Nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine: educational policy and the response of the Russian-speaking population
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Citation for published version (APA):

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The three school subjects mentioned in the title of this chapter lend themselves pre-
eminently to nation-building purposes. It is these subjects that teach pupils the
distinguishing features of Ukrainian national identity, instil a national spirit into them,
and offer justifications for current state independence. For this reason, they are the
exclusive subject matter of this chapter. The first section, which takes up the bulk of the
chapter, discusses the history of Ukraine. The ensuing section is devoted to Ukrainian
literature. As both subjects were also part of the Soviet curriculum, the present subject
matter will be compared to that of Soviet times in order to evaluate the changes. The third
section briefly reports on the current teaching of the geography of Ukraine, a subject
which is apparently of lesser concern to the central authorities as it is not one of the
compulsory central exams of the 11th grade. The final section offers some brief
conclusions.

4.1 History of Ukraine

4.1.1 Introduction

History has always played a pivotal role in the formation or disintegration of national
identities. To promote group cohesion and give citizens a sense of self-esteem, political
entrepreneurs emphasize common ancestry and experiences, and exaggerate the
significance of certain historical events to such an extent that these assume mythical
proportions. To achieve group breakdown the opposite is stressed: inter/intra group
conflict, suppression and injustice. Given Ukraine's considerable linguistic and religious
differences, it is not surprising to find the present-day authorities turning to history to
enhance national unity. Yet, in doing so, they face two major problems.

60 Discussing the structure of Ukrainophile and Belarusophile historiography, Andrew Wilson (1998)
distinguishes as many as 15 kinds of historical myths.
61 Stephan Velychenko argues that the 'poorer, authoritarian' societies 'east of the Elbe' assign much
greater weight to national historiography than the 'wealthier, pluralist and constitutional societies' of the
west. In his view, this is because the eastern societies consider national identity, which heavily relies on
historiography, an end in itself, rather than a means to pursue their material interests. Thus, "insofar as
historiography preserves collective national memory, it becomes essential for group survival [for the
societies of the East] (Velychenko, 1993, p. 18)."

In a comment on this section, Joanna Paraszczuk counters Velychenko's argument by asserting that Western
states have made equal use of historiography to promote national cohesion. In her view, it is the early
success of the Western nation-building projects that obscures the fact that identity politics is still going on
in the established societies of the West. See Paraszczuk (1999).
The discussion on the use of historiography is a reflection of the wider debate on the distinction between an
ethnic and a civic variety of nationalism. According to Kuzio (1997b; 1999b), this distinction serves no
empirical purpose since historically both varieties have become intricately intertwined in the nation-
building programmes of liberal democratic states, homogenizing the societies internally and accentuating
their differences.
Firstly, the ‘heroic’ moments or periods in history from which Ukrainians can derive a feeling of pride appear to be few and far between. Ever since the collapse of the medieval state of Kyïv Rus’ in the 13th century, the Ukrainian lands were dominated by neighbouring powers and its population subjugated to foreign noblemen and administrators. This is not to say that Ukrainians have nothing to fall back on. Ukrainian historians, for instance, appropriate the legacy of Kyïv Rus’ by seeing contemporary Ukraine as the direct successor to that empire. Likewise, the Cossacks of the 16th century are considered brave Ukrainians who fought a national liberation war against the Poles and Tatars.

However, it is precisely on these few moments of glory that Ukrainian historiography clashes with the Russian/Soviet version. In the Russian imperial scheme, Kyïv Rus’ was the precursor of the Russian Czарist Empire. It was seen as the first state governed by and dominated by Russians, with Ukrainians and Belorussians not being recognized as distinct peoples. The Soviet view basically endorsed this idea. It only departed from it to the extent that the inhabitants of the Kyïv Rus’ state were seen as East Slavs, who consisted of proto-Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians. From the 14th century, Soviet historians acknowledged these proto-Ukrainians as a separate people, but asserted that the one and only aim of Ukrainians was to be reunited with their ‘elder’ Russian brethren. For them, the Pereiaslav Treaty of 1654, in which the Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi recognized the suzerainty of the Muscovite Czar in exchange for autonomy, served as convenient proof of this endeavor (Kohut, 1994). In the Soviet view, the Cossack military campaigns of the 16th century thus represented merely an effort to ‘reunite’ with Russia, and not a national liberation struggle.

Secondly, the contradictions between the Ukrainian and the Russian/Soviet view of history place nation-building architects in a dilemma. On the one hand, state officials may find it hard to communicate a radical Ukrainian-nationalist version of history as that could well be unacceptable to the Russian-speaking population of the east and south, who may still feel part of the Russian cultural world. On the other hand, the propagation of a historical scheme much closer to the Russian/Soviet version would undermine the claim that Ukraine is a territory with a history and population distinct from that of Russia. Given the centrality of this claim for the legitimacy of independent Ukraine, it is obvious why the latter scheme, as a potential threat to state independence, enjoys little popularity among Ukrainian elites.

62 The early 20th-century historian Mykhailo Hrushev’s’kyi is generally credited for his contribution to the Ukrainian nation-building project. In his framework Ukrainians constitute a separate nation with their own origin and history (Kuzio, 1998).

63 Wilson has argued that, “because it [the Ukrainian version of history] excludes or caricatures genuinely complex aspects of the Ukrainian-Russian historical relationship, it runs the risk of alienating the Russian-speaking half of the population of Ukraine.” Quoted from Paraszczuk (1999, p. 39). According to Kuzio (1999a), it is inappropriate to consider language to be the main cleavage in Ukrainian society. In his opinion, political attitude and generation are at least as important dividing lines, with reform-minded people and the younger generation (who are generally pro-western, anti-communist and pro-reform in outlook) much more likely to support the Ukrainian scheme of events than people with communist sympathies and the elderly.

64 Naturally, the Russian imperial and Soviet versions of history are no less ‘nationalist’ than the Ukrainian scheme as they also served to forge specific national identities. I owe this point to Joanna Paraszczuk.
It is interesting to contrast the history of Ukraine as taught in schools at present with the Soviet era. This will enable us to see how current textbooks present sensitive historical topics - Kyiv Rus', the Cossack era, the rise of national consciousness in the late 19th century, the attempts to establish independence after the February 1917 Revolution, the famine of the 1930s, and World War II and the role of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Are Ukrainians consistently portrayed as victims of Russian/Soviet rule? Is the Bolshevik Revolution presented as something foreign and hostile, or is it considered a partly domestically-induced turn of events with Ukrainians participating in it? Are Ukraine and its population described as neutral victims of both warring parties in World War II, or are they seen as active participants in the Soviet army and as subjects of German aggression only? The answers to these questions are highly relevant because a whole generation of schoolchildren is now being taught in a new fashion.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, school education has remained highly centralized in post-independence Ukraine, with schools using the programs and 'recommended' textbooks of the Ministry of Education. For the compulsory course of history of Ukraine, the ministry offers schools a choice of two recommended textbooks per grade, books which are also available in a Russian translation for Russian schools (Zbirnyk Minovity, 1996, No. 12). However, all the schools, both Russian and Ukrainian, that I visited on my fieldwork travels throughout Ukraine make use of the same textbook for a certain grade because only this particular textbook closely follows the program in structure and content. This uniform use of a limited number of textbooks, which is reminiscent of the Soviet era, makes it easy to do a comparative content analysis of the Soviet and the new textbooks on the history of Ukraine, as only a few books have to be studied. At the same time, the widespread use of these books underlines the relevance of analyzing them. One has to keep in mind, however, that no matter how uniform their geographical distribution, their dispersal in time may vary, as the ministry sometimes issues a limited number of new textbooks for trial in specially selected schools in two of Ukraine's 26 oblasts. After having used these books for a year, the teachers give their comments, which (at least in theory) are taken into account and incorporated in the new books. Subsequently, these books are distributed to all schools (Zerkalo Nedeli, 26 September 1998).

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65 In Soviet times, the history of Ukraine was taught as part of a general history course.
66 In the years 1996, 1997 and 1998 I made several fieldwork trips to the cities of Kyiv, Odesa, L'viv and Donetsk. In each of these cities, I visited 12 schools and simply asked the teachers to show me the books that were used. On one of these trips, Simferopol, the capital of The Crimea, was visited. To my surprise, even the schools there had begun to use the programs and recommended textbooks. Efforts to consolidate the state thus appear successful (at least in the sphere of education), which is remarkable given the depth of the economic crisis.
67 In contrast to the Soviet era, history teachers are now free to use all sorts of books as additional material in their lessons. In this respect there has been some structural change.
The following textbooks were used in the Soviet era:


The textbooks used in post-Soviet Ukraine are:


It is using these six books that a comparative content analysis will be applied. Two points are immediately apparent when the books are compared. Firstly, three of the authors (Sarbei, Serhienko and Smolyi) wrote both the old and new textbooks. This may be an indication of the difficulties the Ministry of Education has faced in finding experts to write new textbooks. More importantly, it may also testify to the ministry’s approval of letting scholars associated with the old regime participate in the teaching of the new history of Ukraine. It must be noted here that other post-communist states were not as tolerant in their treatment of scholars and officials who occupied important positions in the communist era. In East Berlin, for instance, almost all school directors were changed after ‘Die Wende’ (den Hertog, 1999, interview). Yet, a continuity of personnel need, of course, not by itself stand in the way of a revised content of the history books. Much will depend on the severity of ministerial prescriptions and on the flexibility of the authors. In view of these considerations, it will be interesting to see to what extent the authors of the Soviet textbooks have adjusted the content of the new books to the new political circumstances.

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68 Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10 in the Soviet era equal grades 8, 9, 10 and 11 in post-Soviet Ukraine respectively.  
69 The attentive reader will have noticed that titles are given in a transcription from Russian. This is because the author read the Russian translations. Remarkably, the Russian translation of the grade 11 textbook has a section on the Ukrainian diaspora, which the Ukrainian original does not have. No reason is given for the inclusion of this section in the Russian translation.  
70 In Ukraine, I only found significant personnel changes in the schools in the western Ukrainian city of L’viv.
Secondly, the study load has increased dramatically. Not only did the number of textbooks expand from two to four for each pupil while at school, the number of pages in each textbook has also almost doubled.

4.1.2 Kyïv Rus’

Beginning with Kyïv Rus’, we see that the old textbook for grades 7-8 indeed echoes the Soviet notion of the (pursuit of) unity, brotherhood and friendship of the three East Slavic peoples:

Since the creation of the state [Kyïv Rus’], the differences between the Slavic tribes quickly faded away. Their intensive contacts were greatly aided by the development of the Old Russian language, which was understandable for the whole population of Kyïv Rus’. (...) The Old Russian proto-nation was based on a communality of economic relations, territory, language and culture. In addition to this, certain particularities remained in the language, culture and customs of people living in the northeastern, western and southwestern parts of the territory of Kyïv Rus’. Later these particularities became more pronounced and formed the basis for the evolution of the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian proto-nations. Subsequently, out of these old Russian proto-nations crystallized the three brotherly nations - Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians, who forever retained a feeling of relatedness, communality and historical unity (Sarbei et al., grades 7-8, p. 19).

It was this passage that was thoroughly revised in the new textbook for grades 7-8. Instead, we now read that:

The main state, political, religious and cultural center of Kyïv Rus’ developed, of all places, on the territory of present-day Ukraine, and the Slavic tribes living on these lands founded political alliances, constituted the Ukrainian proto-nation, and were at that time the state-building force of Kyïv Rus’. Kyïv, as the historical center of the Ukrainian proto-nation, became the unifying beginning for the other tribes of the Russian lands, as well. For this reason, many scholars consider Kyïv Rus’, where the leading role was taken by one particular ethnic community, the Ukrainian proto-nation, to be a Ukrainian state. (...) Each proto-nation living on the territory of Kyïv Rus’ developed in isolation and aspired independent state life. Moreover, as we shall see, the union of East Slavic tribal alliances in the state of Kyïv Rus’ was far from voluntary: often the Kyïvan kings had to subjugate them by means of military force (Serhienko and Smolyi, grades 7-8, p. 47).

Claiming that the Ukrainian proto-nation was in fact the ruling group in Kyïv Rus’ and by stating that many experts label Kyïv Rus’ as a Ukrainian state clearly appeals to modern Ukrainian historiography, which considers Kyïv Rus’ to be the forerunner of present-day Ukraine. Moreover, in another contrast to the first extract, not the brotherhood but the animosity between the East Slavic proto-nations is stressed. The problematic relationship with Russia is also highlighted when the Russian imperialist view of Kyïv Rus’ is implicitly attacked: “All this leads to the proper conclusion that the Russian Empire in later times did not have the right to present itself as the sole successor of Kyïv Rus’ and
to subject Ukraine and Belarus to Czarist rule" (ibid. pp. 75,76). To underline the Ukrainian scheme, Hrushevs'kyi, the doyen of 20th century Ukrainian historiography, is quoted: "Kyïv Rus' appears to be the first form of Ukrainian statehood" (ibid. p.76).

Another difference with the old textbook is the way the introduction of Christianity is evaluated. Although the new book admits that Christianity strengthened the authoritarian power of the king, it generally appreciates it as a positive phenomenon, bringing civilisation, literacy and culture to Ukraine and giving it closer ties with western Europe. Later in the book, the Orthodox Church is even mentioned as, “the spiritual base of the Ukrainian proto-nation” (ibid. p. 97). The Soviet book, in contrast, sees Christianity as bringing more harm than good. It is said to have contributed to the “exploitation of the popular masses” by the king and the nobles and to have been unable to stop the feudal quarrels, which significantly weakened Kyïv Rus’. Moreover, literacy is claimed to have preceded Christianity.

In addition to these differences, the books also show remarkable similarities. For example, much of the content of the old book was literally copied in the new book, especially, and quite surprisingly, the section on the origins of the names Rus’ and Russkaia zemlia as alternative names for the Kyiivan state. Like the old book, the new book (its Russian translation) simply uses the adjectival form russkii (Russian) in, for instance, Russkaia zemlia. Although Serbyn (1999, p. 7) argues that russkii is indeed the appropriate adjective for Rus’ in the Russian language, the term could lead to confusion as it carries the meaning of ‘ethnically Russian’ in normal usage. Pupils reading the Russian translation could thus interpret Russkaia zemlia as ‘Russian land,’ (i.e. the ‘land inhabited by ethnic Russians’). Surely, this is not the interpretation the Ministry of Education would like pupils to make. Moreover, as Serbyn points out, the terms russkii and rossiiskii (the adjective for Rossiia - Russia) are often used interchangeably in Russian literature, which undermines the distinction between Russia and Rus’ (ibid. p. 7). In view of the confusion russkii evokes, it seems strange that the authors did not choose (or invent) another Russian term as an adjective for Rus’. Incidentally, the Ukrainian equivalent - rus’kiy - does not lead to any misunderstanding as it only refers to Rus’ and not to Russia or Russian ethnicity - the adjective for the latter two being rosis’kyi.

A second remarkable similarity concerns the new book’s focus on issues of social injustice and class conflict. Copying the old book, it asserts that: “The king and nobles conquered community land and acres and violently forced the peasant serfs not only to pay tribute but also to work a certain amount of days on their country estates” (Serhienko and Smolyi, grades 7-8, p. 49), and that: “The city poor paid the king heavy taxes, fulfilled several duties and had to maintain churches and monasteries. The most cruel exploitation the serfs suffered, who did not own land” (ibid. p. 53). It continues: “Profiteers and merchants thrived on the destruction and poverty of the people. All this led to explosions of popular rage” (ibid. p. 61). These and other excerpts show that the new book was still to a certain extent written in the communist spirit. Given that the authors (Serhienko and Smolyi) of the new edition were also co-authors of the Soviet book, one has to conclude that they certainly did not change all of their historical views with the arrival of Ukraine’s independence.
4.1.3 The Cossack era and Hetman Ivan Mazepa

The accounts of the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks, the Pereyaslav Treaty and the controversial Cossack leader Mazepa in the Soviet textbook are predictably in line with the Soviet scheme of Ukrainian history. In brief, it argues that in the 16th and 17th centuries the Ukrainian popular masses were suppressed by Polish nobles and Tatar warlords, and that due to the courageous military campaigns of the Cossacks (free farmer-soldiers who had fled servitude) and the unconditional support of their Russian brethren, the Ukrainians managed to cast off their foreign yoke and realize their long-cherished dream of uniting with Russia. Mazepa, the Cossack Hetman who in the early 18th century sided with Charles XII of Sweden in his power struggle with Russia’s Peter I, is depicted as a traitor who received only minimal support from his own troops. In particular the signing of the Pereyaslav Agreement of 1654, which united the Cossack lands with Russia in exchange for autonomy, is exalted as a wonderful display of Russian-Ukrainian friendship:

Along the whole way the population of Ukraine greeted the ambassadors of the brotherly Russian people with festivities and happiness. (…) All the participants of the council unanimously voted for the union of the brotherly nations into one state. (…) the oath ‘that all forever be one’ was supported by the whole Ukrainian nation (Sarbei et al., grades 7-8, p.64).

In its discussion of early modern times, the old textbook continues to stress social issues. It contends that only during the war of liberation of 1648-1654 did the ‘popular masses’ of peasants and lower-class Cossacks manage to abolish servitude and take large areas of land for their own use. Very soon afterwards, the Cossack higher circles (the so-called starshyna) “began attacking the social conquests of the laborers” (ibid. p. 70). With the passing of time, peasants and workers, it is argued, were deprived of more and more rights and were pushed back into servitude and conditions of slavery. The book considers the destruction of the Zaporizhzhian Sich, the most important Cossack stronghold, by Czarina Catherine II in 1775, as another lamentable victory of the Czarist regime over the ‘revolutionary anti-feudal’ forces. No reference is made to the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks or to the several peasant uprisings of the 18th century as specific Ukrainian phenomena. Similarly, the book makes no mention of the Ukrainian language, leaving the reader mystified about its fate. Only on two occasions does it give examples of a specific cultural interference by foreign powers: “[in 18th-century Polish-held Ukraine] Ukrainian schools, which were persecuted by the Catholic church and the royal powers, led a pitiful existence” (ibid. p. 102); while “German, Austrian and Hungarian nobles introduced languages that were foreign to the Ukrainian people” (ibid. p. 101). Thus, if we are to believe this book, only powers other than Russia culturally oppressed Ukrainians.

Understandably, the new textbook has a rather different view of the events of the 17th and 18th centuries. The Liberation War is presented not only as a social but also as a national uprising, with the Cossacks identified as Ukrainian freedom fighters who attempted to shed Polish rule and found an independent Ukrainian state. It follows that the Pereyaslav Treaty with Russia is described as an unfortunate but necessary event, as it
meant that the young Cossack state had to surrender some authority in order to safeguard the gains of the Liberation War:

The Pereyaslav Treaty and the subordination to Russia was not at all a coincidental step, but a painful decision by Hetman [Khmel'nyts'kyi] after long contemplation. He realized that the temporary respite for the young Ukrainian state would not be long-lived, taking into account the temporary nature of the alliance with The Crimean Khan, the unreliability of the Sultan of Turkey and the still-powerful Polish kingdom (Serhienko and Smolyi, grades 7-8, p.169).

To justify why Russia in particular was chosen as a protector, the book says that: “Ukraine and Russia were bound together by long historical ties, the ethnic closeness of both peoples and the orthodox faith” (ibid. p. 169).

A similar, rather subtle account is given of Hetman Mazepa. Calling him neither a traitor nor a national hero, the book presents him as an educated man who came to his decision after much deliberation: “restlessness and contradicting feelings tore his soul” (ibid. p. 203). The increasing demands of the Czar on the Hetman to deliver soldiers and food, the high tax burden on the peasants and on the lower-ranking Cossacks, and the lack of respect with which the Czarist governors treated the Cossacks are seen as the direct causes for the Mazepa’s switch in allegiance. Yet, the textbook does not leave unmentioned the fact that Mazepa received only minimal support from the Ukrainian people and that the population began resisting the pillaging army of Charles XII. As in the old book, there is an account on how bravely the citizens of L’viv defended their city against the Swedes. This rather balanced version of the Mazepa years is surprising if one realizes that nation-building architects could use Hetman Mazepa to present evidence of the ‘eternal endeavor of the Ukrainian nation to achieve state independence.’

Another perhaps remarkable aspect of the new edition is that Ukraine under Cossack rule is not idealized. In a straight copy from the old book, the social situation that developed after 1654 is criticized, with the Cossack higher circles being accused of enriching themselves at the expense of the lower classes by taking much of their land and increasing their duties. Similarly, examples can be found of the terminology that can typically be associated with a Soviet account of history: “toiling masses” (ibid. p. 195); “social oppression;” “exploitation by entrepreneurs” and “social struggle of the laboring masses” (ibid. p. 236).

Yet, in clear contrast to the Soviet textbook, the new book does address the issue of the Ukrainian language. More than once it mentions how in the 18th century the Ukrainian language was pushed out of the public domain by a conscious policy of russification in Left Bank Ukraine, and of polonization in Right Bank Ukraine: “(...) the spiritual state of mind of the community was negatively affected by the policy of russification, which was enforced by the Czarist government” (ibid. p. 197) and “gradually, the Ukrainian language was driven not only from the administration, but also from literature and from schools. In its place, Russian was introduced everywhere” (ibid. p. 243). Interestingly, by focusing on the introduction of Russian and Polish on Ukrainian territory by neighbouring powers, the book clearly implies that these languages are foreign to Ukrainians and that only the Ukrainian language can rightfully be called a
constituent element of Ukrainian national identity. Although this stance strongly supports the claim of Ukrainian distinctiveness, it may also lead to feelings of estrangement among Russian-speaking pupils as they might start to question whether they are in fact true Ukrainians if they speak the language of the ‘elder brother.’

4.1.4 The awakening of the Ukrainian nation in the second half of the 19th Century

As expected, the old Soviet textbook interprets the growing dissatisfaction with Czart rule in Ukraine in the second half of the 19th century as, above all, a class struggle of the Ukrainian proletariat and peasantry against the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Nonetheless, it argues that, as a result of the development of capitalism, the Ukrainian ‘capitalist’ nation came into being: “Because of the development of capitalism, the accelerated process of the economic, territorial, linguistic and cultural unification of the population of the Ukrainian lands created the conditions for the completion of the long process of the formation of the Ukrainian nation” (Sarbei et al., grade 7-8, p.144). The book continues by contending that the Ukrainian nation can truly be called ‘capitalist’, with all its inherent conflicts, since there were many Ukrainians, either Ukrainian or Russian-speaking, who entered the ranks of the industrial-commercial bourgeoisie. Consequently, it is argued, these Ukrainians found themselves in a class struggle with fellow Ukrainians of the lower classes. As regards the Ukrainian language, the book claims that local dialects gradually merged into a literary and nationwide language and that the evolution of this language was greatly aided by the works of the classical authors of Ukrainian literature. These authors, Taras Shevchenko and Ivan Franko especially, are portrayed as anti-Czart/Habsburg (not anti-Russian!) social revolutionaries.

Perhaps, quite surprisingly, the old textbook mentions the Czart crackdown on the Ukrainian language and culture: “by means of a special order, Czart Alexander II prohibited the publication of books in the Ukrainian language, and theatre plays for a Ukrainian audience could only be performed in Ukraine by special permission of the governor” (ibid. p. 155). Yet, it fails to note that as a consequence of this Czart ban there may not only have been pronounced anti-Czart sentiments among Ukrainian intelligentsia circles, but also a strong desire to separate from Russia and found an independent Ukrainian state. Instead, the book takes every opportunity to underline the ‘eternal striving of the Ukrainian nation to unite with their Russian brethren.’ In this respect, the Galician writer Ivan Franko is singled out as a “great revolutionary democrat” that dedicated his life and works to the unification of the west Ukrainian population (which was under Austrian rule) with the Czart-ruled Ukrainians “within the structure of Russia.” The textbook quotes him as saying that “we love the Russian people and wish them all the best, we love and learn their language” (ibid. p. 144).

In contrast to the Soviet textbook, the new book (for the ninth grade) contributes the awakening of the Ukrainian nation not to the growth of capitalist economic relations but to the abolition of serfdom and the incessant efforts of the Ukrainian intelligentsia to spread the Ukrainian national idea among the peasantry. These peasants are regarded as the “bearers of the ethnic features of the Ukrainian nation” (Sarbei, grade 9, p. 104), and the Ukrainian language as the, “cementing force of unity of the national culture” (ibid. p. 106). In fact, the new textbook argues that imperialism and capitalism actually frustrated
the consolidation of the Ukrainian nation and the creation of a national economy. It states that: "The road to a normal development of the Ukrainian nation was closed because of the merciless colonizing exploitation of the national economies of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires" (ibid. p.107). To illustrate this point, the textbook contends that Ukraine traded at an unfavorable exchange rate with Russia, exchanging cheap raw materials for expensive finished products. Moreover, it is asserted that the trade sector in Ukraine fell almost completely into the hands of Russian, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks "who often did not operate as civilized merchants, but as barbaric predatory wholesale buyers and sellers" (ibid. p. 108). Thus, the new book refutes the old textbook's claim that Ukrainians participated in the emerging bourgeoisie.

Not surprisingly, the new textbook sees the particular Czarist policy towards the Ukrainian language and culture as another obstacle to the development of the Ukrainian nation. In a full four pages, it recounts how the Czar successively issued orders forbidding Ukrainian textbooks, education, literature, theatre plays and songs, and how the imperial authorities started persecuting members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The Russian-Austrian border, which separated Ukrainians into two halves and significantly hampered their economic, political and cultural ties, is seen as a last impediment to the full realization of Ukrainian nationhood.

Proceeding from the carefully reasoned economic and cultural 'exploitation' of the Ukrainian lands by foreign peoples and powers, the new book considers the anti-Czarist movement of the late 19th century to not only be social-revolutionary in character but also, and above all, national-emancipatory in outlook. It provides eleven pages of discussion on the Ukrainian intelligentsia circles in both the Russian and the Austrian Empire, and describes how these intellectuals sought to disseminate the idea of an independent Ukrainian state under the threat of deportation. Yet, in an echo of the old textbook, the new volume concedes that the advocates of Ukrainian independence were greatly inspired by the revolutionary appeal of Marxism. In a similar vein, using typical Soviet phraseology, it more than once recalls how Ukrainian peasants and laborers were exploited by foreign nobles and industrials.

Comparing the two textbooks, we can conclude that, despite being written by the same authors, the old and the new volumes show remarkable contrasts in their account of the late 19th century. These contradictions concern the participation of Ukrainians in 'the oppressing classes' and the particular outlook of Ukrainian intellectual circles. However, in spite of differences with the old textbook, the new book continues to a significant extent the Soviet tradition of interpreting historical events in a materialistic way.

4.1.5 The Bolshevik Revolution and the ukrainianization of the 1920s

In the Soviet textbook for grades nine and ten, the narrative on the October Revolution and the ensuing Bolshevik conquest of Ukraine is equally straightforward. The Bolsheviks are presented as heroes who liberated the Ukrainian workers and peasants from the tyranny of the bourgeoisie, the nobles and the Central Rada. These 'anti-revolutionary forces' took control over most of Ukraine in the months after the Revolution and demanded the autonomous status of Ukraine within a federal Russia. The participation of the Ukrainian proletariat in the Revolution is stressed more than once.
The rebellion of the *Arsenal* factory workers in enemy-occupied Kyiv is given as a particularly illustrative example: “The Arsenal workers fought bravely, although there was not enough ammunition and food. Women and children helped by providing the workers with food and first-aid equipment for the seriously wounded, which were brought in under heavy fire” (Sarbeia and Spytiskyi, grades 9-10, p. 48).

Yet, the old textbook admits that the transition to Bolshevik power was not easy. It even concedes that in a number of city soviets the Bolsheviks captured only a minority of seats:

In Ukraine the struggle for the victory of the Proletarian Revolution met with different rates of success in the various regions, and depended on the actual class relationships. Thus, Soviet power was established without armed struggle in the Donbas, where the Bolsheviks predominated in the soviets and the proletariat was more organized. But a fierce and tense battle erupted in Kharkiv, Ekatarinoslav (Dnipropetrovs'k), Vinnytsia and Odesa, where the majority of seats in the soviets were captured by Mensheviks, SRs (socialist revolutionaries) and bourgeois nationalists (*ibid.* p. 45).

There is also an implicit acknowledgment that initially not all of Ukraine’s workers supported the Bolsheviks until they confirmed the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination up to the point of secession. This was described as “encouraging the workers of Ukraine to take the side of the Bolshevik party” (*ibid.* p. 47).

Quite noteworthy is the old book’s complete omission of the Bolshevik-induced ukrainianization campaign of the 1920s. Although there is mention of the massive operation to combat illiteracy, there is no reference to the indigenization of administrative and party executives or to the growing number of Ukrainian-language schools, *vuzy* (institutions of higher education) and periodicals. On the other hand, the book does report the communist alternative to the Czarist ‘cultural oppression’. It discloses that: “During the tenth session [of the Russian Communist Party] much attention was paid to the national question. The October Revolution had proclaimed the equality of all nations inhabiting Russia. The task consisted of eliminating the economic and cultural arrears of the nations that had been oppressed by the Czars” (*ibid.* p. 74).

The question is why the book fails to address the ukrainianization of the 1920s when it could serve as an outstanding illustration of the proclaimed endeavor to establish the equality of all Soviet nations. Considering that the book was published in 1987, the year that saw the beginning of national revival movements in the Baltics, one could postulate that the Soviet educational authorities wanted to direct attention away from the sensitive nationality issue. Another reason could be that the educational powers sought to make pupils believe that from the beginning of the existence of the Soviet Union the constituent nations were actually in the process of merging into a larger Soviet nation. A confirmation of this argument can be found:

The common economy and culture, which was international in spirit and character, provided the conditions for an intensification of the friendship and brotherly cooperation of the Soviet republics. This contributed to the creation of a new historical community of people - the Soviet Nation (*ibid.* p. 96).
As could be expected, the new edition for grade 10 presents an entirely different picture of the Bolshevik period. The Bolshevik ideal of absolute equality, social harmony and economic prosperity is portrayed as a Utopian dream for which there was not even enough support among the population of Russia. It is also seen as an ideological movement foreign to Ukraine, as reportedly only a small minority of Ukrainians sided with the Bolsheviks. Very cleverly, the book quotes V. Zatonskii, one of the early Bolshevik leaders, as saying that: “The Bolshevik party had the Russian or russified proletariat as its backbone” (Turchenko, grade 10, p. 35). The book continues by asserting that, given these circumstances, Soviet power could only be established by force in Ukraine. To underline this, it is stressed that: “The social base of the Bolsheviks was weak, and their authority insignificant” (ibid. p. 36), with the sole exception of the Donbas where the Bolsheviks captured power peacefully. Moreover, to corroborate the claim that the Central Rada was the only political body that legitimately represented the Ukrainian population, the book discloses the results of the November 1917 elections for the first session, which purportedly show that the Ukrainian national parties captured about 75 percent of the votes, while the Bolsheviks received only 10 percent.

Yet, the Central Rada is also criticized for not addressing the critical issue of land reform. Although it is admitted that a radical redistribution of land would have had disastrous consequences for agrarian productivity, its postponement is seen as the principle reason why the rural poor turned their backs on the Central Rada. Interestingly, by quoting the historian Viacheslav Lypins’kyi, who “with bitterness stated that the notion of Ukraine (…) was replaced by the notion of the desiatina zemli [a specific measure of land]” (ibid. p. 41), the book quite explicitly acknowledges that a Ukrainian national consciousness appears to have been quite shallow among the peasantry. Likewise, it is conceded that most of the urban poor chose the Bolshevik side. The textbook even mentions the Arsenal uprising and how it contributed to the defeat of the army of the Central Rada in its defense of Kyiv. Taken as a whole, however, the work maintains its position that the arrival of Soviet power in Ukraine was deplorable, accusing the Bolsheviks of eliminating democracy, indulging in cruel terror, persecuting Ukrainian culture and confiscating food and other products. It ends a section with a strong condemnation: “The establishment of Bolshevik power in Ukraine, by means of deceit, violence and direct interference from abroad, inevitably had to become and became the object of nationwide opposition” (ibid. p. 58).

Given the new textbooks’ preoccupation with the Ukrainian language - the book for the ninth grade even explicitly states that “the membership of which [the Ukrainian nation] was before all determined by the native [i.e. Ukrainian] language” (Sarbei, grade 9, p. 107) - it is interesting to see how the ukrainianization of the 1920s is portrayed. Yet, the book for the tenth grade is ambiguous about this period. On the one hand, ukrainianization is appreciated as it “attracted many representatives of the national intelligentsia to the process of cultural rebuilding, who sincerely attempted to serve the nation and to contribute to its social-economic and spiritual revival” (Turchenko, grade 10, p. 194). In a similar manner, the book values achievements such as the reduction of

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71 This land measure refers to the heated debate on whether estates of less than 40 desiatina would be subject to redistribution as well.
illiteracy, the increase of Ukrainian-language schools, vuzy and publications, and the mass admission of Ukrainians into the student population. On the other hand, it is argued that ukrainianization was not strong enough to have a lasting impact on the language regime in the most important sphere of public life, the Communist Party bureaucracy, where Russian remained the dominant language. However, the harshest criticism of the policy of ukrainianization was that its initiators did not see it as a goal in itself:

From its very first beginning this process was subordinated (...) to the construction of a culture on the ideological foundation of Marxism. ukrainianization (...) was only permitted to the extent that it did not collide with the interests and ideological orientations of the leadership of the highest state and party organs (ibid. p.194).

4.1.6 The collectivisation of agriculture and the 1930s famine

Obviously, the old and the new textbooks completely differ in their narratives on the collectivization of agriculture and its consequences. The Soviet textbook appreciates the collectivization drive as the campaign that broke the last elements of capitalist, anti-revolutionary resistance. It argues that: “The socialist restructuring of the countryside eliminated the class stratification of the peasantry, humility and poverty” (Sarbei and Spyttskyi, grades 9-10, p. 87), and it claims that people valued the expression that “people live well on those places where they sow and harvest together” (ibid. p. 85). The Kulaks (well-to-do farmers) are blamed for all the wrongs on the collective farms: the low morale of the workers, the lack of discipline, theft and sabotage of Kolkhoz/Sovkhoz property and even terror against party activists and farm personnel. Yet, there is an acknowledgment that the authorities were responsible for certain excesses as well: “In some places, the principle of voluntary cooperation was violated (...) The exaggerations in the Kolkhoz campaign led to dissatisfaction among some peasants, which had a negative influence on the solidarity of the union of the working class with the peasantry” (ibid. p. 87). The book is quick to point out that the Communist Party took appropriate measures to prevent similar mistakes from happening again. However, it is completely silent about the consequence of these ‘exaggerations’ i.e. the 1930s famine.

As would be expected, the new textbook strongly condemns the collectivization and the ensuing famine. It asserts that the former can be equated with a “pillaging of the countryside” (Turchenko, grade 10, p. 221), which served to speed up industrialization. Detailed accounts are given of the confiscation of food and private property, of the forceful incorporation of peasants into kolkhozes, and of the dramatic decline in production levels. All this is said to have resulted in the artificial famine of 1932-1933, which is characterized as: “One of the most cruel crimes organised by Stalinism against the Ukrainian nation” (ibid. p. 225). The book even claims that the authorities deliberately induced the famine to crush the resistance of peasants and nationalist forces. To substantiate this claim, the textbook quotes a communist official who reportedly said that: “A bloody war is fought between the peasants and our powers. This is a war of life and death. This year was a test of our strength and their endurance. The hunger showed them who is the boss here. It cost millions of lives, but the kolkhoz system will exist forever. We won the war!” (ibid. p. 227). Nonetheless, the book does not go as far as to
accuse the authorities of specifically targeting the Ukrainians as it discloses how the
hunger not only affected the Ukrainian lands but also other regions of intensive
agriculture, such as the northern Caucasus, the Kuban and Volga regions and northern
Kazakhstan.

4.1.7 World War II and the role of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
(OUN)

In its account of World War II, the Soviet textbook pictures the Ukrainians as a people
who greatly suffered from the German occupational regime and who supported and
participated in the Soviet Army struggle against the ‘fascist aggressor.’ For instance, to
give the impression that the people of western Ukraine welcomed the Soviet invasion of
Poland in September 1939, the book reports the local population as saying that: “When
the Red Army crossed the river Zbruch, the sun started shining over the Galicians”
(Sarbei and Spytskyi, grade 9-10, p. 105). It is stressed that Ukrainians, both on Soviet
territory and in other countries, both as partisans and as regular Soviet Army servicemen,
courageously fought on the Soviet side to defeat the German occupiers:

Under terrible wartime conditions, the Ukrainian people together with all nations of
the USSR honorably fulfilled its holy obligation towards the Socialist Fatherland.
For their participation in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, about 2.5 million
Ukrainian servicemen were awarded with combat medals and more than a thousand
among them were granted the title of Hero of the Soviet Union (ibid. p.124).

The book pays remarkably little attention to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
(OUN), a branch of which, the Stepan Bandera wing, fought against both the Soviet and
the German armies. It only briefly states that the German forces relied on “Ukrainian
bourgeois nationalists, former Kulaks and criminals (...) for the pillaging of the
Ukrainian lands” (ibid. p. 113). The Uniate Church in western Ukraine, under
Metropolitan Andriy Sheptyts'kyi, is singled out as having particularly ardently
collaborated with the Germans. According to the book, it played an active role in the
creation of the “fascist” army division SS Halychyna.

The new textbook’s version of World War II matches the Soviet one on two
accounts. The first concerns the presentation of the Soviet invasion in Poland: in an echo
of the Soviet volume, it is argued that: “The west Ukrainian population met the Red
Army with enthusiasm and hope” (Turchenko, grade 10, p. 278). However, the new
edition is quick to point out that this reaction was quite understandable in view of the
preceding period of Polish oppression and widespread Soviet propaganda which
explained the Soviet attack as a successful attempt to ward off German occupation of
Galicia. It holds that this sympathy quickly turned into hate once the Soviets started
disbanding political parties and cultural associations and began persecuting members of
the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The second case of resemblance between the Soviet and post-
Soviet volumes constitutes the presentation of life in the German occupied zone, which is
reported to have been full of suffering and hardship: “It [the German occupation] brought
such agony, terror on such a scale (...) that the recent Soviet past appeared almost like paradise" (ibid. p. 296).

Nonetheless, it is the pronounced contradictions with the Soviet account of events that are most conspicuous. One of these pertains to the participation of Ukrainians in the Soviet army. In contrast to the Soviet textbook, the new book does not once mention the inclusion of large numbers of Ukrainians in the regular Soviet forces, although it does admit that many Ukrainians were active as partisans in the Soviet underground. Similarly, the narrative on the OUN is entirely different. On reading it one obtains the impression that the new textbook makes a conscious effort to rehabilitate this organization — and its military wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) — as it dedicates many pages (8 out of a total of 30 dealing with World War II) to the Bandera-led underground wing which turned against the German army in the early stages of the war. The volume emphasizes a secret German order of December 1941 that reportedly said: “Except for the OUN-Bandera group, there is not one resistance movement in Ukraine that is capable of presenting a serious danger to us” (ibid. p. 302). The book even claims that the OUN-Bandera forces were far more effective in combating the Germans than the Soviet underground. In addition to this, the OUN is portrayed as an organization that embraced democratic values (freedom of speech, press and religion, and the equality of all nationalities living on Ukrainian territory). In another contrast with the Soviet textbook, no mention is made of any possible collaboration between the Uniate Church and the Germans. The new book only acknowledges that another wing of the OUN, headed by Andriy Melnyk, did cooperate with the Germans, as it mentions that the Melnyk branch supported the creation of the Waffen SS Halychna division.

It is perhaps surprising to find the new account of World War II differing so radically from the old version. The complete lack of any reference to the participation of Ukrainians in the Soviet Army is likely to give these veterans the impression that they are denied a role as the liberators of Ukraine. Moreover, attempts to rehabilitate the OUN-UPA could give veterans the idea that this new historiography actually portrays them as the ‘bad guys’ who, as servicemen of a foreign army, fought the ‘good guys’ of the OUN-UPA. What is more, this perception of having been part of a foreign army is reinforced by excerpts in the book that accuse the Soviet authorities, after their recapture of the Ukrainian lands, of forcefully confiscating food and other products, sending millions of Ukrainian youth to the front as cannon fodder, and reinstating the totalitarian regime of the past (ibid. pp. 310,311). To make matters even worse, the new book says the following:

After the 20th session of the CPSU (in 1956), it became known that (Jozef) Stalin had very seriously considered a plan to deport all Ukrainians, in addition to Crimean Tatars, Kalmuks and some Caucasus peoples. And, as (Nikita) Khrushchev remarked (...), the only reason that this had not happened was that there were too many Ukrainians, there were no places to send them to, otherwise Stalin would have deported them too (ibid. p. 325).

Clearly, this extract leaves the reader no other impression than that the Soviet army was part of a regime that was alien and hostile to Ukraine and Ukrainians.
4.1.8 Conclusion

Five conclusions can now be made. Firstly, the new accounts of Ukrainian history are clearly more balanced than the version laid down in the Soviet editions. The new textbooks, for instance, do not hesitate to point to the shortcomings, especially in the socio-economic sphere, of the regimes that are seen as the predecessors of contemporary Ukraine (i.e. Kyїв Rus’, the Cossack state and the different governments attempting to found an independent Ukrainian state after the Bolshevik Revolution). The Soviet editions lack this element of self-criticism.

Secondly, another feature that Soviet textbooks miss is a certain individuality of character. Among the new textbooks, there is quite a difference between the book for grades 7-8 and that for grade 10. Whereas the former dedicates many pages to class conflict and uses some of the terminology and even whole extracts from the old textbook, the latter presents a chronicle of Ukrainian history that sharply contrasts with the old version on most points. It appears, therefore, that the educational authorities in post-independence Ukraine granted the authors of schoolbooks more individual freedom of movement than the authorities in Soviet times did. This comparison of books also shows that Serhienko and Smolyi, as the authors of the new book for grades 7-8, did not change all the content and outlook of the old textbook. One can therefore conclude that the continuity of personnel (remember that both the authors also wrote the Soviet textbook) has resulted in a perpetuation of content and interpretation. In this light, it may not be a coincidence that the present educational authorities ordered that the textbooks dealing with 20th-century history be written by new authors. They may well have considered the modern period too crucial and too sensitive for authors associated with the old regime (notably Sarbei) to write them.

Thirdly, the old and the new editions diverge most notably in their accounts of matters related to the sensitive topics of Ukrainian national identity or Ukrainian statehood. The old textbooks, for instance, hardly touch upon the issue of the Ukrainian language, and when they do, it is only to accuse other imperial powers (Poland, Czarist Russia and Austria-Hungary) of culturally subduing the Ukrainians. In fact, the old book for grades 9-10 is completely silent about the fate of the Ukrainian language in Soviet times. In the new books, on the other hand, the Ukrainian language is a much-discussed topic. It is asserted that the Ukrainian language is the principal determinant of Ukrainian national identity, and it is implied that Russian and Polish are foreign languages, introduced by neighboring powers bent on eliminating the use of Ukrainian in public spheres.72

Fourthly, another noteworthy difference of opinion concerns the degree of involvement of Ukrainians in the Bolshevik conquest of Ukraine and in the Soviet fight

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72 Motyl (1993) asserts that after independence the ruling elites began propagating the image of the Ukrainian nation as a people multiethnic in character who had internalized the Cossack-ascribed values of freedom, equality and democracy. Although the spread of this image may have occurred in some policy areas, it certainly, as we have seen, has not touched the teaching of history in schools. Instead, a rather narrow conception of the Ukrainian nation is communicated; it is implied that only those that speak Ukrainian are ‘real Ukrainians’. The new textbooks make no reference to particular Cossack virtues as constituent elements of Ukrainian national identity.
against German invaders. According to the Soviet textbook, Ukrainians fully participated in both struggles, side by side with their Russian 'brethren'. The message the book sends is clear: the Bolshevik Revolution is as much a Ukrainian phenomenon as a Russian one, and it further strengthened the 'bonds of friendship between the two brotherly nations.' In contrast, the new textbook argues that only a small minority of Ukrainians supported the Bolshevik Revolution, and it makes no mention of Ukrainians as regular Soviet army servicemen. Consequently, the new edition portrays the Bolshevik regime as a foreign power, in which Ukrainians had no part. Moreover, its hostility towards the Ukrainians is stressed, as the book seizes every opportunity to discredit the Soviet regime.

Finally, an important contrast can also be found in the narratives on the role of the OUN in World War II. While the Soviet textbook considers the OUN a 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist' organization that 'shamelessly' collaborated with the Nazis, the new book makes a calculated effort to rehabilitate the OUN. Among other things, it presents the Bandera-led wing of the OUN as an underground group that combated the Germans quite effectively and which stood up for democratic values and the ideal of an independent Ukrainian state.

To a certain extent, the particular version of history advanced by the new textbooks is understandable. After all, the emphasis on Ukrainian as the sole native language, on the Bolshevik regime as a foreign power, and on the OUN as a genuine national liberation movement firmly upholds claims of Ukrainian distinctiveness. However, at the same time this version runs the risk of alienating both the Russian-speaking part of the population and people who cherish the Soviet past, such as Soviet army veterans. The former are likely to ask themselves whether they can ever call themselves - and be accepted as - 'authentic Ukrainians' if they continue to speak Russian. The latter may very well take the new historiography as an insult because it degrades the status of Soviet army veterans. They used to be portrayed as soldiers who 'courageously fought to liberate Ukraine from fascist occupation' but are now presented as soldiers who 'contributed to the reinstitution of a foreign and oppressive regime that denied the Ukrainian nation its sacred right to self-determination.' An intriguing question for further study, therefore, is whether Russian speakers and people with communist sympathies will accept or reject the new version of history which their children are being taught.

4.2 Ukrainian Literature

This section is restricted to a comparison of old and new Ukrainian literature programs. Since programs offer a short description of the compulsory subject matter and the authors and their works, this overview provides only a sketchy appreciation and summary of the changes.

4.2.1 Ukrainian literature in Soviet times

As could be expected from a regime that sought to monopolize all spheres of life, there was one standardized program for all schools in Soviet Ukraine. Each grade had its own
textbook and corresponding Khrestomatiia (collection of book excerpts). However, many pupils in Russian schools did not study Ukrainian literature in Soviet times since they had been excused, on parental request, from learning the titular language and its literature.

According to the old program, the objective of Ukrainian literature education is to create “a Marxist-Leninist world outlook of the thoroughly and harmoniously developed personality of a constructor of a communist society” (Prohramy serednoi ...IV-X kl., 1984, p. 1). Given this aim, it is not surprising to find Soviet Ukrainian literature education being heavily politicized. The following themes recur frequently in the program: (1) the poverty and exploitation of serfs by (foreign) noblemen and landowners; (2) the common struggle of peasants and workers to overthrow the oppressive, exploitative regime in the 19th century; (3) the realization in the 17th century of the long-cherished dream of the Ukrainian people of reuniting with Russia; (4) the closeness of Ukrainian literature with Russian and Belorussian literature in style and content; (5) the church as a collaborator with the Czarist and Austrian exploitative regimes and the hypocrisy of its leaders; (6) the people’s happiness about the unification of all Ukrainian lands in one Ukrainian socialist republic within the structure of the Soviet Union in 1939; (7) the exaltation of Lenin and the Communist Party leadership; (8) the glorification of the Red Army in its heroic fight with fascist invaders; and (9) the brotherly cooperation of all Soviet nations in the Red Army and in the post-war years of reconstruction.

The designers of the Soviet program had a large supply of 19th-century, socially committed Ukrainian writers at their disposal to address the first two themes in particular. Taras Shevchenko, for instance, the most famous of them all and the national hero of contemporary Ukraine, dedicated many of his works to the fate of the serfs and to the role of the Czarist authorities in consolidating social inequalities. Ivan Franko, the Galician intellectual of the late 19th and early 20th century, was no less revolutionary in his appeals to the working class to fight for freedom and to overthrow the exploitative regime. In addition to Shevchenko and Franko, Marko Vovchok, Leonid Hlibov, Ivan Nechui-Levys’kyi, Lesia Ukrainka, Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi, and many other 19th-century writers who identified with the Ukrainian peasantry and depicted the birth of social protest were used by educational officials to underpin Soviet ideology. For the glorification of Lenin and the Communist Party, the Soviet educators could rely on the works of Maksym Ryls’kyi, Pavlo Tychyna, Volodymyr Sosiura and Ostap Vyshnia, who (perhaps forcibly) wrote enthusiastic works in support of Bolshevik rule. It goes without saying that authors and individual works critical of (aspects of) the Soviet regime cannot be found in the old program.

The extent to which Ukrainian literature was politicized in Soviet days can best be analyzed by determining how many of the works listed in the program are addressing one of the aforementioned themes. For the fourth grade (the first grade that teaches Ukrainian literature), we find that 17 out of 30 works convey a political message. Under the genre of fairy tales, the young pupils of this grade were given narratives of Lenin as the leader “who showed workers the road to liberation from the oppression of exploiters” and of “the contrasting interests of workers with landowners and rich people” (ibid. p. 10). Pupils were taught both the all-Union and the Soviet Ukrainian anthems at the start of the
course. In the seventh grade, as much as 19 of the 21 books discuss issues like the class struggle and the achievements of communist society, according to the short description in the program. In the tenth grade at least 40 of the 51 compulsory works cited in the program have a politicized content.

A last noteworthy feature of Soviet Ukrainian literature education is that only from grade eight onwards is there a systematic chronological build-up of the curriculum. In the first four grades (grades four to seven), the curriculum lacks a clear structure as in each grade the emphasis is on the 19th and early 20th centuries, with writers seemingly arbitrarily selected from this period.

**4.2.2 Ukrainian literature in contemporary Ukraine**

The new literature teaching is different from the old in a number of ways, both in structure and in content. First, there is no one new program to replace the old one, but three, and teachers are allowed to choose freely between the three and combine materials from them at their own discretion. Second, the foreword to the new programs states that “Every teacher must approach the content of the program creatively, introducing changes and additions to the hours and the materials and reallocating them” (Prohramy serednoi ...8-11 klas, 1995, p. 2). Third, teachers are permitted to add hours to the curriculum for the education of literature of the “home region” (ridnyi krai: i.e. the oblast, rayon or city the school is located in). Thus, although the subject matter is still to a large extent predetermined in the new Ukrainian literature course, the teacher can leave a much greater mark on the content of the lessons than he/she could in Soviet days.

As in Soviet days, there is one textbook and one corresponding collection of book excerpts per grade. These textbooks and collections, moreover, are used throughout Ukraine, with the geographical distribution of these materials being as uniform as that of the textbooks of history of Ukraine. Several of the authors of the new textbooks also wrote the old ones, which is a phenomenon we know from the teaching of history of Ukraine. However, whereas the Soviet-era writers of history of Ukraine wrote the new books for grades eight and nine which discuss Ukrainian history up to the 20th century, the Soviet-era writers of Ukrainian literature wrote the new books for grades ten and eleven which deal with literature from the end of the 19th century to the present - Neporozhniii and Semenchuk for current grade eleven and corresponding grade ten in Soviet days, and Khropko for current grade ten and Soviet grade nine.

The new program prepared by the Institute of Pedagogy of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine was compared with the old program. A study of this program reveals that the proposed subject matter was much less politicized and covered a wider range of themes than that of the Soviet program, especially concerning literature from the 20th century. Thus, many works discuss topics like the beauty of nature, country life, good and bad character traits, human yearnings, the raising of children, love, the passing of time,

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73 Naturally, Soviet Ukraine is no exception in teaching the national anthem in schools. In fact, nearly all countries, including the United States, make pupils learn the national anthem by heart. Thus, almost all national curricula are politicized to at least some degree.

74 As I discovered in the schools in Kyiv, L'viv, Odesa and Donets'k.
and other themes that have no specific ideological or nationalizing content. Subjects that did carry a strong political message included, among other things, (1) the rise and fall of Kyivian Rus', (2) the heroic deeds of the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks and their efforts to found an independent Ukrainian state, (3) the misery of the Ukrainian serfs, peasants and workers and their exploitation by foreign landowners, industrials and merchants, (4) the fate of the Ukrainian language under Russian-Czarist and Austrian cultural oppression, (5) the Ukrainian language as the bearer of Ukrainian national consciousness, (6) the totalitarian character of the communist regime and the Stalinist crackdown on Ukrainian writers, (7) the collectivization of agriculture and the ensuing famine, (8) the suffering of the Ukrainians under German fascist occupation and the struggle of the Red Army and the partisan movement to liberate Ukraine. All in all, just 22 out of the 73 works from 20th-century literature contain an overt political message.

A remarkable finding is that the new program presents few works critical of the Soviet regime. Of the 73 20th-century works that the pupils of the 10th and 11th grades have to study, only seven denounce aspects of Soviet society, according to the short description in the program. Moreover, just one of these six works, Iurii Mushketyk's Sud (justice), is devoted to the 1930s famine, and none of them address the steady post-war retreat of Ukrainian from public spheres (which is a popular theme among Ukrainian nationalists and dissidents). Another noteworthy finding is that none of the 73 works takes up the theme of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and role of the Bandera-led underground wing during World War II. There are, on the other hand, three works praising the heroic deeds of the Red Army and Soviet partisans against the fascist invaders. The scarcity of works critical of the Soviet regime and the complete lack of works focusing on opposition groups (such as the OUN) may be an indication that works on these topics simply do not exist, due to decades of Soviet censorship. The program’s introduction to the literature of the 20th century seems to suggest this as it draws the reader’s attention to the persecution of Ukrainian writers during the Stalin era (the program speaks of “the extermination of the nation’s flower”) and to the devastating impact this had on the development of Ukrainian literature in the pre-war years (ibid. p. 97). Yet, the paucity of critical works may also reflect the preferences of the authors of the 10th and 11th grade textbooks as both authors also wrote the Soviet manuals and can thus be associated with the Soviet past.

Perhaps equally astounding is how closely the new program follows the old program in its treatment of 19th-century authors and their preoccupation with social inequality and class conflict. As many as 13 of the 16 authors and 36 of the 61 works can also be found in the old program, and 24 works (more than one-third!) discuss the plight of the peasantry and/or make revolutionary appeals to overthrow the “exploitative” regime. What is more, the new program impudently copies much of the Soviet rhetoric and terminology from the old program. Thus, it speaks of “the contrast of the healthy morale of the working people with the degeneration and egoism of the privileged classes,” “the pseudo-liberalism of the Ukrainian nobility, the treason to their people,” “the common struggle of the progressive activists of the Ukrainian and Russian theater art,” “... employees and businessmen, the exposure of their immorality (hypocrisy, deceit,

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75 Nineteenth century literature is taught to grades nine and ten.
blackmail, cynicism and theft)," and "the attempt to contrast the predatory exploiters with the representatives of the people's intelligentsia." (ibid. pp. 62, 67, 77, 79). Panteleimon Kulish is the only writer the new program introduces who does not speak in pejorative terms about the middle and upper classes. In his work Ridne Slovo (native word), he calls for inter-class unity in order to achieve "the state and national revival of Ukraine" (ibid. p. 70).

The focus on social injustice and class conflict does not mean that national issues are disregarded. In the new program, we find 7 of the 61 works of 19th-century Ukrainian literature discussing the plight of the Ukrainian language under foreign oppression and its importance as the primary building block of Ukrainian national consciousness. Another 10 works are devoted to the heroism of the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks and to the suppression of Ukraine by foreign powers. Interestingly, the new program also presents hitherto unknown works by famous authors like Shevchenko, Franko and Tychyna. Obviously, these works were deemed unfit by the Soviet educators for the propagation of communist ideology and the idea of the "brotherhood of Soviet nations," and were withheld accordingly. The newly found legacy of Pavlo Tychyna, which is highly critical of early Soviet society, stands out as the same author also wrote works praising Lenin and the Communist Party (with revealing titles like Lenin; The Party Leads; Lenin Sun) (Prohramy serednoi ... IV-X kl., 1984, p. 68).

Another remarkable finding is that the structure of the curriculum has remained the same. As in the old system, the first four grades (grades five to eight) all present 19th and 20th-century literature indiscriminately, with each devoting several hours to a special literary genre (fifth grade - fairy tales and riddles; sixth grade - folk songs; seventh grade - folk ballads; eighth grade - lyric poetry). From grade nine, the curriculum is built up chronologically. The periodization, however, differs from the old program, and the titles of the periods have been modified. Thus, "Ukrainian literature of the third stage of the liberation movement in Russia" is now given the neutral label "The literary process at the end of the 19th century - beginning of the 20th century." Likewise, "The formation and development of Ukrainian Soviet literature" has been changed into simply "Literature of the 20th century: 1900 - 1940" (ibid. pp. 58, 66, and Prohramy serednoi ... 8-11 klasy, 1995, pp. 83, 89). The fact that the new titles no longer carry any ideological content is another indication that the new literature teaching has become less politicized.

4.3 Geography of Ukraine

The thematic content of geography courses was altered dramatically with independence. The sections in the geography program devoted to the geography of the USSR were replaced by sections on world geography and geography of Ukraine (compare Prohramy dlia ... 5-9 kl, 1983 with Prohramy dlia ... 5-10 klasy, 1996). By omitting any reference to the CIS as a separate geopolitical or socioeconomic unit in the new program, the authorities may have wanted to emphasize Ukraine's distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Russian Federation.

Remarkably, the new geography textbook does not emphasize geographical features in order to legitimize Ukraine's independence. For instance, no argument is made
of Ukraine having somehow natural borders with Russia or of an early settlement pattern of Ukrainians corresponding exactly to the territory of contemporary Ukraine. Instead, the new book relies on the origin of the name Ukraine, on history, and on an economic argument in order to justify post-Soviet independence. As for the origin of the name of Ukraine, it is argued that the word of Ukraine was already used in 12th-century chronicles of Kyïvan Rus' to denote the northern part of present-day central Ukraine. From the 16th century, it is claimed, the name of Ukraine began to be used widely in state documents, diplomatic acts and literary sources, with its population being increasingly identified as Ukrainians (Syrotenko et al., 1994). The book maintains that the names Malorosia, Mala Rus' and Malorosiis'kyi krai only appeared in the 18th century and “reflected the social and national politics of the Czarist government towards the Ukrainian people” (ibid. p. 9).

As regards history, the emphasis is on past attempts to found a “Ukrainian state” (the Cossack era in particular is highlighted) and on the Czarist policies, which “attempted to destroy everything that was left of Ukrainian statehood, Ukrainian freedom and those democratic customs by which Ukraine distinguished itself from Russia” (ibid. p. 9).

The economic argument focuses on the structure of the Soviet Ukrainian economy and on its dependency on Moscow as the center of decision-making and how this prevented Ukraine from realizing its economic potential: “The command methods of administrating the economy and the rigid centralization manacled the initiative and creativity of the masses and slowed down the development of the economy. Since the economy of Ukraine was subordinated to the economic complex of the USSR, Ukraine’s economy worked to fulfill its needs, often at the expense of its own interests” (ibid. p. 123).

4.4 Conclusion

An analysis of old and new history books shows us that the current teaching of the history of Ukraine teaching has created new myths (Kyïvan Rus’ and the Cossack state are depicted as early forms of Ukrainian statehood) and has sought to maximize Ukrainian distinctiveness vis-à-vis Russia by an emphasis on Ukrainian as the sole native language, the portrayal of the Bolshevik Revolution as a foreign phenomenon in which Ukrainians had no part, and the characterization of the OUN as a genuine national liberation movement. The comparison further reveals that the new book for grades seven and eight to some extent echo the old book, especially as far as social issues are concerned. Given that the authors of the old book also wrote the new book, it is concluded that a continuity of personnel did indeed to some degree lead to a perpetuation of content. This conclusion is confirmed by the finding that the new author of the current textbook for the 10th grade (which deals with the crucial period of the first half of the 20th century) produced a book that strongly contrasted with the corresponding old book for grades nine and ten in its interpretation of events.

A study of the old and new Ukrainian literature programs reveals that the new course of Ukrainian literature of the 20th century is much less politicized than the old course. The great majority of the works the new program presents are dedicated to topics
that have no specific ideological or nationalizing content. Moreover, remarkably few works have been introduced that are critical of the Soviet regime. This paucity of faultfinding works, it is argued, could well reflect the preferences of the authors of the 10th and 11th grade textbooks since both authors also wrote the Soviet manuals. Perhaps equally surprising is the finding that the new program closely follows the old program in its treatment of 19th-century literature. Not only does the new program rely heavily on works discussing social inequality and class conflict, it also shamelessly copies much of the Soviet rhetoric and terminology from the old program.

When the new teaching of 20th-century Ukrainian literature is compared to that of 20th-century history of Ukraine, the former appears to contrast markedly with the latter. Whereas the former is largely apolitical and presents few works critical of the Soviet regime, the latter is strongly nationalizing in content and misses no opportunity to criticize aspects of Soviet society. This difference could well be attributed to the varying backgrounds of the authors: whereas the new Ukrainian literature textbooks for the 10th and 11th grades were written by authors who also wrote the old books, the new Ukrainian history books for the last two grades were written by new authors with no association with the Soviet past. Thus, for whatever reason, modern Ukrainian literature teaching has been far less modified than modern Ukrainian history teaching in post-Soviet Ukraine. This is an indication that policies of nation-building are not consistent in all fields of state activity.

The revised geography of Ukraine course contributes to the nation-building project by touching on history, on the origin of the name Ukraine, and on economic relations during the Soviet era as arguments that legitimate Ukraine’s independence. In the economic argument, the subordination of the Ukrainian economy to that of the USSR held back the development of Ukrainian society. Surprisingly, the new geography textbook does not present typical geographical features, such as natural borders or settlement patterns of the titular population, as elements of distinction that justify state independence.