Marrism and Soviet Lexicography

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0. Introduction*

It is an honor indeed to be able to include this paper in a volume dedicated to the person who has influenced all my lexicographic and linguistic investigations—Ladislav Zgusta.

In the late 1920s, as the period of relative freedom that accompanied Lenin's New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) was ending and the repressions of the 1930s approached, a push began to re-establish all branches of Soviet science on a new, Marxist basis. In the West, the best-known example of this disastrous effort is in genetics. Trofim D. Lysenko (1898-1976), who was most influential from the 1940s until around Stalin's death (1953), claimed that heredity could be modified by the environment, and that environmentally-acquired characteristics could in their turn be inherited: the application of his theories led to unsuccessful results in Soviet agriculture (Brown *et al.*, eds. 1982: 270-71). The Marxist push had a stifling effect not only on the hard sciences in the Soviet Union, but on every academic discipline, including linguistics. Though the name Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr may be less familiar than that of Lysenko, the story of the former's influence on Soviet linguistics from 1928-50 is equally, if not more, dramatic than the story in genetics. When a power struggle between Lysenko's supporters and critics took place during 1948, Stalin remained in the shadows; during the linguistic discussions of May-August 1950, he emerged as the main protagonist. While the discussions in genetics were carried out among specialists, the linguistic discussions took place before the general public, on the pages of the newspaper *Pravda* (Alpatov, 1991: 169). Mikhail Gorbanevskii (1991a: 8) tells how the whole country paused to watch the spectacle in *Pravda* unfold, "from Pioneer to pensioner, from miner to doctor, from sales clerk to Party functionary, and from Secret Police official to peasant."

As fascinating as they are, the Stalinist linguistic discussions of 1950 only mark the end of a somber period in the history of Soviet linguistics, in which the fantastic, pseudo-Marxist theories

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of the charismatic Nikolai Marr reigned supreme. It is important to note at the outset that Marrism was more than just a linguistic theory, which might today be only a curiosity to a few linguists. Marr himself had a miniature "cult of personality" that did not compete with but merely reinforced Stalin's own "Cult"; at the height of Marr's popularity he was praised in the academic articles of all disciplines, including articles on ceramics among the mountain Tajiks; and he was a figure of such importance that the whole city of Leningrad mourned his death in 1934 (Alpatov, 1991: 94, 110). During his lifetime and afterwards, Marr managed to have an impact on practically every sphere of activity in linguistics. Though lexicographic work suffered less from Marrism than many other areas of linguistic endeavor, it nevertheless was affected, especially in Marr's home city of Leningrad. The purpose of this paper is to examine Marr's life and work, in order to understand how he influenced Soviet linguistics and in particular lexicography, as well as Soviet culture and society. In lexicography, the paper will focus on Marrism and the prehistory of the 17-volume *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian* (Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka), published from 1948-65.

1. Marr's Life and Work

Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr was born in January 1865 (new style; December 1864 in the Julian calendar) in Kutais (i.e. Kutaisi), Georgia, to a Scottish naturalist and his Georgian wife. His father, James, who designed gardens for a Georgian prince, died when his son was eight years old. Early in life Nikolai demonstrated an amazing talent for languages, and studied seven of them besides his native Georgian in the gymnasium in Kutais. In 1884, he entered the division of Oriental languages at St. Petersburg University. There he studied so many different languages that the stories of exactly how many vary; he apparently broke precedents at the University, and learned at least all the languages of the Near East and Caucasus. Lawrence Thomas (1957: 2) underlines that although Marr studied many languages, he never systematically studied linguistics, either at this point in his education or later. Oriental Studies in Russia at the time were directed toward the study of culture in the wide sense, and linguistics was not very developed within that field, so that for all his languages Marr never had a formal linguistics course (Alpatov, 1991: 11).

During 1894, Marr came into contact with professional linguists during a trip to Europe, but these meetings ended in misunderstanding, apparently on both sides (Thomas, 1957: 3-4). Marr was skeptical of the western linguists he met at an international Orientalist congress held in Strasbourg, due to their poor knowledge of the languages that he knew so well, and he became convinced that they had nothing to teach him (Alpatov, 1991: 13). It could not have occurred to Marr that the lack of knowledge of certain languages which the Indo-Europeanists displayed in no way proved that the comparative method itself was flawed, since, other than a knowledge of basic

concepts such as that of language family and protolanguage, Marr did not have enough understanding of the method to properly evaluate it. During this period, a remark about Marr is attributed to the French comparativist Antoine Meillet, who met him in Paris: it accuses Marr of having stupefying fantasies devoid of linguistic content ("des fantaisies stupéfiantes, il n'y a pas de linguistique dedans" qtd. in Thomas, 1957: 148, n. 11).

Because of the doubts of his own professors in Russia about his linguistic abilities, Marr promised in 1888 not to pursue linguistic work, and instead concentrated on archeology and other areas. After his doctoral dissertation was accepted in 1901, he was no longer bound by the promise, and began work on a monograph, published in 1908, which proposed a genetic relationship between Georgian and the Semitic languages. This work was based on ideas that Marr had expressed in a Georgian newspaper article already twenty years before. Relying on the Biblical names of Noah and his sons, Marr proposed that the Georgian language family, called "Japhetic", and the Hamitic and Semitic language families were branches of a larger "Noëtic" family tree. The monograph, which was full of dubious phonetic and morphological proofs that relied heavily on semantics, met with neither criticism nor praise at the time, since most European linguists were not familiar with the languages that Marr worked with, and therefore could not evaluate his results. In addition, due to the unsystematic nature of Marr's work, it was often difficult to determine what he was proposing at any given time (Alpatov, 1991: 16-17; Thomas, 1957: 2-11).

In the years that followed, Marr continued to develop his linguistic theories, as he worked tirelessly in other academic domains. There are several aspects to his theories, which although they developed in roughly chronological order, were not completely separate but intertwined. The first aspect, his Japhetic theory, began to emerge with his 1908 paper. Marr did not stop at postulating a relation between Georgian (Japhetic) and Semitic, but went on as time passed to include in the Japhetic family every single language that he studied (and often languages that he had not yet studied), always on the basis of minimal evidence along with a chaotic blend of phonetic, morphological and semantic "facts". His method involved the application of extremely flexible sound laws, which were apparently not restricted to a given time frame like the phonetic laws of the Indo-Europeanists, and which were rendered even more complex due to "language-mixing"; this mixing was extremely widespread and important in Marr's theory (Thomas, 1957: 20-21, 33, 41-3, 52, 57).

Thanks to strenuous, inexhaustible activity in the fields of archeology and philology more than in linguistics, Marr began to advance professionally. By 1912, he held the titles of Full Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Eastern Languages at St. Petersburg University, and Academician at the Imperial Academy of Sciences. In 1915, he was awarded the Uvarov Prize by the Archeological Society, the highest award granted in Russian archaeology. Honors of this sort would pile up throughout Marr's life.

When World War I, the Russian Revolution and subsequent Civil War interrupted his archaeological fieldwork, Marr turned from the research that had gained him wide respect to concentrate on linguistics, a field in which, as we have said, he had no formal training, despite his legendary language-learning skills. By 1920, Marr's Japhetic language family had moved far beyond its original area of the Caucasus, to include both Etruscan and Basque, among many other languages. As he continued to add languages to the Japhetic family, Marr founded the Institute of Japhetidological Investigations (Institut Iafetidologicheskikh Izyskanii) in 1921; the following year, the name was changed to the simpler Japhetic Institute (Iafeticheskii Institut). Initially, Marr sought to augment his new language family by adding only those languages that had not been hypothetically assigned to another family by comparative linguists. However, he soon began to see Japhetic elements in Indo-European languages as well as in languages already assumed to be part of other families (Alpatov, 1991: 17, 19, 23-8).

A turning point in Marr's theory came in 1923, when he presented a paper on Indo-European languages proposing that they also had Japhetic elements. Now, Marr rejected the concept of a proto-language as well as the comparative method associated with it, and denied the existence of the Indo-European language family (Alpatov, 1991: 31). Thus, his animosity toward western linguists which had been festering for thirty years began more and more to be reflected in his theories. This fit in well with the developing Soviet ideology that had such a strong interest in distinguishing "bourgeois" and "proletarian" science in all fields. (Later, with the advent of the Nazis, Soviet linguists and propagandists could label the proto-language theory a racist and fascist concept.) Marr rejected genetic development as irrelevant, and proposed that significant change in languages occurs in stages parallel to the stages of social and economic transformation. Instead of a genetic classification, languages were grouped according to the stage of class development they had attained; Marr assumed that the evolution from one stage to another would be a revolutionary leap, so that successive generations would cease even to understand each other (Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 47-8; Ivić 1965: 104; Leroy 1967: 118; L'Hermitte 1987: 15; Marcellesi *et al.* 1977: 9; Thomas 1957: 55, 117; Zvegintsev 1989: 15).

Although Thomas (1957: 37, 91) maintains that Marr's reception by other Soviet linguists was still "cool" at this time, and would remain so until about 1926-28,[1] Marr's activities continued at the same feverish pace. In 1925, he gained the official support of A. V. Lunacharskii, the first head of the People's Commissariat of Education (Narodnyi komissariat prosveshcheniia, or Narkompros), and his deputy M. N. Pokrovskii.[2] The importance of such official support should not be underestimated, especially given the increasingly regulative and repressive atmosphere of

1 L'Hermitte (1987: 18-19) goes even further and maintains that Marr was opposed and ignored in Russia as late as 1928.

2 Pokrovskii wrote the following about Marr in 1928, in the newspaper *Izvestiia:* "If Engels were still living among us, every student would be studying Marr's theory, because it would have entered the ironclad inventory of a Marxist understanding of the history of human culture" (qtd. in Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 45).

the Soviet Union at that time (as exemplified by the initiation in 1929 of the first Five-Year Plan). However, equally important to Marr's success was the intense level of professional activity that he maintained, which allowed him to gain and then stay in the official spotlight. In addition, in spite of the skeptical attitude that many linguists continued to have toward his theories, it was hard to refute Marr completely, since no one knew all the languages of his analyses. Due to Marr's impressive achievements in other fields, he "convinced" many scholars who were not directly involved in linguistic work and who were therefore incapable of fully evaluating him (Alpatov, 1991: 30, 54-5). Besides their support, he continued to receive support from high places; eventually he would be supported from the Highest Place of all, as we shall see.

From 1923-31, Marr continued to collect academic and professional honors. He held, among numerous other high positions, that of director of the Leningrad Public Library (1924-30), and director of the Japhetic Institute he had established, which was renamed the Institute of Language and Thinking (Institut Iazyka i Myshleniia) in 1931.[3] During this time he was involved in the publication of bilingual dictionaries, the creation of new textbooks, the development of language-teaching methods, the literacy campaign in the Caucasus and elsewhere, and the creation of new alphabets for the unwritten languages of the U.S.S.R. He used every occasion to maintain that good results could be achieved in all of the above areas of endeavor if his linguistic theories were used; this is why, when his theories were finally rejected by Stalin in 1950, almost all spheres of Soviet linguistic activity had to be overhauled (Alpatov, 1991: 198-9; Thomas, 1957: 87-8).

As we have seen, Marr moved from his initial hypothesis of a Japhetic language family to the rejection of the Indo-European family and the concept of a proto-language. The third aspect of Marr's theories is his "paleontological analysis" of language into its most primitive and archaic linguistic elements. From an original postulation of twelve primordial elements, Marr worked his way down, during 1925 to mid-1926, to only four final elements, *sal*, *ber*, *yon*, and *rosh*. These elements, Marr claimed, were the basis of all the words of all the languages of the world: all existing words could be reduced to one of them (Thomas, 1957: 62-3). Associated with the 4-element analysis is the theory of the origin of human language, or the New Teaching on Language ("novoe uchenie o iazyke"). This theory can be called a sublime coincidence, since Marr proposed that there were numerous languages[4] (rather than a single protolanguage) from the very beginnings of human speech, all with the same four basic elements which had originated in non-meaningful primal cries. Although the first prehistoric languages eventually became the modern languages

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3 As Zgusta (1991) aptly points out, 'language and thinking' is a better translation of the Russian *iazyk i myshlenie* than is the more static 'language and thought'. The new name for the Japhetic Institute is tied to the stadialist aspect of Marr's theory. It was assumed that both language and thinking (thought processes) would be transformed by the transformation of the class society.

4 Leroy (1967: 118) and Ivić (1965: 102-5) are incorrect in stating that Marr's theory was monogenetic. Thomas (1957: 81-3) notes that from an original view that all languages had a common origin, Marr had moved by 1923 to his view that languages, though they were "related" in their stages of development and in that they all contained the same four elements, had developed independently.

through mixing, they would meld with time into a single future language, at a certain stage of class development. Marr used the metaphor of a pyramid to explain his theory: from a wide multilingual base, the languages of the world will eventually converge with the final social and economic transformations of class societies. Marr's pyramid is opposed to the upside-down pyramid of the comparative method, which claims that one can reconstruct a single proto-language from a base of divergent genetically-related languages (Thomas, 1957: 59, 82, 109).

It must be emphasized that the Marxist component of Marr's theory, which began to manifest itself toward the end of the 1920s, is an afterthought. Marr exploited superficial similarities in his own and Marxist thought, and began to emphasize them in the 1930s, at a time when life was becoming more dangerous for everyone in the Soviet Union. In 1924, Marr could still be flippant: "[if] Japhetic linguistics . . . has theses which affirm Marxist theory . . . then all the better for it and all the worse for its opponents" (qtd. in Thomas, 1957: 91). And as late as 1927, he would tell the scholar Unbegaun in Paris: "Marxists consider my work Marxist—all the better for Marxism" (qtd. in Alpatov, 1991: 68). Scholars (Alpatov, 1991: 68; Thomas, 1957: 91) generally agree that Marr actually began to read the Marxist classics only around 1928, when he was already over 60 years old. This is significant, because it shows that Marxism was not responsible for the nature of Marr's linguistic theories—on the contrary, the theories tended toward the fantastic from the very beginning, and the Marxist veneer helped Marr to keep them in official favor. For example, Vladimir Alpatov (1991: 17) notes that the idea of the class nature of language was first proposed by Marr in 1892, in connection with his work on Armenian dialects. Though Marxism and the Soviet ideology were not responsible for Marr's theories, they did provide the perfect environment for the complete triumph of Marrism for more than 25 years.

It is ironic that the unfortunate Evgenii D. Polivanov, a Marxist with a real knowledge of the "classic" texts, got into much more trouble than did the ideologically ignorant Marr. A polyglot to rival Marr himself as well as a talented linguist (he had been a student of Baudouin de Courtenay), Polivanov took a stand against the linguistic content of Marr's theories in a meeting of the subsection of Materialist Linguistics of the Communist Academy, Moscow in early 1929. The end result of this discussion was a sharp change in Polivanov's professional and personal situation. After being forced to leave Moscow for Central Asia in fall 1929, he was arrested in Frunze (now Bishkek, Kyrgystan) and sent to Lubianka in 1937. He was shot in the following year under the pretext of being a spy (Alpatov, 1991: 87-93; Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 61-2, 64-5, 72, 90; L'Hermitte, 1987: 22-4; cf. also Gentry, 1977 and Gorbanevskii, 1991b). Marr, on the other hand, had the good fortune to die of natural causes in 1934, long before his ideas could have created difficulties for him.

The outcome of the Polivanov discussion was a victory for Marr's ideas. The New Teaching on Language was now the officially-sanctioned linguistic theory, and the working conditions for those who did not support it became intolerable. At the end of the N.E.P. era, similar conditions

prevailed in many of the other Soviet sciences as well. In 1930, the 16th Congress of the Communist Party was held, marking the beginning of the Cult of Personality of Stalin. Stalin echoed Marr's ideas on language and national culture in his speech, which was immediately followed by the appearance of Marr himself. A possibly legendary story relates that Marr delivered parts of his speech in Georgian, as if speaking directly to the Leader. The following year, Marr became a Communist Party member, without having to undergo the usual waiting period that accompanied the honor in those days; two years later, in 1933, he received the Order of Lenin. Such triumph, however, did not protect Marr from the fear of arrest shared by all during the Stalin Terror: it is said that L. P. Iakubinskii, a linguist who rang Marr's doorbell during these dark years entered the apartment to find him hiding under the bed (Alpatov, 1991: 93, 107; Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 43-4).

After the Polivanov discussion of 1929, there was one last attempt to dispute the New Teaching on Language, this time from a Marxist rather than linguistic point of view. Members of the Moscow group Iazykofront (or, Iazykfront) staged their own discussion in 1930. Though they approved of Marr's antagonistic attitude toward Indo-European and western, bourgeois linguistics, they disagreed with his emphasis on the prehistory of language and the four-element analysis, and charged that the relationship between language change and economic change was too direct in Marr's theory. In short, they concluded that Japhetic linguistics was really a pseudo-Marxist linguistics. Initially, the fate of the Iazykofront group was better than that of Polivanov: the discussion in Moscow ended inconclusively, and they were able to set up their own institute within the People's Commissariat of Education in 1931. Though the group continued its battle with Marr's New Teaching on Language, it also devoted its time to "'witch hunts' within its own walls" (Alpatov, 1991: 98). However, after Marrists went on the counter-attack, the Iazykofront group was finally forced to disband in 1932. Their institute closed in 1933, leaving Marr with no opposition whatsoever. That, however, did not slow the Marrists in their efforts to discredit every scholar who dared to show the slightest independence (Alpatov, 1991: 97-107; Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 67).

This pernicious atmosphere existed not only in Moscow and Leningrad, but spread throughout the Soviet republics, impeding everywhere normal linguistic work. Both the situation in linguistics and the situation in the country as a whole caused individual linguists to lose their positions, to be arrested, exiled, imprisoned, or killed. In early 1934, the first group of linguists was arrested, mostly in Moscow, in the so-called "affair of the Slavists"; among them was Viktor V. Vinogradov, who suffered in the years that followed through various demotions, exiles and other humiliations (Alpatov, 1991: 109; Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 87). Although Marr died on December 20th of the same year, this would not mark the end of the reign of his theories or of the Institute of Language and Thinking in Leningrad, which now came under the control of Ivan I. Meshchaninov, his closest colleague since 1917. From 1935-47, Meshchaninov was able to usher

in a period of calm[5] compared to what had preceded, so that linguistic work could continue in a more or less normal way—as long as some vague lip service was paid to Marr's ideas, or as long as linguists hid from danger behind "the shield" of Marr's name (Alpatov, 1991: 114-16). During this interim period, there was even a partial mending of fences with the comparative method, so that Obnorskii (1944) could state:

> The pre-revolutionary Indo-European school of linguistics, during the period of its 100-year existence, has huge uncontroversial achievements. . . . If we cast aside Marr's excessive passion in the war with the Indo-European school as such . . . , if we admit that several of Academician Marr's initial ideas are in themselves working proposals, hypotheses, then many other positions for which Marr fought so heatedly can be considered completely correct, all the more so that some individual positions of this kind were advanced earlier, though not in as harsh a form as they had in Marr.

This calm was only the eye of the hurricane. After the end of the Second World War, the atmosphere in the Soviet Union deteriorated generally, as the "war against cosmopolitanism" (i.e., against Jews, western ideas, lack of orthodoxy in general, etc.) began inside the country, and the Cold War outside. Once again, the situation in linguistics became extremely tense, as even some linguists working in the Institute of Language and Thinking were accused of having moved away from Marr's thought. One of the most vehement in his denunciations of others was a former graduate student of Marr's, Fedot P. Filin. Already in 1932 Filin had distinguished himself for the viciousness of his attacks, and now he even accused Meshchaninov, the head of Marr's Institute, of being "out of step" in his thinking (Alpatov, 1991: 102; Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 67-9; L'Hermitte, 1987: 60-62). It was at this point that Stalin, for reasons that may never be fully known, decided to intervene.[6] The newspaper *Pravda*, the central organ of the Communist Party, announced in May 1950 that it would publish a discussion on the situation in linguistics; articles began to appear by scholars who supported Marr's views, and by those who took exception to his theories.[7] The first article, opposing Marr, was written by the Georgian scholar Arnol'd S. Chikobava and appeared on May 9; Meshchaninov responded in support of Marr as the discussion continued. Also against Marr were Vinogradov and his former student Boris A. Serebrennikov; Filin wrote in favor of Marr as did Nikolai S. Chemodanov. On June 20, Stalin's own article[8] appeared in

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5 Many have commented on the reasonableness of Meshchaninov's behavior in this difficult era. L'Hermitte (1987: 41, 49-50) notes the absence of personal attacks in his writing, and an openness toward new research.

6 Speculations as to why Stalin intervened have been numerous, and sometimes far-fetched. The *New York Times* (21 June 1950) guessed that post-war resistance to Russification in non-Russian areas of the USSR was the cause, though this opinion was later retracted (25 June 1950). A plausible account in Zvegintsev (1989: 18) is based on the author's conversations with A. S. Chikobava, who died in 1985. After receiving a number of letters interceding on behalf of a lexicographer who had been repressed, Stalin called in Chikobava for consultation. The latter's comments on the state of affairs in linguistics led Stalin to ask him to write an article, which was later published in *Pravda*. Cf. also Alpatov (1991: 181-4), Gorbanevskii (1988; 1991a: 133-53) and L'Hermitte (1987: 73-5), among others.

7 The complete English translation of the linguistic articles from *Pravda* is available in Murra *et al.*, eds. (1951). A. Adzhubei (1989: 54-5) relates the events surrounding their publication as told to him by L. F. Il'ichev, the editor of *Pravda* at the time.

8 It is commonly believed that Stalin did not write the article himself, and several linguists have been proposed as authors or co-authors, though some of them have denied taking part. In general, legends and stories about Marr,

support of Marr's critics, thus deciding the fates, positive and negative, of both sides and ending the need for further discussion. The articles that followed, including the self-critiques of various Marrists, were unanimous in their praise of Stalin's linguistic theses. Stalin added to his original comments on July 4, and finally the 3-month discussion ended with Stalin's last word on August 2. As a result of the discussion Filin and Meshchaninov were demoted, as Vinogradov, Chikobava, and Serebrennikov were promoted, and Soviet linguists energetically began pumping out detailed critiques of Marr as well as works supporting Stalin's pronouncements. In addition, textbooks, dictionaries, the teaching program for students in philology and linguistics—in short, every area of linguistic endeavor that Marr had touched—had to be revised (Alpatov, 1991: 198-9; Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 56; Zvegintsev, 1989: 18-20).

The above discussion of Stalin's intervention in linguistics is brief, since the subject is generally more familiar than are the events of Marr's life and the content of his theories. For our purposes, the major import of the Stalinist discussion is its aftermath. Though Marrism went completely out of fashion in 1950, it is significant that it went out just as it first came in—in a social environment that forbade a normal, reasoned debate over linguistic or other ideas, and that dictated in advance which theories would gain acceptance. After 1950, linguists were still not free of Marr but had to show in great detail how he was wrong and how they were wrong in believing in him. Then they had to reconstruct what he had built—but still in direct reaction to him. In this way, the spirit of Marr continued to hover over Soviet linguistics long after the Stalin pronouncements against him appeared in *Pravda* in 1950. To some extent, this spirit had not completely faded even at the very end of the Soviet period, in spite of contributions made by Soviet linguists to world linguistic thought (Gorbanevskii, 1988; Zvegintsev, 1989: 24-8). However, analysis of the late Soviet period is beyond the present focus, and this discussion will now turn to lexicography.

2. Marrism and Lexicography[9]

The *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian* (Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka) is one of the most important lexicographic products of Soviet Russia. It was compiled in the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad, and published in 17 volumes from 1948-65, as part of the tradition of Russian academy dictionaries that had started in 1789, with the publication in St.

Marrism, and the linguistic discussions of 1950 abound, just as there is much apocryphal literature about Stalin. For example, cf. the story about Stalin and Vinogradov in Borev (1991: 274), and about Marr in Filippov (1990: 144-5). A scene in *The First Circle* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn depicts Stalin, alone in his Kremlin office, writing his article on linguistics deep in the night.

9 The main Russian source in what follows is R. M. Tseitlin's *Short Sketch of the History of Russian Lexicography* (1958). For an account in English of the history of lexicography in St. Petersburg/Leningrad/ etc., see Farina (1992).

Petersburg of the *Dictionary of the Russian Academy* (Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi). Though the titles of the various academy dictionaries changed through time, and though the principles of compilation used by individual editors often drastically differed, Soviet scholars have always considered the Petersburg/ Leningrad/ etc. dictionaries as closely related, and have referred to them as an actual series of editions. Because of this, it will be useful to put the Marrist period of Soviet lexicography into perspective by briefly commenting on what went before. By the "Marrist period", I mean roughly 1928-50, the period immediately preceding the publication of the *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian*, and the first years of that dictionary's publication.

The first edition of the Academy dictionary was the 1789 work; the second, the Dictionary *of the Russian Academy with an Alphabetic Order of Arrangement* (Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi po azbuchnomu poriadku raspolozhennyi), appeared from 1806-22, and differed from its predecessor most notably in that it lacked hard-to-use nested entries organized by etymological roots. The third edition bore the title *Dictionary of Church Slavonic and Russian* (Slovar' tserkovno-slavianskogo i russkogo iazyka) and was published in 1847. In competition with the highly successful dictionary of Vladimir I. Dal' (published 1863-6 independently of the Academy), the fourth edition appeared in 1867-8: it was not a new work but a reprint of the 3rd edition.

By the time that the 3rd and 4th editions were published, certain problems were evident in academy lexicographic work that did not diminish with time, and that were always related to events taking place in the society at large. One can argue that the biggest problem was a preference for the treatment of early stages in the development of Russian and a seeming reluctance to describe fully the modern period (i.e., the approximately 50-year period immediately preceding the time in which any given dictionary was being made). The 3rd edition of 1847 covers the period all the way back to the 11th century, and probably reflects the conservative views toward the Russian standard language (*literaturnyi iazyk*) of A. S. Shishkov, President of the Academy until 1841. In the second half of the 19th century, dictionary work in the Academy stalled, until Iakov K. Grot was named director of the project in 1888. Grot attempted to create a dictionary of a normative (i.e., standard-descriptive) type, by eliminating about 6,000 Church Slavonicisms and by including new words from Russian regional and European sources; his work on the *Dictionary of Russian* (Slovar' russkogo iazyka), is noteworthy for its historical treatment of the development of meaning, inclusion of grammatical and stylistic labels, and quoted examples from Russian writers (Filin, ed. 1979: 63; Tseitlin, 1958: 97-9). Grot died in 1893 with his work unfinished; his so-called 5th edition consists of only one volume, the letters A-D, published 1891-5.

The continuation of the *Dictionary of Russian*, the 6th edition, was to have a completely different form. Aleksei A. Shakhmatov, who was appointed editor in 1895, rejected Grot's normative approach to dictionary compilation, and sought to describe and register all known Russian words, whether they were from the standard language, regional dialects, slang, argots, technical vocabularies, or even if they were Church Slavonicisms. Shakhmatov did not believe

that a lexicographer should make judgements as to what is standard, but should only record and define what exists. Although this approach was consistent with prevailing opinion at the end of the 19th century (Tseitlin, 1958: 104) and with Shakhmatov's own interest in Russian dialectology, it created a practical lexicographic problem: with no limitation as to the type of word to be included, the amount of materials gathered for the dictionary grew to such unmanageable proportions that work dragged out. In addition to this, there were societal problems that indirectly but seriously affected dictionary work. While Shakhmatov was editor the Revolution of 1905 occurred; the outbreak of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Civil War caused dictionary publication to stop; and there was an orthographic reform in 1917-18. The valuable dictionary card files (*kartoteka*) that were begun in 1784 for the very first academic dictionary were evacuated to Saratov because of danger from the war; even after they were returned to Petrograd, they remained in a state of disarray until 1925 (Istrin, 1927; Istrina, 1946). This period saw a devastating decline in the money allocated for lexicographic work: while the Imperial Academy had devoted enormous sums to dictionary projects, after the Revolution funds were scarce and very little could be spared (Istrin, 1928).

Shakhmatov was editor of the dictionary until 1907, but continued to be involved in the project until his death in 1920.[10] His 6th edition was published in 1897-1907, in 1916, and from 1922-9 (in the old orthography): not all letters of the alphabet were completed, and some letters that did appear in print were only partially complete. In 1928, it was decided that there should be a "perestroika" in the Academy's lexicographic work (Ozhegov, 1952), that a new dictionary should be published in the new orthography, and that its content should reflect "the modern stage of living speech" (Tseitlin, 1958: 105). Thus, work began on the 7th edition.

The reference above to the modern *stage* of speech reflects the Marrist assumption that speech in post-revolutionary Russia should be undergoing drastic change, in conjunction with social and economic changes. In the late 1920s and afterwards, dictionary makers had the task of recording the new revolutionary language. As the working classes came to the forefront, they would bring with them new words; new meanings not recognized by bourgeois society for previously existing words would appear, and words reflective of the former society would disappear. Language considered unacceptable, or nonstandard, by the previous ruling class would now be the only acceptable language, and previous notions of what was correct or standard in Russian would have to be thrown out. N. S. Derzhavin (1932) expressed these ideas as follows, at the height of Marr's popularity:

> In a word, the dialectic process in the development of language unfolds, first and foremost, in two basic lines: in the line of the normative [= standard] language of the ruling classes by way of its quantitative growth in connection, in the final analysis, with the process of increase in productive forces and the development of the economy; secondly, in the line of social changes and revolution: when, in connection with the development of industrial relations right up to the break with the old order, more and

10 Shakhmatov's death, widely believed to be from starvation, is also an indication of the severity of the times (cf. Gorbanevskii, 1991a: 79).

> more new speech elements begin to penetrate in mass into the old normative language of the ruling classes; when people begin to say that the literary language is becoming "coarse", is being "spoiled" and "democratized", etc., without taking into account the real social essence of this process and its real driving force.

A full 56 volumes were planned for the ill-fated 7th edition; the size shows that the proposed work was based on a principle of wide inclusion just like Shakhmatov's dictionary, though for different reasons. Shakhmatov's interest in the historical development of language and in dialectal speech was replaced by an emphasis on the language and writers of the modern, revolutionary period. The inclusion of quotations of ideological content from modern and pre-revolutionary literature would make the dictionary Marxist-Leninist, and would show the extent to which the Revolution had created unprecedented change in words and meanings, in line with Marr's theory.

Vladimir Alpatov (1991: 108) believes that dictionary work was one area of Soviet linguistic work relatively unaffected by Marr. This appears to have been true in Moscow, where D. N. Ushakov worked on his 4-volume *Explanatory Dictionary of Russian* (Tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka) published 1935-40. Ushakov, however, may have been a special case due to the support that his work received initially from Lenin himself. In a letter written in January 1920 to Lunacharskii, the head of the People's Commissariat of Education, Lenin underlined the need for a dictionary that was modern and cited the classics from Pushkin to Gorkii (Filin, ed. 1979: 208). In May 1920, Lenin wrote to Pokrovskii, Lunacharskii's assistant, to check on the state of work; in the next year he made three further inquiries. In 1921, Ushakov began work on his dictionary. After Lenin became ill the attention stopped, and in 1923 the People's Commissariat withdrew its support for Ushakov's project, partially due to the inclusion by the editors of material from symbolist poetry and other controversial sources (cf. Ozhegov, 1952). Nevertheless, the work began anew in 1928, and Ushakov was able to bring it to conclusion. Ushakov may have been helped later on by his indirect association with the Lenin letter, when he came under attack by Marr.

In Leningrad, where Marr's center of power was located, the same protections were not available. In Marr's Institute of Language and Thinking, work on the 7th edition academic dictionary proceeded from 1928-36. In charge of the Dictionary Section was N. S. Derzhavin;[11] his assistant, S. P. Obnorskii, was a student of Shakhmatov's and a contributor to the dictionary since 1912 (Filin, ed. 1979: 166). Releases were published for parts of several letters until 1937, when the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences resolved to close the project, stating: "work on the *Dictionary of Russian* was neglected to the highest degree. The card file is poisoned with clearly counter-revolutionary words and quotations, as well as with vulgar, often pornographic and artificial language." In addition, Derzhavin and Obnorskii were relieved of their positions ("Postanovleniia Prezidiuma" 1937). Although the dictionary project as it had been conceived was probably too vast to be completed according to plan (all 56 of the volumes were to

11 Derzhavin had been among those Marrists who spoke against Polivanov in 1929; his attacks were especially noteworthy for their personal character (Alpatov, 1991: 90).

be finished by 1942, just 13 years after the work began!), it was political and not practical considerations that doomed it. At this time, the 150 year-old card file was closed.

It will be useful to review the reasons given for curtailment of this project, as they provide insight into the society in which Marr had triumphed. Beliaev (1937) enumerates different categories of error manifest in the dictionary. First, some citations from "acceptable" authors convey an erroneous impression of their views: a quotation from Saltykov-Shchedrin, meant to be ironic, about the "raging enemy of the Russian people" Arakcheev gives the uninitiated reader the impression that Arakcheev was a precursor of communism.[12] Second, the compilers include pre-revolutionary material without choosing it carefully enough: a citation by Marlinskii[13] for the word *analiz* 'analysis' reads: "On them (the unmarried girls) were directed all lorgnettes, all mouths were occupied with their analysis." Third, some citations from post-revolutionary authors are taken out of context and sound "counter-revolutionary" in the hands of the dictionary makers; in addition, the best Soviet writers are quoted far too rarely (e.g., Gorkii[14] is cited hardly at all). Fourth, some dictionary citations taken from Soviet newspapers mention negative "phenomena in the life of the . . . country having a temporary character" only. These newspaper citations are used by the dictionary compilers in the same way as they are exploited in the foreign bourgeois press; on the other hand, the lexicon of the modern collective farm is ignored, and a large number of new words from the revolutionary period are not included. Fifth, "enemies of the people" such as Bukharin, Radek, Zinov'ev, and Kamenev are cited in the dictionary.[15]

Beliaev (1937) goes on to note that some of the words in the dictionary are not acceptable: for example, the interjection *amba* 'it's over, kaput!', is said to be from thieves' jargon, and some of the citations contain ungrammatical Russian. This type of "incorrectness" is significant, because it shows that since 1932 (see the quotation from Derzhavin, above), there has been some movement away from the principles of non-normativity and all-inclusiveness: there is after all such a thing as standard, grammatical speech, and it is not acceptable to include in the dictionary every single word used after the Revolution. In fact, in its resolution of 1937, the Presidium of the Academy stated:

> the *Dictionary of Russian*. . . should be of an explanatory-historical [= general monolingual-historical] and normative [= standard-descriptive] character, should promote the future development of the Russian literary [= standard] language in the USSR, and should, proceeding from Marxist-Leninist positions, present itself as a practical guide to the correct understanding of the social significance of the vocabulary, and to the correct usage of the forms and locutions of Russian in written, public, and colloquial speech ("Postanovleniia Prezidiuma" 1937).

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12 M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-1889), a satirical writer and government official during the reigns of Nicholas I and Alexander II. A. A. Arakcheev (1769-1834) was Alexander I's despotic assistant during the second half of his reign.

13 A. A. Bestuzhev (1797-1837), a writer and Decembrist revolutionary, had the pseudonym Marlinskii.

14 The writer Maksim Gorkii (1868-1936) is considered the founder of socialist realism.

15 N. I. Bukharin (1888-1938), L. B. Kamenev (1883-1936), and G. E. Zinov'ev (1883-1936) were prominent Bolsheviks executed after public trials during the Stalin purges. K. B. Radek (1885-1939) was exiled to Siberia after his arrest and show trial. During the 1930s, good communists changed so quickly into enemies of the people that it was nearly impossible to safely quote any contemporary in a dictionary's entries.

Beliaev (1937) criticized the dictionary for its lack of historicity, contending that the order of citations within an entry did not allow a clear understanding of a word's origin and semantic development. Though this sounds like a recognition of the traditional, non-Marrist view of the historical evolution of a word, the author most likely means that the dictionary should show the revolutionary development of meaning after 1917; this can be inferred from the statement, in the same article, that "the New Teaching on Language (Japhetic theory) of Academician N. I. Marr must find complete expression in the content of the dictionary." This point is made clearer in Orlov (1938), where the 7th edition dictionary is accused of being part of the Shakhmatov tradition, based on the "formalist[16] Indo-European method," and of ignoring Marr's accomplishments in Soviet linguistics.

It appears that the most important reason for the 7th edition's demise was its inclusion of quotations from "enemies of the Russian people"; Marrism was apparently used by authors such as Beliaev and Orlov solely to bolster their arguments against the dictionary. Nevertheless, the reference to the Russian standard language in the Soviet Academy's resolution indicates that the dictionary was unsatisfactory on other grounds as well. The all-inclusive compilation approach advocated by Shakhmatov had not been rendered conducive to good lexicography by altering it to conform to Marrist/Marxist principles, and it certainly went against the grain of many lexicographers who did not want to give up the notion of a standard Russian language. Thus the title of the new project, *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian* (Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka) reflects a change in compilation principles with the inclusion of the word *literaturnogo* 'standard'.

But this change created a delicate problem: how could one reject the inclusive approach that had been heretofore linked with Marr's name and still ensure that the new, more selective approach designed to describe the standard language remained Marrist? Orlov (1938) demonstrates how the problem was solved. First, it was emphasized that the application of the normative principle would not decrease the lexical stock of Russian: the richness of the new, modern standard language would be fully brought out. Second, it was noted that the structure of dictionary entries would be changed: each new entry would consist of a nest that grouped together words similar in form and meaning. These nests would be based on Marrist principles of semantic connections between words, unlike the nests of the very first academic dictionary (1789-94), which were based on etymological derivation from a root. (An etymologically-based nest would have been in line with the comparative linguistic method odious to Marr.) For example, *matematika* 'mathematics', *matematicheskii* 'mathematic', and *matematik* 'mathematician' could be in the same nest, but *vodka* and *voda* 'water' would have to be in different nests, because the difference in their meanings is too great.

16 The charge of formalism was a serious one by the 1930s, though formalists had initially known official favor (cf. Terras, ed. 1985 *s.v.*)

Another delicate problem had to do with the historical development of meaning and whether it could be reflected in the ordering of senses in the new nests. It was considered desirable to show the semantic history of a word, but it appeared to be too closely associated with the comparative method to be in harmony with Marrism. The solution was to call the ordering of senses "historical" in the Marxist sense, and to reverse it chronologically, so that the most modern meaning would be listed first. Other subordinate principles determined subsequent ordering of senses.

Orlov (1938) noted that citations in the proposed new dictionary should be chosen so that their portrayals of events "correctly reflect reality and answer to the task of agitation and propaganda of Marxist-Leninist ideas". The error and vestigial character of the former meanings of non-revolutionary words such as *angel* and *blagorodnyi* 'noble' should be brought out. To summarize, the new dictionary, like the old, would be based on Marrist principles, but on different Marrist principles: the theoretical problems raised by the transition were solved by pretending they never existed.

The directors of the new project were A. S. Orlov and V. I. Chernyshev; the latter had worked on Shakhmatov's dictionary beginning in the late 1890s (Istrina, 1946). The original plan called for 15 volumes in the complete work, though ultimately 17 would be published. In 1939, a revised version of the dictionary plan was approved ("V Otdelenii . . ." 1939). The new plan differed from the previous one most in its calmer tone, reflecting the atmosphere in linguistics several years after the death of Marr ("Slovar' Sovremennogo . . ." 1940). Though the revised plan still discusses how the dictionary should reflect the political life of the country, the language in which it does this is more formulaic than before, and the amount of commentary on the political obligations of the dictionary are substantially diminished over Orlov (1938).

Besides the difference in tone, the new plan is different in other ways as well. Though the nested entry is retained, the selection basis for words in a nest has slightly changed, from words related in "form and meaning" to words related in "origin and meaning": this indicates a partial amends with the comparative method so hated by Marr. The discussion of the normative principle is also different, in that the emphasis is no longer put on the social concern of reflecting post-revolutionary speech, but on the linguistic concern of registering the set of words that are used on various speech occasions, and giving advice (in the form of labels) on these words.

We may ask the question: Why had the compilers decided to introduce nested entries in the first place? Since they had used Marr to justify both the normative and non-normative principles, they could easily have "proved" that the alphabetical order was the best reflection of Marrist thought, and kept it intact in the dictionary. One explanation may be that they wanted to distance themselves from the 7th edition as much as possible, due to the serious political errors it had been accused of; a very visible way to do this was to alter the dictionary format with the the nested entry. The nest had another advantage: it was used in the dictionary of Dal' (published 1863-6)

which had received praise from Lenin in his 1920 letter to Lunacharskii. In the report on the revised plan for the dictionary ("Slovar' Sovremennogo . . ." 1940), a comparison with the Dal' style of nesting is made overtly.

The nested format was used in the first three volumes only of the *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian*. Following the Stalin linguistic discussion of 1950, nesting was rejected in favor of the easier-to-use alphabetical entry.[17] The Preface to the alphabetically-arranged fourth volume (1955) recognizes that the format of vols. 1-3 was a "mistake", and links it directly to the "erroneous" teachings of Marr. However, it is debatable to what extent the nests reflect Marrist thought. While the compilers did try to reflect more synchronic relations of form and meaning between words, and while the new nests did not have the etymological depth of those in the dictionary of Dal', it is not always clear how the compilers determined what words were formally and semantically similar. For example, the nest with the headword *vek* 'century' also contains the adjective *vechnyi* 'eternal': one can argue that the main senses of these two words (as reflected by their English glosses) are as far apart as the meanings of *voda* 'water' and *vodka,* which were relegated on principle to separate nests; in addition, the formal similarity of *vek* and *vechnyi* is more distant than that of *voda* and *vodka.* It appears that the authors were so conditioned by tradition to consider *vek* and *vechnyi* as related, that they could not bring themselves to separate them. Just as the nested entry was probably adopted in 1937 to place political distance between the proposed and the preceding dictionary projects, so it was probably abandoned after 1950 in order to make a political statement, rather than for purely lexicographic reasons. However, the change to the alphabetic order was a boon for Russian dictionary users, who, after the third volume, would not have to resort to indexes in the back of each volume to locate the nest in which a given word could be found.

In 1991, the first and second volumes in the new, 2nd edition of the *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian* were published—without nests. When the third volume appears in print, the nested format of the first edition will be a relic of the past. Though it is also a part of the past, understanding the Marrist/Stalinist era is necessary for understanding Soviet linguistics, and for a proper evaluation of lexicographic work in the Soviet period. Soviet lexicographers were constantly involved in a balancing act between two often conflicting goals: the lexicographic goal of describing the Russian language, usually in its standard variety, and the social goal of reflecting the reigning ideology in such a way so as not to risk disapproval that could harm or even destroy a dictionary project. As discussed in Farina (1992), even the new first and second volumes of the 2nd edition *Dictionary of Modern Standard Russian* show signs of this conflict, to the detriment of the descriptive, lexicographic aspect of the work. Though dictionaries will always reflect the cultures that produce them, one can hope that Russian dictionaries of the future will also reflect a

[17] Both volume 2 (1951) and volume 3 (1954) were published after the Stalin linguistic discussions in the newspaper *Pravda,* but they had apparently gone to the typesetters before and therefore retained the nested style. Volume 4 (1955) is the first to appear in the alphabetical format.

greater autonomy on the part of lexicographers in determining the extent to which social and cultural issues will be manifested. Such autonomy should insure that purely linguistic and lexicographic issues will receive greater attention.

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