

Doctoral Thesis Summary

„The Belarusization Episode“ in the Process of Formation of the Belarusian Nation

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The subject of this study is the phenomenon of the so-called Belarusization in the territory of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic in the 1920s. The Belarusization is a unique historical process, which was a local Belarusian equivalent of the policy sanctioned by the all-union communist government promoting national culture of the local nations (of the national languages and others) and of the policy of “indigenization” (*korenizace*), i. e. installment of ethnically “local” staff in the bureaus of the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union.

This study analyzes the reasoning standing behind the initiation of the Belarusization policy; the execution of this policy was supposed to strengthen the insecure stability of the newly established soviet government and soviet state, and this even at the price of a number of compromises (meaning de facto the support of a growing national movement) toward the respective republics and national intelligentsia, which played a most significant role in the Belarusian conditions. Hence the study pays major attention to the role and status of the Belarusian intelligentsia, who, even though for the most part they weren't in the Communist party, were nevertheless the main force advancing the Belarusization. This cooperation with the Belarusian national intelligentsia, offered to it by the Communist party itself, was a result of insufficiency in communist staff, who could have replaced this often social-democratic or non-party intelligentsia. This is the root of the long-term discrepancy in the stance of the communist elite toward this intelligentsia, and it is without a surprise, that it was finally solved by a complete annihilation of the top ranking members of this intelligentsia.

A large section of this work is devoted to an investigation of the process of the tedious implementation of Belarusization measures in the contemporary public school system and in the public administration; these measures mostly consisted of promoting the Belarusian language in school classwork and in office agenda and in introduction of homeland-studies.

Finally the study deals with the so-called indigenization, i. e. personal, cadre policy promoting ethnic Belarusians, or more generally representatives of the Belarusian culture into the chief positions in the administration.

Belarusization mostly had a superficial character in the administration and in most universities and colleges. Nevertheless it had offered a national identity, that didn't match the soviet model of cultural and identity development according to the motto “national in its form and socialistic in its content”. In the Belarusian case Belarusization grew over mere personal securing of the soviet power in the periphery, it surpassed the level of mere “retranslation of soviet politics into the border republics in a local language”, the support for Belarusian language led to an intense development of “being-Belarusian” as such. We find the most distinct manifestation of this development in the newly created Belarusian national identity, which emphasized peculiar Belarusian cultural, linguistic, ethnic and other individuality and an individual historical development of the nation, which had an affinity with Western European models and values, and which was independent from Russia. It is in the new contemporary history, geography and literature school-books, where we find this new Belarusian identity in its exceptionally pronounced and concentrated form.

The study also deals with the violent shut-down of the Belarusization politics, ushered by Stalin's “great break”, sharpened class-struggle and stern dismissal of any existing deviations from the severe Marxist-Leninist line. We can see that the whole Belarusization was such a deviation, a compromise; it was a hardly understandable suspension of the proletarian internationalism. This study thus aims at shedding light on this contrariety and to do so from the perspectives of the power-struggle, of the evolution of the political environment of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, from the ideological and generally cultural-historical and anthropological perspectives. The study presents a whole picture and conception of the role of the Belarusization within the wider process of formation of the Belarusian nation.