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# Creating Social Reality by Soviet Children's Publishing Companies in Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s

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The article deals with the influence of state ideology on children, as carried out through state control/supervision of book publishing. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the peculiarities of creating (a new) social reality by means of children's literature in the 1920s and 1930s in Ukraine. The research material is a selection of publications of the Ukrainian specialised publishing houses Ditydav and Molodyi Bilshovyk. The results of the analysis show that 46% of the books in the corpus contain the following keywords: revolution, civil war, Pioneers, Little Octobrists, Soviet holidays, Lenin, Stalin, collective farms, collectivisation, industrialisation, metallurgy, factory, mines, and so forth, that is, they contain an emphasised ideological component. Soviet society's rejection of the national tradition, even in the face of the policy of Ukrainianisation, is also confirmed. The dominance of Russia and its representatives in comparison with other republics in the USSR and the limitations of gender roles in the constructed worldview are also demonstrated.

**Keywords:** Bolshevism, book publishing, Ukrainian children's literature, construction of social reality, ideology

Catriona Kelly in *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* notes that from the earliest days, the leaders of the new regime were child-oriented “not just as the recipients of nurture, but as an audience for political ideas” (2007: 62). She shows how children were taught to become ancillaries of the Soviet Union, to become part of its “civilising” mission by means of education and the arts. Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, investigating the social education of preschool children in the Soviet Union in 1917–

1932, concludes that the Bolsheviks conceptualised children as “independent, rational and powerful agents of revolution” (2001: 5).

One of the means to create a template for the younger generation is children's literature. During the first 20 years of the Bolshevik regime, its educational function became crucial not only for children's literature but also for the official method, known as socialist realism. According to Yevgeniy Dobrenko, socialism's production was the chief task of socialist realism (2007: 28). In other words, literature generated a new reality and implemented new realities. Andrei Fateev (2007) investigated which documents and practices the Soviet authorities used to establish a controlled system over children's literature, which evolved into a means of controlled socialisation and political propaganda. Ukrainian researchers Valentyna Molotkina (2019) and Oksana Fedotova (2003, 2007) both described the national specificity of the process.

Felicity Ann O'Dell's study *Socialization Through Children's Literature: The Soviet Example* reveals “the specific role assigned to children's literature in Soviet society in the purposive socialization of the child to officially approved norms” (1978: 24). She notes that character education was intended to build such traits as collectivism, discipline, love of the work force, patriotism, internationalism, and atheism, in accordance with the Code of the Builder of Communism. In considering children's literature in general, she emphasises textbooks, the magazine *Murzilka*, and such iconic literary texts as Arkady Gaidar's 1940 short novel *Timur and His Squad* (*Тимур и его команда*). An analysis of the discourse of Soviet children's literature of the 1920s and 1930s in Ukraine will emphasise and develop the findings of previous researchers.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the specific features of the efforts to create a new social reality by means of the controlled publication of children's literature in the 1920s and 1930s in the national republics as members of the USSR, using the example of Ukraine. The research material is a corpus of publications (808 in total) of the children's publishing houses Dytvydav (Дитвидав [Child Publications]) and Molodyi Bilshovyk (Молодий більшовик [Young Bolshevik]), housed in the rare books collection of the National Library of Ukraine for Children.<sup>1</sup>

These two publishing houses represent the Bolsheviks' policy on children's literature in Ukraine. The publishing house Molodyi Bilshovyk was founded in Kharkiv in 1923 and was at first called Molodyi robotnyk (Молодий робітник [Young Worker]). In 1929 it was reorganised into the Young Bilshovyk, and published literature for both children and young people. After the decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks “On the publication of children's literature” (1933), a separate publishing house Dytvydav was created on the basis of its children's editions. This new publishing house specialised in literature for children, and Young Bilshovyk focused on literature for young people.<sup>2</sup> Thus, children's book publishing, which was previously carried out by more than 10 publishing houses of various forms of ownership,

<sup>1</sup> See the catalogue of the National Library of Ukraine for Children in Kyiv. <<https://chl.kiev.ua/Catalog.aspx>>.

<sup>2</sup> See more in Molotkina (2019).

was centralised. Between 1941 and 1945 Dytvydav and Young Bilshovyk ceased to exist. In 1945, the Molod' (Молодь [Young]) publishing house was established and it continued the activities of the previous two publishers until 1956, when the publishing house focusing on children's literature separated.

This objective requires an interdisciplinary approach and blends discursive and content analysis elements. Children's literature is examined in the context of the socio-historical situation of the time in order to demonstrate how certain ideas were generated and sustained through the production, distribution, and reception of texts. Special attention is paid to the promotion of ideology, limitations of national issues, the dominance of Russian influence, and the shaping of gender roles in Soviet children's literature.

This methodological strategy involves the publication description, especially the headings and keywords. This was first done electronically, and then the composition of each group was manually individually verified. The groups were combined into thematic fields. The detected recurring concepts were considered as proposed to young readers in the context of the children's contemporary reality and were of particular research interest because they demonstrate the worldview that was being formed and supported by the Soviet children's books of this period. Despite the fact that it does not deal with the artistic or ethical-didactic qualities of the text to which the attention of Ukrainian researchers is most often drawn, for example in works by Serhiy Ivanyuk (1990), Raisa Movchan (2011), and Uliana Fedoriv (2016), such methodology allows us to avoid the selectivity of the narratives and to look at the literature that was offered as a certain template against which individual texts or creative practices can be compared.

## **New trends in Soviet times**

The findings of the analysis of our corpus are presented with respect to these specific categories: represented authors, represented genres and types of texts, typical settings, the ideology inscribed in the analysed texts, indicators of geopolitical references and source cultures of translated texts, historical personages in focus, fictional characters and depictions of children's lives, and, finally, gender issues.

### ***Represented authors***

The presentation of the results begins with the distribution of authors. There are 342 authors altogether in the corpus (anthologies and compilations were not taken into account), among whom 311 are men and 31 are women (only 9%). At least 152 authors are foreign (45%), although this figure may be slightly higher, because not all books indicate whether the work is original or translated, and there is no available information about some authors today. Of the authors, 98 are native speakers of the Russian language (28% of all and 64% of foreign authors). Most of the writers are of that time, and classic literature is represented by only 48 authors (14%), 10 of whom are Ukrainian (i.e. 3% of all). For foreign literature, Hans Christian Andersen, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jules Verne, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Victor Hugo, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Adam Mickiewicz,

Rudolf Erich Raspe, Miguel de Cervantes, Walter Scott, Mark Twain, Friedrich Schiller, and Sholem Aleichem, among others, were offered. Russian pre-revolutionary literature was represented by Vsevolod Garshin, Vladimir Korolenko, Pyotr Yershov, Dmitry Mamin-Sibiriyak, Nikolay Nekrasov, Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Yury Tynyanov, Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, and Anton Chekhov. As for the Ukrainian classics, books by Leonid Hlibov, Mykola Kostomarov, Ivan Kotliarevsky, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, Panas Myrny, Ivan Nechuy-Levytsky, Arkhyy Teslenko, Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko and Taras Shevchenko were offered.

The most frequently represented authors in the corpus are Natalya Zabyla (40 titles), Oles Donchenko (27), Mykola Trublaini (26), Oksana Ivanenko (22), Volodymyr Vladko (12), Leo Tolstoy (11), Yaroslav Hrymailo (11), Taras Shevchenko (10), Ivan Franko (10) and Maria Pryhara (10). Thus, we observe: 1) there is almost an equal representation of Ukrainian and foreign literature, in which Russian literature prevails; 2) the list of represented authors is updated with contemporary authors; 3) there is a neglect of Ukrainian classical authors.

### ***Genres and types of texts***

Regarding the genres and types of literature, the majority of publications in the corpus are prose; poetic texts account for 211 titles (26%), and dramatic ones for 32 (3.9%). Eighteen editions are specified as picturebooks, craft books, or scrapbooks (2%). Works of fiction dominate the prose editions, while there are 120 texts of non-fiction (essays, biographies, instructional editions), which is almost 22% of all prose. Popular scientific publications are represented mainly by translated essays on chemistry, physics, geography, biology and their researchers. The lack of a popular presentation of economics is surprising, since Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were experts in this field and otherwise very popular authors. However, among the knowledge that Soviet children needed, information about finance, taxes, the budget, and so forth, was missing.<sup>3</sup> But even more surprising is the production of texts of an official-directive nature for children, such as the following publications of the 1930s, which appeared in Ukrainian: *The Victorious Way: An Abridged Report by Comrades Kaganovich, Yakovlev, Kosarev, and Comrade Stalin's Speech at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers: For Older Children* (published in Kharkiv and Kyiv in 1933); *G.I. Petrovsky's Conversation with the Delegates of the Pioneers of Kyiv on October 22, 1934* (published in Kharkiv and Odessa in 1935), *Strengthen Collective Farms: For Older Children about the Organizational and Economic Strengthening of Collective Farms* (published in Kharkiv and Odessa in 1933).

It does not seem possible to consider all prose genres, but let us pay attention to a special one: the fairy tale. There are 90 (11%) in the corpus (including prose, poetry and drama). In the first decade of Bolshevik rule, the fairy tale was a marginalised genre.

<sup>3</sup> The Bolsheviks radically changed the economic system but restricted the information even of the basic processes that Soviet children would be expected to understand, as they did with ideological ones. But I think they intentionally did not explain the functioning of the economy in order to hide exploitation.

The Soviet ideologists of the new upbringing (paedologists<sup>4</sup>) argued that children's literature should have "class-oriented content", and the fairy tale, like folklore in general, reflected the ideology of the former ruling classes (putting the spotlight on princes, princesses, kings and palaces).<sup>5</sup> In addition, it contained fantasy, which was, in their opinion, harmful to children, because it interfered with the process of promoting the materialistic worldview in education. The publication of fairy tales was considered to be so dangerous that it could lead to the closing of a publishing house (as happened in 1929 to the publishers Kosmos (Космос [Cosmos]), and Slovo (Слово [Word]), due to the publication of translations of the original versions of fairy tales by H.C. Andersen, Wilhelm Hauff, etc.). In 1934, during the First Soviet Writers' Congress, Maxim Gorky defended fairy tales and was supported by Samuil Marshak, and in 1936, paedology was rejected by a decree of the Central Committee. Therefore, the number of fairy tales in the corpus is considered with respect to the years of publication. Only five of them appeared before 1934, another 16 were published in 1934–1935, and 69 tales appeared in 1936–1941. The leading authors whose tales were published in the latter period are Oksana Ivanenko (11 fairy tales) and Natalya Zabila (7 fairy tales). Publishers preferred original fairy tales because of the criticism of traditional fairy tales as carriers of "wrong" pre-revolutionary values; indeed, there are only 16 folk fairy tales in the corpus.

### *The settings*

Dominant settings present an important aspect of the worldview that was formed by Soviet children's literature. We focus in particular on the distinction between rural settings, closely related to the theme of nature, and urban settings, and also how these are presented. The traditional settings of a large portion of children's literature are images of natural places and thus the literary worlds created both in the genre of fairy tales about animals and in popular science essays used to be dominated by the outside spaces of the countryside. The corpus includes 144 titles which incorporate the keywords "nature", "animals", "plants", and/or "birds", which is 18% of all the publications. There are also 59 translated publications (43 from Russian). Distribution by genre has been established as follows: fairy tales – 45, adventure and animalistic prose – 42, poetry – 34, popular science – 15, picturebooks – 6, plays – 2.

This group of publications represents the basis of the Soviet children's literature counter-discourse. As will be demonstrated below, an important topic of children's literature of those times was urbanisation and technical modernisation, which caused the transformation of the previously dominant countryside and rural settings. At the same time, nature-loving authors (Russians Vitaly Bianki, Mikhail Prishvin, and, in Ukrainian literature, Aleksandr Kopylenko and Oksana Ivanenko) wrote works humanising the natural world, raising a careful and empathic attitude to nature in children. However, such works were also subjected to harsh criticism.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1920s "paedology" was the name of the Soviet scientific approach to child development, which combines medicine, biology, psychology, and pedagogy.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the functioning of fairy tales in Soviet children's literature, see Balina 2005.

The theme of village, representative of rural settings, which is related to nature, underwent significant ideological influences. The early twenty years of the Soviet power rule were marked by the rapid urbanisation of rustic Ukraine. According to the 1926 census, the rural population of Ukraine was almost 80%, but in 1939 the number of people living in cities reached 38.5%, that is, it almost doubled, and in industrial regions the urban population surpassed the rural population. The corpus demonstrates the marginalisation of rural areas, which is represented by only 63 titles (7.7%). This category includes works by Ukrainian classic authors: Kotliarevsky, Shevchenko, Kotsiubynsky, Teslenko (9 editions in total) as well as fairy tales of the “peoples of the USSR”. This also covers a group of works about Soviet transformations: collective farms are talked about in 18 texts, and the same number of titles are about “collectivisation” (some texts fall into several groups), another 12 texts demonise well-to-do landowners who opposed the socialisation of the land and means of production (the keyword “*kurkuls*” (as the owners were called in Soviet times) is detected in the bibliographic cards of such works). In total, this subgroup consists of 30 titles, that is, almost half of the whole group of titles which indicate Soviet transformations. Therefore, regarding ideological manipulation in the representation of the village, it can be concluded that it becomes a battlefield for Soviet transformations, but, in fact, the battle was being waged against Ukrainian national ideas and traditions. Conventionally, the rural world of Ukraine in children's literature was rapidly urbanising.

The theme of urbanisation is represented by 122 titles (15%). The keywords of the topic are “industrialisation” (11 titles), “metallurgy” (7), “plant” (12), “electricity” (7), “energy” (14), “mining” (12), “machinery” (11), “industry” and “production” (11), “construction” (9), “communications” (8), “transport” and “infrastructure” (25). These titles include both works of fiction and popular science publications which explain how certain processes take place. Examples of such publications include these titles (in Ukrainian): *Journey Through the Electric Lamp* by Mykola (Nikolai) Bulatov and Pavlo (Pavel) Lopatin,<sup>6</sup> published in 1936, and *300,000 Kilometres per Second: (A Young Radio Technician)* by Efrem Weinstein, published in 1934. This theme has much in common with literature for adults of the time, imbued with admiration for the success of industrialisation and the portrayal of industrial giants. We also find texts about the largest constructions of that time, including books for children, such as: *Traktorobud – KhTP* (by Natalia Zabyla, 1933), *Magnetobud* (by Leonid Zymny, 1932), *Dniprelstan* (by Oles Hromiv, 1932), *Dniprobud* (by Yaroslav Hrymailo, 1932), *Turksib* (by Vasyl Mysyk, 1933).<sup>7</sup> Right beside them there are the fantasy works by Volodymyr Vladko and Maria Romanivska, which also belong to the “urbanisation” group of titles. Concentration on the present time with a focus on the future is what vividly characterises this group of

<sup>6</sup> The spelling of the names follows the way they are given in the books themselves, on the covers or on the title page. However, the original Russian spelling is given in parenthesis in the case of translated books.

<sup>7</sup> These are the names of great buildings such as hydroelectric power plants, railway, factories.

texts, but there are very few publications on the history of industry and technology (such as *From Fire to Electricity* by Andriy (Andrei) Korotkov, 1931, and *Home-made Steam Engines* by Alexander Abramov, which appeared in 1936). Industrialisation, which children were to embrace in the future, was shown as the pride of the Soviet Union. The focus on Soviet achievements also influenced the fact that out of 122 texts, only 25 texts were translated, with 22 of these translated from Russian. As for foreign literature, children were invited to read the following books: *The Secret of the Strike: A Story about American Guys* by E. Key, D. Parker, M. Gold (USA), 1936; *Uncle Tom's Mine* by Bernhard Kellermann (Germany), 1930; *Textile Worker Koji* by Vakidzo Hosoi (Japan), 1932.

### **Ideology**

The group of texts in which a certain ideology is overt includes 140 editions (17% of the whole corpus). Of course, both the Soviet transformations in the countryside and the theme of industrialisation also have the imprint of ideology, but the sub-topics considered in this section are in particular those represented by the following key words: “revolution” (22 titles), “civil war” (68 titles (!)), “Pioneers” (33), “Little Octobrists” (8), “Soviet holidays” (12), “Lenin” (19 titles), and “Stalin” (18). The subgroup focused on “revolution” covers not only the Bolshevik coup in 1917 but also the protest movements of 1905. The “civil war” subgroup is remarkable because the authors represented by several editions in this group of titles are those who had survived the repressions and later became famous Soviet writers: Andriy Holovko, Petro Panch, Oles Donchenko, Arkady Gaidar, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Leonid Panteleyev, and Dmitry Furmanov. The use of the condemned genre of fairy tales, such as in Gaidar’s *A Tale about a War Secret, about the Boy Nipper-Pipper, and his Word of Honour*,<sup>8</sup> published in 1934, and in *Songs and Tales about Lenin and Stalin*, published in 1939, used as an effective channel for influencing the reader, is interesting as a special “way of presenting the young child with a Soviet version of twentieth-century ‘history’ in a form which is immediately appealing to him because of his familiarity with the folk-tales of the past” (O’Dell 1978: 16). Catriona Kelly, who paid special attention to the cult of personality in Soviet culture, wrote that the cult of Stalin was stronger, while Lenin’s was “relatively marginal” (2007: 106), but the analysed text corpus does not confirm this.

Ideology is also associated with the military theme, a group of texts comprising 43 titles. The subgroup “army” contains 12 editions, and the same number of books appear in the subgroup with the keyword “military”, as well as subgroups with the keywords “aviation” and “aircraft”. There are four texts with the keyword “fleet” and nine texts concerning “border protection”.

<sup>8</sup> I use the title of the Soviet translation here. It was published in 1975 and 1980. Other translations are “Tale of the Military Secret, Malchish-Kibalchish and his Solemn Word” and “Tale of a Military Secret, of Boy-Kibalchish and His Word”.

### ***Geopolitical references and source cultures of translated texts***

Next, I consider geography in the coordinates within which Soviet literature proposes children to think. The analysis reveals both quite obvious issues and less expected ones. It is not surprising that most books are marked by the geographical heading "Ukraine" (there are 491, that is, 60% in the corpus); the second most frequent is the heading "Russia" (243, that is, 30%); the rest of the world accounts for about 10% of the titles in our corpus. This deforms the impression of the realistic situation in the world and the understanding of the role of Russia in the world in general and in the Soviet Union in particular. Other Soviet republics have been given remarkably limited attention (only six republics appear in 1926 and 11 in 1939): four editions deal with the Transcaucasian Socialist Federal Republics, which covered Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, two editions are about Kazakhstan and two editions about Kyrgyzstan (which, until 1936, were the territories of different autonomous republics within Russia) and one title is about Tajikistan (a republic of the USSR from 1929).

Other countries also appear. There are 22 editions about Germany, nine of them being works by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller and Rudolf Erich Raspe, and another eight are books about fascism and the labour movement: for example, *Small Children Are in Great Need: Images from Life in Nazi Germany* by Kurt Hauser, published in Ukrainian in 1937; *Letters from Berlin: From the Life and Struggle of Working Children in Germany* by Erich Eger, which appeared in 1933 in translation into Ukrainian; and, in the same year, when huge masses of Ukrainian peasants were starving to death,<sup>9</sup> a book was published under the title *Their Children Are Starving... Children are Dying...: Based on the Materials of the Workers International Relief in Berlin, Germany*. The image of the hard life of Western workers, in particular German ones, was supposed to foster international solidarity, while at the same time provoking the desire to "liberate" oppressed workers.

The set of books related to Britain comprises classic works by Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, Jonathan Swift, Sir Walter Scott, Herbert Wells, and a biographical edition about James Watt (a total of 17 editions), but none that would reflect current events in the United Kingdom. France (15 editions) is also mainly represented by classics: Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, Alphonse Daudet, Prosper Mérimée, Guy de Maupassant, J.-H. Rosny aîné (Rosny the Elder), but there are also works by Ukrainian and Russian authors in this group about France-related themes (four titles): Mykhailo Gershenzon, Donchenko, Olha Kuznetsova (about Louis Pasteur), Dmytro Shavykin (*The Visibility of the Paris Commune*).

There are 10 books related to America, mainly works about nature by James Oliver Curwood, Jack London, Jordan L. Mott, H. (Dorothy) Canfield, and some of the most

<sup>9</sup> The Terror-Famine was a famine in Soviet Ukraine in 1932–1933 that killed from 3.5 to 5 million Ukrainians. Some historians conclude that the famine was planned and exacerbated by Stalin to eliminate the Ukrainian independence movement. Others suggest that the famine arose because of rapid Soviet industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture. The harsh grain requisitions were accompanied by repressive policies including, but not limited to, blacklisting, the internal passport system, and prosecution for gleaning leftover grain from the fields.



popular novels by Mark Twain and Beecher Stowe. There are also two editions about the communist movement in the United States in this subgroup.

Of the nearest neighbours, Ukrainian children were informed about Poland, as five publications are devoted to this country, two of which are written by Polish authors (Adam Mickiewicz and Marion<sup>10</sup>). The main theme is social injustice. It is characteristic that Marion's *Revolutionary Drawings* was first published for an adult audience in the Ukrainian *Chervony Shliakh* (Red Way) magazine in 1925, and in 1930 it was published for children. Another edition is about Romania, more precisely about the communist movement in the country.

The analysis of our corpus confirms O'Dell's assertion that foreign countries are normally shown as a sphere of "violence and injustice" (O'Dell 1978: 20). In addition, we can conclude that Soviet children's literature was forming an active interest in the political life of Germany and Poland, whose labour movement was to be encouraged. The publications showed the plans of the Soviet leadership for future expansion.

Soviet interests are also clearly demonstrated in the group of texts geographically oriented towards the Far East, which embraces 20 editions and covers works about China, Mongolia, Japan and the Russian part of the region. At the same time, these publications include presentations of both regional geographic research, such as Volodymyr (Vladimir) Arsenyev's *Dersu Uzala*, and straightforward ideological intentions, such as *I Know Who My Enemy Is: From the Life and Struggle of China's Working Children* by Fang-Wang, 1933, and *Karafuto* by Donchenko, 1940, in which Japanese imperialists try to find out state secrets from a Soviet scientist. Another area of Soviet interest is the North, which is described in 21 editions. Along with texts about the development of the North by other peoples, an important group of titles consists of works about Soviet achievements, such as the rescue of members of an expedition upon the crash of the airship Italia by the icebreaker Krassin,<sup>11</sup> Papanin's expedition,<sup>12</sup> and the pioneer expedition to the Arctic Circle.<sup>13</sup> The leading author in this group is Mykola Trublaini, the author of 10 and the editor of two more works. Yet, such large (and exotic) regions as Africa and Australia are mentioned only four times.

### **Personages**

The personages about whom children could read in our corpus are those who create a certain model for self-actualisation and who may affect the identity formation

<sup>10</sup> "Marion" seems to be a pseudonym. It has been impossible to find any specific information about this author.

<sup>11</sup> Krassin, the icebreaker, saved General Umberto Nobile and his surviving crew when their airship Italia crashed on the ice upon returning from the North Pole in 1928.

<sup>12</sup> Ivan Papanin took part in several polar expeditions in the 1930s. The most famous was that in 1937–1938. He was a leader of a team of researchers, who spent 234 days on the world's first Soviet-manned drifting station in the Arctic Ocean.

<sup>13</sup> The Ukrainian writer Mykola Trublaini, who wrote extensively about the Arctic, established the Arctic Young Research Club in Kharkiv. He organised the first USSR research trip to the Arctic Circle for the club members.

of the younger generation. Scientists of various fields of knowledge from Antiquity to the current times make up the largest group among the featured individuals (46 people). However, it should be noted that few of them are covered, so to speak, "monographically"; more often the focus is on people who studied a certain phenomenon in different countries. These scholars are mentioned only in 15 books in all, as some books cover several of them. Notably, the one person to whom the original text was dedicated was the Soviet botanist, geneticist and agronomist Nikolai Vavilov, who was later arrested by Soviet authorities and driven to exhaustion and death. Other representatives of Soviet science in the corpus are Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Ivan Pavlov, as well as three Arctic researchers: Yevgeny Fedorov, with one title devoted to him, and Mikhail Babushkin and Ivan Papanin with two titles each.

The second group consists of fewer names, only 21, but by the frequency of their appearance in the corpus, they easily dominate all the other names, because there are as many as 84 titles about them in all. This is a group of Soviet officials. In addition to Lenin and Stalin, mentioned above, children were told about Vasily Chapayev in nine titles, Kliment Voroshilov in seven, Mykola Shchors in five, Semyon Budyonny and Sergei Kirov in four each, Artem (Fyodor Sergeev), Valerian Kuibyshev and Pavel Postyshev in two each, and Iona Yakir, Amangeldy Imanov, and Semyon Rudnev in one publication each.

The pioneers and Komsomol members whose death became a symbol of the sacrifice for Bolshevik ideals are in a separate group: Pavlik Morozov appears in four editions, Ivan Mynaylenko in two, while Ida Krasnoshchokina and Tamara Malt are mentioned in one edition each. It is interesting that the cult of the 13-year-old boy Pavlik Morozov began to form earlier:<sup>14</sup> the first publication about him appeared in 1933, while the rest of the legends were published in 1938–1939 (although the related legendary figures died in 1919–20). Accordingly, children were offered the idea of sacrifice in the name of the state on the eve of World War II.

Maria Demchenko, the initiator of the collective farmers' movement for high yields of sugar beet, stands apart in this group. It is worth noting that there are very few women in the corpus (only six out of 94 people, that is, about 6%): in addition to trying to emulate Demchenko, Krasnoshchokina and Malt, girls were encouraged to be like the pilots Marina Raskova, Valentina Grizodubova and Polina Osypenko<sup>15</sup> (featured in the book *Brave Daughters of the Motherland*, published in 1939). There are no women in the other groups except for Catherine II, i.e. the Empress of Russia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>14</sup> Pavlik Morozov was the hero of a Soviet legend, according to which he denounced his father to the authorities and was killed by his family. This story became an extreme example of the widespread Soviet idea of demolishing the past for the sake of a Soviet transformation, as well as the idea of the formation of a community not on the principle of blood, but on an ideological principle. Pavlik Morozov became a hero of books, songs, plays and even opera. His cult had a significant impact on the moral norms of Soviet children, who were encouraged to inform on their parents.

<sup>15</sup> I use the spelling Osypenko instead of Osipenko as she was Ukrainian: she was born in Ukraine in a Ukrainian family, lived most of her life in Ukraine and, in general, Osypenko is a Ukrainian surname. Grizodubova was born in Ukrainian Kharkiv, but she had a Russian surname.

Although the model presented to girls of female pilots that set the female world aviation record of distant flight looks progressive, the idealisation of this model, as well as others, is suppressive in the absence of other perspectives.

The remaining personalities belong to two groups: historical figures and writers. The first group predominantly brings characters from classic historical works: the Empress Catherine II, the Emperor of Russia (1682–1725) Peter I, and the 13<sup>th</sup> century King of France Louis XI. Still, we have detected a certain inclination of Soviet publishers toward works about the leaders of popular uprisings, so children were learning about Salawat Yulayev,<sup>16</sup> Yemelyan Pugachev,<sup>17</sup> Ustym Karmaliuk,<sup>18</sup> and Spartacus, a rebel against the Roman Republic and a gladiator in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. From Ukrainian history, the children were offered, in addition to Karmaliuk, the leaders of the Haidamaks:<sup>19</sup> Ivan Gonta and Maksym Zalizniak, and the Cossacks: Ivan Pidkova and Maksym Kryvonis. Ukrainian figures make up 30% of all historical persons, about the same distribution as the portion of Ukrainians we found in the group of texts about writers. Stories about Taras Shevchenko (2), Yury Fedkovych and Mykola Trublaini were offered in Ukrainian literature.

### ***Fictional characters and representations of children's lives***

Speaking about characters in children's books, our results can be related to the findings of previous studies by Oksana Fedotova and Katerina Clark. Fedotova notes that the main characters of children's books were supposed to be adults, because limiting the book content to children's lives and work only, according to the Central Council of Extracurricular Education, could lead to the "distortion of reality". As an exception, the problems of pioneer organisations and schools were allowed to be shown (Fedotova 2007: 96). It seems that the officials were not so much worried about the "distortions of reality" as about the limited possibilities of ideological politics in the world of childhood and the desirability of the child reader to identify with those characters who were actively engaged in developing the Bolshevik state.

Clark, analysing the Soviet novel as a ritual structure, perceives the myth of the large family in the formation of the character system, where political leaders (primarily Lenin and Stalin) assumed the roles of parents, and heroes (those who demonstrated outstanding professional results or loyalty to Bolshevik ideals) became sons. This metaphor, according to Clark, consolidated the hierarchical organisation of the state, and privileged the state as a large family against the conventional family unit (2002: 102–103). The corpus also demonstrates the emphasis placed on the advantages of this "big family": it has already been indicated that there is a significant amount of publications about the "father", but a group of publications promoting Soviet achievements in the conquest of mountains, in aviation, and the development of the Arctic also attracts

<sup>16</sup> Salawat Yulayev is a Bashkir national hero who participated in Pugachev's rebellion.

<sup>17</sup> Yemelyan Pugachev led a great popular insurrection in 1773–1775.

<sup>18</sup> Ustym Karmaliuk was the "Ukrainian Robin Hood" who fought against the Russian administration.

<sup>19</sup> Ukrainian Cossack paramilitary squads.

attention (for example, Mykhailo Pogrebetsky's *Khan-Tengri*, Iryna Stuchynska's (Irina Stuchinskaya's) *Wings of Soviets*, Ezra Vilensky's *Papanintsy* and others), and so do stories about victims in the name of the revolution.

Conversely, the "small family", a topic traditionally typical of children's literature, is presented to a very limited extent. Above all, these are the classic texts by Taras Shevchenko and Maxim Gorky, as well as Andrij Holovko's novel for adults *Mother*. It is also used for anti-religious propaganda (as in *Mother and Taras Are Both Against Religion* by Ivan Malovichko, published in 1931, and *Grandmother's Holy Spirit* by Ivan Vilka, in 1930) or for an anti-alcohol campaign (*Insects* by Alexander Kopylenko, in 1932).

The depictions of children's lives are also limited: the group of titles focusing on the key word "school" in the corpus is represented by 51 titles (covering not only the modern Soviet school, but also schools in past times and in other countries); focus on the "kindergarten" is represented by four books (here it is worth recalling that the group of titles about Pioneers includes 33 editions, and the group of editions about "little Octobrists" eight); another group of editions emphasising the idea of "toys", otherwise typical of young children's literature, consists of only 11 publications.

### ***Gender issues***

Finally, a word about gender in children's literature of the period under analysis: in the first decade of the Bolshevik rule, the 1920s, a number of legal documents were adopted to dismantle the patriarchal system: women received the right to economic, social and sexual self-determination. However, in the second decade, the 1930s, the legislation was revised and, in general, the standard of masculinity was formed as an ideal and a norm that women needed to be guided by.

There are 65 books in the corpus which include the keyword "boys" and 22 books with the keyword "girls". This labelling reflects the characters of these books, but there is an obvious difference in the gender roles that are offered to readers. Male characters are researchers, military heroes or rebels, workers, and inventors. Female characters are presented much less often, and as a rule in the role of victims of the old system, but those who represent modernity work in aviation: apart from *The Brave Daughters of the Motherland*, the corpus contains texts about parachutists (*Parachute* by Maria Pryhara, published in 1936, and *Overboard Aircraft* by Victor Kozulia, in 1935), factory workers (*Mothers in Factories* by Valentyn Bychko, in 1932), and those helping to transform villages. Texts with boy characters mostly include the following keywords: "adventure" (16 texts, that is, almost 25% of 66 titles), "civil war and intervention" (eight texts), "war", "machine gun", "commander", "troops", and/or "spy" (overall, they make up 21% of 66 titles), "school" (10 texts, 15%), "poverty" (nine texts, i.e. 14%). Texts with girl characters also include the keywords "civil war" (five texts, 23% of 22 titles) and "adventures" (four texts, 18%), but there are also the keywords "drawings" (four texts, 18%) and "cats" (three texts, 14%). So, on the one hand, we see a certain alignment of gender roles: both boys and girls are offered characters with an active life position

(adventurous super types, characteristic of adventure stories) and the struggle for Bolshevik ideals. However, the assimilation of the female gender role to the male role was not aimed at expanding women's opportunities, but rather at widening the range of women's labour in enterprises and in public campaigns (in addition to daily housework). In addition, the images of military women, women members of secret organisations as well as women workers were preparing them for participation in a future war or to become involved in industrial production for the needs of the country and the front.

## Conclusion

The analysis clearly demonstrates how ideology defined the worldview offered by children's literature in the first decades of the Bolshevik period in Ukraine as a member state of the USSR. The group of texts united under the concept of ideology, texts about Soviet realities (texts with keywords such as "collective farms", "collectivisation", "industrialisation", "metallurgy", "factory", and "mines"), and the group of military topics and texts about Soviet functionaries all together account for 46% of the analysed corpus. In other words, almost every second book published by the publishers Dytvydav and Molodyi Bilshovyk contained an emphasised ideological component. If we take into account that a part of the publishing repertoire consisted of classics and foreign editions, it can be concluded that an author's chances of publishing a book for children beyond the realm of the dominant ideology was low. The easiest way to do so was in the form of poems for little ones or various genre books about researchers (from popular science essays to science fiction). Against the background of the military topic, the emphasis on science looks attractive, but the fact that it is presented in terms of its ability to reclaim and modify nature and society reveals the instrumental approach employed. The spectrum of the sciences involved – physics, chemistry, biology, geography (but not economics or linguistics) – demonstrates the practical purpose of Soviet education: knowledge in these areas was expected to contribute to the growth of production and the development of the Soviet territory.

The analysis of our corpus clearly confirms Soviet society's rejection of national traditions even under the conditions of the policy of Ukrainisation in the territory of Ukraine. The corpus includes only 39 editions of Ukrainian classics, 10 works of national folklore, and one edition devoted to Ukrainian history with an emphasis on the Cossacks (Taras Shevchenko's works were considered classics), which makes up 6% of the corpus. The marginalisation of the national past also occurred by means of keeping things silent for the new generations. The low percentage of publications on Ukrainian history contributed to the denationalisation and formation of the identity of the "Soviet man" in place of the Ukrainian national identity.

This analysis also reveals a distinctive feature of the individual national corpora of children's literature, such as the Ukrainian one addressed here, which Western scholars have not covered sufficiently so far since they primarily focus on Russian Soviet material. The present study has detected the privileged place of Russia and its representatives

in comparison with the national republics in the USSR in the images of the worlds of children's literature during the Soviet era. Thus, domestic authors account for 55%, Russian authors account for 28%, and all other foreign authors total only 17% of the analysed corpus of children's literature publications in Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, Russian literature was represented not only by Soviet authors but also by classic ones, while the Ukrainian classics were considered archaic. The number of publications that deal with Russia is 30% of the whole corpus, while the rest of the world accounts for only about 10% of titles. All this creates a deformed impression of the global world and of the role of Russia in it. Besides, the remaining republics of the Soviet Union, apart from Russia and Ukraine, are represented by only 1% of publications in our corpus, which indicates that the role of Russia in the Soviet Union is also widely overstated in the inscribed messages to child readers of the time. The analysis of the geographic parameters of the world image created by Soviet children's publications shows their correlation with the interests of the important role of the USSR in the international arena and of the dominance of Russia within the state itself.

Military and industrial needs determined the representation of gender roles. The themes covered by the publications in our corpus correspond to boys' reading tastes, which were also imposed on girls. The acceptable gender role of a girl was guided by the role model of a boy. Characters with an active position in life were offered equally to boys and to girls, and the struggle for Bolshevik ideals was promoted. But boys were rather given the roles of heroes, investigators and scientists, and the girls were offered the roles of victims in the ideological struggle.

Generally speaking, our findings confirm a pragmatic and ideological approach to children by means of children's texts in the Soviet Union, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, and challenge the myth of a happy Soviet childhood.

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## Stvaranje društvene stvarnosti u režiji sovjetskih nakladnika dječje književnosti u Ukrajini 1920-ih i 1930-ih godina

Članak istražuje utjecaj državne ideologije na djecu, kako se ona nametala državnom kontrolom objavljivanja knjiga. Cilj je istraživanja pokazati osobitosti stvaranja (nove) društvene stvarnosti uz pomoć dječje književnosti u Ukrajini tijekom dvaju međuratnih desetljeća dvadesetoga stoljeća. Analiziraju se izdanja ukrajinskih specijaliziranih izdavačkih kuća Dityvdav [Dječja izdanja] i Molodyi Bilshovyk [Mladi Boljševik]. Analiza pokazuje da 46 % djela u korpusu sadrži sljedeće ključne riječi: evolucija, građanski rat, pioniri, mladi oktobristi, sovjetski praznici, Lenjin, Staljin, kolektivna seoska gospodarstva, kolektivizacija, industrijalizacija, metalurgija, tvornica, rudnici i slično. Drugim riječima, ta

djela sadrže naglašenu ideološku sastavnicu. Potvrđuje se i odbacivanje nacionalne tradicije i prije izdvojeno kao odrednica sovjetskoga društva, unatoč proklamiranoj ukrajinizaciji. Nadalje, uočava se jasna prevlast Rusije i njezinih predstavnika u usporedbi sa zastupljenošću ostalih republika u SSSR-u, kao i pojava ograničavanja ženskih rodni uloga u kontekstu konstruiranoga pogleda na svijet.

**Ključne riječi:** boljševizam, nakladništvo, ukrajinska dječja književnost, konstrukcija društvene stvarnosti, ideologija