in particular and anti-Ukrainian activities in general were not only counter-productive and harmful to “Russian interests” (i.e. the interests of the Russian people), but, in fact, illogical. And yet if we differentiate between “the Russian people” (who are never asked about what they really want) and “the Russian idea” (a political concept that has dominated Russian political discourse since at least the 17th century) then the Valuev Circular looks like an example of sound strategic thinking.

As contemporary Russian historian Alexei Miller observes, “Literary experiments in the ‘Little Russian dialect,’ which reflected local exotica, aroused sympathetic interest in St. Petersburg and Moscow as a part of Russian literature, but any attempts to interpret this ‘Little Russian dialect’ as

15 Gordon Dale Knutson, *Peter Valuev: A Conservative’s Approach and Reactions to the Reforms of Alexander II*, Dissertation, 1971, UMI Dissertation Information Service, University Microfilms, University of Kansas, PhD, 1970, history, modern, 305.

16 Knutson, *Peter Valuev*, 174.

17 Knutson, *Peter Valuev*, 304.

18 Savchenko, Fedir. *Zaborona ukrajins’koho pys’menstva, 1876*, in: Fedir Savchenko. *The suppression of Ukrainian activities in 1876*. Reprint of the Kiev 1930 edition with an editor’s preface: Fedir Savchenko and his work by O. Pritzak and with an introduction by Basil Dmytryshyn. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Munchen. 1970, xvi.

an independent Ukrainian language, separate from Russian, was unacceptable for the advocates of the Pan-Russian national concept.” Ukrainian nationalism rejected a Little Russian identity that could peacefully coexist with the All-Russian identity, and created its own image of the ideal fatherland, which contradicted both the Russian and Polish images. The Ukrainian idea was “taking away from the Russian idea not simply a part of the national territory, but Kyiv as ‘mother of the Russian cities,’ the place where Orthodox faith and Rus’ statehood were acquired.”¹⁹

In other words, Ukrainophiles, just like other Slavic nationalists, were aiming at nation-building, while the Russian authorities and political thinkers historically (and one is tempted to say “instinctively”) opted not for the Nation but for the Empire. Perhaps, that is the reason why even the liberal Russian scholars (like A. Miller) are more inclined to side with the “*Derzhava*” rather than “*Rodina*.” As one of the conclusions of his very insightful book on “the Ukrainian question” Miller claims that “it is clear that the story of the competition between the All-Russian and Ukrainian nation-building projects must be told not only, and perhaps not so much, as the success story of the Ukrainian national movement as the story of the failure of Russian assimilating efforts.”²⁰

In the mid-19th century even the Slavophiles who were generally sympathetic towards Ukrainophiles after the arrests of the members of the Cyril and Methodius brotherhood felt offended and betrayed by them. In a letter to Samarin (May 30, 1847) Khomiakov wrote that

Little Russians were eventually infected with political stupidity. It is sad and painful to see such nonsense and backwardness. ... When the social question is barely raised, when it is not solved, but is very far from being solved, how can people, who seem smart, stick to politics?!... I do not know whether the Little Russians’ delusion was criminal, but I know that their thoughtlessness is more than striking. The age of politics is over.... Moral struggle — this is what we have to think about today.²¹

And this very well may be true for Khomiakov, while for Kulish and his colleagues the age of politics had just begun. It is no surprise that scholars as well as the general public in Ukraine and Russia perceive the Valuev Circular differently. In Ukraine it is not uncommon to hear that “the Circular banned the publication of Ukrainian books,”²² or that “the ban was a heavy blow on our word (*slovo*)” and a hurdle in the development of “our literature (*pysmenstvo*).” While the Russian Wikipedia informs its computer savvy audience that the main consequence of

19 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 27–28.

20 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 250.

21 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, 60.

22 Oleksandr Sydorenko, *Nezdiisneni vydannia. Anotovanyi pokazhchyk nerealizovanykh proektiv ukrainomovnykh chasopysiv kintsia XIX — pochatku XX st.* [*Stifled Publications. An Annotated Register of Ukrainian Language Journals Submitted for Publication and Turned down by Tsarist Censorship*] (Kyiv, 1995).

the Circular was that “the publication of a sizeable chunk of Ukrainian books was temporarily stopped (*priostanovlena*).”²³

However, in all likelihood the Russian minister was neither for nor against Ukrainian literature. In popular consciousness literature is typically associated with the names of writers and their crowning achievements. But in socio-economic terms it is a very complex and dynamic system which includes the author, his or her immediate milieu, salons, literary agents, in some cases — censors, the publisher, the literary critic, periodicals, distributors, bookstores, people and institutions who are responsible for book promotion, literary readings, advertising, libraries, schools, university syllabi etc., and finally — readers, preferably with networks of reading clubs, subscriptions, and social events featuring various literary figures.

The key link of this chain (apart from the writer, of course) is the reader. And the purpose of the Valuev Circular was to prevent the emergence of a Ukrainian reader. Because it was not hard to imagine that the Ukrainian language school as well the Ukrainian language church within a period of one generation could produce the critical mass of readers capable of creating the infrastructure of a viable literature as well as all other institutions of a modern nation (even if they did not enjoy the support of the government). And vice versa, without the Ukrainian language school and church it was much easier to turn Ukrainian literature into a patient on life support, if you will.

Russian Imperial policy vis-à-vis Ukrainian national aspirations became even more explicit after the Ems Decree that followed the Valuev Circular. On May 18, 1876 Alexander II approved the recommendations of the Imperial Commission that studied the issue of “Ukrainian propaganda.” He signed a Decree which acquired the force of Law. According to this law, the Ministry of Education was:

- 1) to instruct all local school authorities to prohibit teaching in elementary schools of any subject in the Ukrainian language;
- 2) to remove from libraries of elementary and secondary schools throughout Ukraine all books written in Ukrainian or by Ukrainians;
- 3) to take a careful inventory of the teaching personnel in the Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa educational districts;
- 4) to expel suspect students and teachers;
- 5) to accept as a general rule that teachers in the Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa educational districts must be Russians (Ukrainians could be employed in the St. Petersburg, Kazan, and Orenburg educational districts);
- 6) to close the Kyiv branch of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society.

Also it was recommended that the Third Section (Secret police) exile Drahomanov and Chubynskyi from Ukraine because “they were incorrigible and positively dangerous agitators.”²⁴

A lot was written about the difficulties imposed upon Ukrainian literature (even if it was not explicitly banned). For one thing, all the publishers and authors who dared to submit their Ukrainian language works to censors were treated as subversive elements who “under innocent

23 Wikipedia in Russian, on the Valuev Circular, <http://ru.wikipedia.org/> (accessed March 15, 2017).

24 Fedir Savchenko, *Zaborona ukrainstva 1876: The Suppression of Ukrainian Activities in 1876* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970), xxiv.

headlines harbor malicious aims, thus employing grammatical tools to prepare potent weapons of undermining the foundations of statehood.”²⁵ In line with this policy even at the beginning of the 20th century during school surveys students in Ukraine were ordered to indicate “Russian” as their “native tongue.” The rationale behind such an order was “you are educated and brought up in a Russian school that is why your native tongue should be Russian.”²⁶

The most determined Ukrainophiles became experts in finding loopholes in the Circular and through personal connections or sometimes bribes managed to get their works published (while translations into Ukrainian were considered to be an act of either sabotage or dangerous eccentricity, Mykhailo Starytskyi for example, in 1874 was able to publish in Kyiv 17 (!) books of his translations of H.-Ch. Andersen’s fairy-tales).²⁷ Truth be told, in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kyiv many censors were highly educated officials, and sometimes even sympathizers of the Ukrainian cause. They could easily find a pretext to allow the publication of those works of fiction that were not explicitly banned by the Circular.

But in smaller cities chances of finding “an enlightened” censor were minimal. In Chernihiv right after the introduction of the Circular the governor’s office without any explanation ordered the destruction of the whole print run of a collection of fables by local poet and journalist Leonid Hlibov. His Ukrainian language activity looked so suspicious to the authorities that in two years they closed *Chernigovskii listok*, a Russian language weekly founded and edited by L. Hlibov, and put the writer himself under constant police surveillance.²⁸

The tragic “incompleteness” of their literature (i.e. absence of many of its vital links) was well understood and addressed by Ukrainian cultural and political activists. And the Censor’s Office had always been keen on prohibiting everything that would encourage and stimulate immediate contact with readers. For the period of 1863–1881 not a single literary almanac or collection (*zbirnyk*) was published in Ukraine.²⁹ And later, in the 1880s, the Censor’s office could easily turn down any request for the publication of a periodical on the basis of some unspecified “regulations for internal use only.”³⁰

Here is another example. While for the period of 1895–1903 the Ukrainian publisher “Vik” was allowed to publish about one third of the requested book titles,³¹ the negative ratio for

25 Yefremov, *Literaturno-krytychni statti*, 23.

26 Yefremov, *Literaturno-krytychni statti*, 29.

27 Ya.P. Dashkevych, L. I. Ilnytska, and O. I. Khmil, eds., *Repertuar ukrainskoi knyhy 1798–1915. Materialy do bibliohrafii* [*The Repertoir of Ukrainian book publishing. Bibliography*], vol. 2 (Lviv: Lviv National Vasyl Stefanyk Scientific Library of Ukraine, 1995), 45–47.

28 Andrii Derkach, “Literaturna diaspora Chernihova [The Literary Diaspora of Chernihiv],” Litakcent, accessed April 2, 2017, <http://litakcent.com/2012/03/016/literaturna-diaspora-chernihova/>.

29 I. Z. Boiko, ed., *Ukrainski literaturni almanakhy i zbirnyky XIX — pochatku XX st. Bibliografichnyi pokazhchyk* [*Ukrainian Literary Almanacs and Compilations of the 19th — early 20th centuries*] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1967).

30 Boiko, *Ukrainski literaturni almanakhy*, 14.

31 Yefremov, *Literaturno-krytychni statti*, 34.

periodicals was much higher. Even after the 1905–1907 Russian revolution 14 requests for the publication of periodicals were turned down in Kyiv, 4 — in Poltava, and 4 — in St. Petersburg.³²

As testimony to the precariousness of the situation, prominent Ukrainian literary critic Serhii Yefremov in his article “Outlawed: The History of the Censorship in Russia,” published in *Russkoe Bogatstvo* in 1905 wrote that

many literary genres (like journalism or literary criticism, in particular) cannot exist under the present conditions. Other segments of literature are hopelessly lagging behind, and there is a whole host of topics and issues that authors are forced to avoid. ... The Russian writer has his own audience, readers who eagerly and impatiently await every new publication of their beloved author, while for a Ukrainian writer his only readers are sometimes the members of his own family... A Russian writer, thanks to the fact that his work is paid, could concentrate on his writing, while a Ukrainian author had to be first of all be a teacher, or a doctor, a civil servant, a publication editor, and could devote to literature only what is left of his time and energy.³³

To illustrate this point let us look at a young Russian writer, Antosha Chekhonte (later known as Anton Chekhov), who between the years 1880 and 1888 published 528 short stories, mostly in small satirical magazines. So even long before winning a prestigious Pushkin prize and becoming a “serious” writer, he was able to support his large family, afford a large house in the center of Moscow and a 572 acre estate Melikhovo some 40 miles south of Moscow.³⁴

But, perhaps, the best way of gauging the impact of the Valuev Circular on Ukrainian literature would be to compare book publishing at different periods of the 19th century in terms of the number of books, languages, genres, and geography, as well as its relevance to the contemporary literary canon. And the most reliable source here would be the two volume *Repertory of the Ukrainian Book, 1798–1916*, a Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Lviv, Stefanyk Library publication, a comprehensive catalogue that summed up the efforts of many generations of dedicated Ukrainian bibliographers.

Over a period of two centuries the very notion of “Ukrainian literature” or a “Ukrainian book” provoked acrimonious debate. The basis of *Repertory*, as stated by its scholarly editor Ya.R. Dashkevych, is the conviction that “1) Ukrainian spiritual (*dukhovna*) culture is the spiritual culture of the Ukrainian ethnos, of the Ukrainian ethnic (and not political) nation; 2) that a Ukrainian book is a book written in the Ukrainian language (in all its historical, territorial, and dialectal varieties).”³⁵ However it should be noted that this clearly defined criteria is not always applied throughout the *Repertory*. For example, it includes scholarly publications in at

32 Sydorenko, *Nezdiisneni vydannia*, 15.

33 Yefremov, *Literaturno-krytychni statii*, 42–43.

34 Tim Parks, *Chekhov. Behind the Charm*, NYRB, April 5, 12, vol. LIX, number 6, 78.

35 Ya.P. Dashkevych, L. I. Ilnytska, and O. I. Khmil, eds., *Repertuar ukrainskoi knyhy 1798–1915. Materialy do bibliografii* [*The Repertoir of Ukrainian Book Publishing. Bibliography*], vol. 1 (Lviv: Lviv National Vasyl Stefanyk Scientific Library of Ukraine, 1995).

least 7 languages, or works of fiction (belle-lettres) in Latin (V. Dovhovyč's *Oda Ruthenica ad monumentum Joannae Kovachich*, No. 12, p. 3, Budae, 1807) or Russian (No. 81, p. 13, M. Pogodin — *Urania*, Moscow, 1826 or No. 177, p. 28, S. Karpenko, *Malorossiiskie vasilkovskie povesti*, M., 1837) but never mentions the original publications of Gogol. (An exclusion, I believe, that is highly symptomatic of the state and, if you will, mindset of contemporary Ukrainian scholarship.)

The first period (1798–1838) would start with I. Kotliarevskyi's *Eneida* and would end with the appearance of T. Shevchenko on the literary scene (his 1838 poem *To the Eternal Memory of Kotliarevskyi* draws the symbolic line between “the old guard” and the new generation that is about to replace them).

1798–1838

Just 203 items for a period spanning 40 years.

Published

- in the Russian Empire (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Orel, Kharkiv, Kyiv) — 100 items;
- in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Vienna, Buda, Pest, Prague, Pochaiv, Lviv, Warsaw, Cracow, Przemysl) — 103 items.

Languages — Ukrainian, Russian, Church-Slavonic, Latin, Polish, German, Slovak.

Genres —

Religion (exclusively in the Austro-Hungarian Ukraine);

Primers and school textbooks — except A. Pavlovsky's *Grammatika malorosiiskoho narechiia*, 1818, St. Petersburg, #48, p. 8, all published in AH Ukraine (the Ukrainian language was always called “slovenskij”);

Scholarly literature, folklore and ethnography — mostly in RU (Russian Ukraine);

Ukrainian language publications commemorating official holidays, birthdays of members of the Imperial family, and the name days of Church hierarchs. Such outpouring of loyalty blossomed exclusively in AHU (Austro-Hungarian Ukraine).

Literature — except for Josyp Levitskyi's translation into Ukrainian (or “sloveno-ruskii”) of one Goethe poem (1822, No. 64, p. 10), everything else was published in RU.

And the amazing thing is that apart from an obscure writer, Nikolai Venger from Odessa, the rest of the Ukrainian language authors published during that period still remain an integral part of the canon. Among them are I. Kotliarevskyi (6 publications), Kvitka-Osnovianenko (9), Shakhovskiy (3), Hulak-Artemovskiy (2) and Ye. Hrebinka (2). The same period saw a considerable number of literary almanacs, mostly in Kharkiv and, of course, *Rusalka Dnistrova* (1837).

Beginning from 1856 and up until 1863 Ukrainians in the Russian Empire enjoyed a kind of cultural thaw, which is reflected in the number of Ukrainian language publications.

In 1856 — 41 items,

1857 — 52,

1858 — 52,

1859 — 56,

1860 — 120,

1861 — 134,
 1862 — 95,
 1863, the year of the Valuev Circular, — 115.

1861

This year is chosen because it appears to be a decisive year both in terms of the quantity (a record 134 items, RU — 59, AHU — 75). Russian Ukraine was slowly but steadily catching up with Austro-Hungarian Ukraine, and the quality of publications (the short-lived but very influential almanac *Osnova*) was a huge step forward in creating a separate national as well as literary identity).

In Austro-Hungarian Ukraine the predominant genres are still religious literature, primers, elementary school textbooks, calendars, and panegyrics to governmental and church officials. To the list of cities where Ukrainian books are published the city of Chernivtsi (Czernowitz) is added (2 items).

In Russian Ukraine we can see the appearance on the literary map of Chernihiv, Poltava, and Katerynoslav (in addition to Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Odessa). The publication in Ukrainian of a short explanation of the rights and duties of former serfs (Katerynoslav, 1861, Repertuar, No. 1170, p. 201) clearly contradicts the government's claim that "all Ukrainians understand Russian." When the authorities really wanted to get their message across to their subjects they opted for addressing them in their "dialect," even to the point of waiving its own restrictions, especially when it came to explaining the basics of a new legal system (Blonskyi, *Korotkyi vyklad z sudovykh ustaviv*, Katerynoslav, 1867, No. 1751, p. 293 or *Pro kary, do yakykh prysuzhdaiut myrovi suddi*, Kyiv, 1870, No. 2039, p. 339) or the purely practical issues of language use (*Opyt rusko-ukrainskoho slovaria*, K., 1874, No. 2423); or military service (*Yak teper odbuvaietsia voenna sluzhba*, K., 1874, No. 2406); or agriculture (N. Gorbunov, *Shcho robytsia u vozdusi, i shcho treba znaty zemlerobu*, 1874, No. 2540, p. 71, and *Yak rozpiznaty grunt i yaki buvaiut grunty*, K., 1875, No. 2678,); medicine (*Pro kholeru*, 1875, No. 2610, p. 80, *Pro khvoroby*, 1875, No. 2611, p. 80) or finances (V. Shcherbatyi, *Pro hroshi*, K., 1876, No. 2792, p. 105).

In Russian Ukraine the predominant genre is folklore (collections of songs, folktales, and other ethnographic materials), or popular comic operas (*Neshchaslyve kokhannia*, No. 1202, p. 206, Ya. Kukharenko's *Chornomorskyi pobut na Kubani*). But a new feature is the growing number of school textbooks in Ukrainian (K. K. Sheikovskiy, *Vyshchi pochatky, Domashnia nauka*, K., No. 11244, No. 1245), a Ukrainian dictionary, (No. 1150), and books in the series *Silska biblioteka*, whose target audience comprises millions of newly freed peasants, the backbone of an emerging nation. That year alone the literary component of all the publications included works of Marko Vovchok (2), Kvitka-Osnovianenko (10), P. Kulish (8), D. Mordovets (2), H. Skovoroda and T. Shevchenko (3), as well as a book of memoirs about the latter poet.

Maybe that does not sound too impressive compared to a huge Russian literary market, but it became apparent that given a chance the educational zeal of relatively few Ukrainophiles could seriously upset the political and cultural balance in Russia. And the Valuev Circular was the Imperial answer to this challenge.

The numbers for the years that follow the introduction of the Circular look like this:

1864 — 106 items overall (RU — 19),
 1865 — 91 items (RU — 7),
 1866 — 74 items (RU — 6),
 1867 — 76 items (RU — 8),
 1868 — 126 items (RU — 5),
 1869 — 90 items (RU — 9),
 1870 — 86 items (RU — 10),
 1871 — 94 items (RU — 13),
 1872 — 91 items (RU — 37, mostly ethnography),
 1873 — 92 items (RU — 23),
 1874 — 62 items (RU — 50, of which 17 — Starytskyi's translations of H-Ch. Andersen),
 1875 — 132 items (RU₄₂, of which 6 — Kotliarevskyi, 5 — Nechui-Levytskyi),
 1876 — 143 items (RU — 34),
 1877 — 135 items (RU — 15, the drop in numbers — direct result of the Ems Edict),
 1878 — 121 items (RU — 19, of which 6 — Kotliarevskyi, the rest — ethnography),
 1879 — 133 items (RU — 3),
 1880 — 118 items (RU — 11),
 1881 — 125 items (RU — 15),
 1882 — 143 items (RU — 23),
 1883 — 163 items (RU — 38),
 1884 — 160 items (RU — 31),
 1885 — 205 items (RU — 44), and finally
 1886 — 207 items (RU — 52, AHU — 155).

The *Repertuar* catalogue ends here. In other words in 1886 for every Ukrainian book published in the Russian Empire, there are 3 that appeared in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the same period new Ukrainian publishers appeared in Kherson, Kolomyia, Stanislav, and Ternopil.

In AHU we basically observe the same tendency as before (school textbooks, religious literature, calendars, official and public documents), but also more ethnography, literary collections (*zbirky*), books on history — including translations from Russian of M. Kostomarov's works (1 — Ternopil, 1 — Vienna), of *Igor's Song*, of I. Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, of Homer's *Odyssey* (trans. P. Nishchynskyi) and a poetry collection of S. Rudanskyi (Lviv Shevchenko Society reprint of the 1880 Kyiv edition). Also many of the books in the *People's Library* (*Biblioteka dlia narodu*) series included “educational” stories, materials from history, ethnography, and “practical knowledge.”

In RU censors seemed to favor good old low-brow Little Russian comical stories and vaudevilles like F. Baranovskyi's *An Adventure with Garlic Buns* (*Okaziia z pampushkamy*), *Christmas Eve* (*Rizdvianyi vechir*) (No. 4116) or M. Voronchuk's *Misfortune* (*Khalepa*) — all at the expense of more urgent or contemporary topics. This was definitely an anachronism in the era of naturalism and the advent of modernism and the can-can, but it suited the official policy of constricting Ukrainian literature to a sort of cultural reservation.

The only exceptions were 2 books by B. Hrinchenko (Chaichenko), the real hero of that period but hardly a major writer, and a collection of plays by I. Karpenko-Karyi (in 1881 some restrictions on the Ukrainian theater were eased). Other Ukrainian writers published in 1886 were I. Kvitka, Kotliarevskiy (7 items), Panas Myrnyi (a collection of sketches *Zbyranyna z ridnoho polia*), 3 Kyiv editions of T. Shevchenko, and a book of Olena Pchilka's poems (the same year her brother M. Drahomanov published his *For the Consideration of my Countrymen (Do sudu zemliakiv)* in Geneva, although chances of this booklet reaching its audience were minimal).

It is a generally accepted opinion that the Valuev Circular had a detrimental effect on Ukrainian literature in the East but also that, being squeezed by imperial authorities, writers were forced to publish in Galicia. This influx of Russian Ukrainians radicalized the Ruthenian intelligentsia, and thus created the notion of one Ukrainian literature. And in this respect the influence of Drahomanov, Kulish, and Antonovych was indeed crucial. It is only after the contacts with the Eastern Ukrainians that Galicians were able to establish a number of periodicals (*Pravda, Meta, Nyva, and Rusalka*). To advance adult education the *Prosvita* society was founded in Lviv in 1868, and then the Shevchenko Society in 1873. (Savchenko, xxii.) But the creation of literature is basically an internal process, and it is not until the 1880s that Western Ukraine could produce a major writer like Ivan Franko.

On the issue of Eastern Ukrainian writers taking their operation to Galicia, the *Repertuar* gives a more sobering picture. In fact, of all the living writers it was only I. Nechui-Levytskyi, P. Kulish, and M. Drahomanov who regularly published their works in Lviv.

This is a full list of Eastern Ukrainian authors whose works after the Valuev Circular appeared in print in AHU.

1865–2 translations of Gogol's *Vechori* (Evenings) by Ksenophont Klymovych (No. 1597, 1598), and Shevchenko's *Son*, Lviv. (Apparently the Western Ukrainian audience, despite the scholarly position of the authors of *Repertuar*, did treat Gogol as a Ukrainian writer.)

1867 — M. Kostomarov, *Pereiaslavska nich* (*The Pereiaslav Night*), Lviv.

T. Shevchenko, *Poetry* in 2 volumes, Lviv (No. 1816).

1869 — I. Nechui-Levytskyi, *Rybalka Panas Krut*, Lviv (No. 1949).

T. Shevchenko, *Poetry*, Lviv (No. 1986).

1872 — I. Nechui (I. Levytskyi), *Povisti* (*Stories*), Lviv (No. 3354).

1873 — M. Drahomanov (Ukrainets), *Literatura rosiiska, velykoruska, ukrainska i halytska*, Lviv (No. 2291).

I. Nechui (Levytskyi) — 3 publications, *Zaporozhtsi, kazka;*

Novyi cholovik, povist;

Povisti i opovidannia, Lviv.

1874 — H. F. Kvitka, *Stories* (Nos. 2405, 2406).

1875 — M. Kostomarov, *Ruska istoria v zhyttiepysakh*, transl. from Russian, Lviv (No. 2564).

1876 — Marko Vovchok, *Stories*, Shevchenko Society, Lviv (No. 2571).

Drahomanov, *Halytsko-ruske pysmenstvo*, Lviv, Shevchenko Society (No. 2684).

H. Kvitka, *Marusia*, Lviv, Sh. Soc. (No. 2655).

- I. Nechui-Levytskyi, *Svitohliad ukrainskoho narodu*, Lviv, Sh. Soc. (No. 2724).
 (*this year also saw the publications of Yu.-O. Fedkovych and I. Franko (*Ballads and Stories*), Lviv, Shevchenko Society, — the real beginning of Galician / Western Ukrainian literature).
- T. Shevchenko, 7 books of poetry published in Prague.
 1877 — Marko Vovchok, *Stories* (3 books), Lviv, Sh. Soc.
 H. Kvitka, *Marusia, Saldatskyi partret*.
 M. Kostomarov, *Russian history* (trans.).
 (*I. Franko published a collection of stories *Boryslav smiïtsia*.)
 1878 — Marko Vovchok, 2 books of short stories.
 M. Drahomanov, *Literatura ukrainska*, Lviv, Sh. Soc.
 Panas Myrnyi — *Khiba revut voly, yak yasla povni?*, Lviv (in 1877 published *Lykhi liude* in Geneva).
 1879 — I. Nechui-Levytskyi, *Istoriia Rusi* (2 parts), *Kaidasheva simia*, *Ivan Vyhovskiy*, *Yurii Khmelnychenko*, Lviv.
 1880 — P. Myrnyi, I. Bilyk — *Khiba revut voly*, Geneva.
 T. Shevchenko, *Poetry*, Lviv.
 1881 — N. Gogol — *Collected Works*, trans. Olena Pchilka (the same year published in Kyiv).
 I. Nechui-Levytskyi — 2 books published in Lviv and 2 in Kyiv.
 T. Shevchenko, *Poetry*, Lviv.
 1882 — H. Kvitka — *Mertvetskyi velykden*, Lviv.
 P. Kulish, *Krashanka rusynam i poliakam na velykden*.
Khutirska poezia, Lviv.
 T. Shevchenko, *Mariia*, Lviv.
 P. Kulish, Translations from W. Shakespeare, Lviv, Shevchenko Society (another major contribution — translations of the *Bible*, banned in the RU).
 1883 — T. Shevchenko, *Poetry*, Lviv.
 1884 — I. Nechui-Levytskyi, *Zaporozhtsi*, Lviv, Sh. Soc.
 1885 — N. Gogol, *Works* (4 books), trans. O. Pchilka, Lviv, Sh. Soc.
 I. Nechui-Levytskyi, *Works*, Lviv, Sh. Soc.
 T. Shevchenko, *Poetry*, Lviv, Sh. Soc.

Conclusions

The Valuev Circular became a watershed — ideologically, politically, and esthetically. It was an unambiguous manifestation of the awareness on the part of the Russian authorities that the Ukrainian cultural revival posed a serious danger to the unity of the Empire. It had the effect of a cold shower. (The advice of the philosopher Konstantin Leontiev — “One should freeze Russia a bit” (*Rossiia nado by podmorozit*) was fully implemented by the czarist government on its biggest minority.)

And the detrimental effect it had on all of Ukrainian culture is well documented. The silver lining, if there was any, was that the very name “Little Russian” acquired a derogatory meaning, and since 1863 all “nationally conscious” Ukrainians (*“natsionalno-svidomi,”* a term coined by

Borys Hrinchenko) had to radically rethink their attitudes towards the country they lived in. The bilingualism of the previous generation was now considered an act of betrayal.

Although there was no exodus of Ukrainian writers to Eastern Galicia in search of a wider audience, the Circular helped to ferment an understanding of the same cultural origin and affinity between Galicia, Bukovyna, and “the Greater Ukraine.” (M. Drahomanov in his article “Ukrainian literature 1866–1873” published in 1874 in the Russian magazine *Vestnik Evropy* applies this notion to everything written in Ukrainian both in the Russian and in the Austro-Hungarian Empires.)³⁶

The Circular did not succeed in eradicating the Ukrainian movement. Ukrainian literature, as a repository of national aspirations, survived half a century of external pressure, but it had to pay a high price. By banning the Ukrainian language from school and church and from most other spheres of state and social life the Valuev Circular deprived Ukraine of at least two generations of Ukrainian readers (arguably, one of the two indispensable elements of any literature) and seriously curtailed the ability of Ukrainian literature to create a viable infrastructure. A semi-underground existence turned it into a sort of cult, totally engrossed in self-preservation and self-victimization, preoccupied with its uniqueness (*samobutnist*) and prone to idolatry (the worshiping of “Nashe Slovo”). These direct consequences of the Valuev Circular still plague Ukrainian literature. One only has to look at the print runs of contemporary Ukrainian writers to conclude that a lack of readers is the main source of their insecurities. Despite more than twenty years of independence, the Ukrainian language (nobody can doubt that without the Ukrainian language there could only be “Little Russia”) remains an endangered species. In fact it is the main target of Ukrainian haters both inside and outside of the Ukrainian government. (According to one of its attackers, the Ukrainian language is nothing, but an artificial construct, totally out of touch with its native soil, and therefore hardly a native tongue for the majority of Ukrainians. Which sounds like a new take on the 19th century invention of a “Polish intrigue.”)³⁷

But no matter who or what you are going to blame for this situation — ever plotting external enemies or psychological traumas — at the core of the problem lies the issue of identity, or, to be precise, the lack of certainty that a substantial segment of the Ukrainian population feels about their national identity. How did it come to this? What could have been done to prevent that situation from happening? What actions should Ukrainian writers have taken to create a fully-fledged literature? And finally, why did Ukrainian leaders of different periods fail to turn their people into a nation? All of these are valid and important questions, but they are, of course, beyond the scope of this article.

36 M. P. Drahomanov, “Literatura rosiiska, velykoruska, ukrainska i halytska [Russian, Great Russian, Ukrainian, and Galician Literatures],” *Pravda*, Lviv, 1873, in Drahomanov M. P. *Literaturno-publitsychni pratsi [Literary Criticism]*, vol. 1 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1970), 247.

37 Aleksandr Karevin, *Rus nerusskaia. Kak rozhdalas “ridna mova” [A non-Russian Rus. How the “Ukrainian language” Came about]*, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://russian.kiev.ua/books/karevin/rusnorus/rusnorus01.shtml>.

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