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“I ONLY DO IT TO STAY ALIVE”: DEVELOPMENT OF THE NARRATIVE OF “UNIFICATION OF THE WESTERN LANDS OF UKRAINE AND BELARUS WITH THE UKRAINIAN AND BELARUSIAN SOVIET REPUBLICS” IN SOVIET HISTORICAL PROPAGANDA*

ABSTRACT

The article analyses selected aspects of the formation of the historical propaganda narrative of the unification of the lands of Western Ukraine with the Ukrainian SSR and of Western Belarus with the Belarusian SSR as well as the participation of individual historians deliberately involved or for various reasons forced to take part in developing the academic justification for the change in borders. The knowledge and authority of scholars often originating from the pre-revolutionary school were necessary for creating a historical narrative legitimizing the change in policy and reinforcing the propaganda message.

KEYWORDS:

Soviet historiography, Vladimir Picheta, Western Belarus, Western Ukraine, propaganda

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* This article was written as part of the project “The Image of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth/Poland in the ‘History of the Byelorussian SSR’: transformation of the Soviet historical message in the national-official version of history”, funded by the National Centre for Research and Development.

In Bolshevik propaganda, it would be a truism to say that war – and, more broadly, the ideological preparation of Soviet society for the inexorable clash with “all sorts of enemies” surrounding a country ruled by “workers and peasants” – was an essential feature of the indoctrination system. By creating an atmosphere of constant threat, the Soviet propaganda machine not only succeeded in stoking patriotic feelings; it also contributed to the development of an array of devices, phrases and propaganda slogans that took hold in the lexicon of propaganda concepts that have experienced a renaissance in the twenty-first century. A separate phenomenon was attaching new political significance and meaning to concepts and their derivatives that had hitherto been used in a neutral sense.

It is, in fact, an impossible task to make even a cursory analysis of selected aspects of the workings of Soviet propaganda using the examples of press, radio, cinema, and art in one article, yet both Russian and foreign scholars have attempted it. Even a list of just the essential subject literature would not fit into one footnote and would require a separate supplement. Those who have researched the Soviet propaganda apparatus and its mechanisms include Western Sovietologists such as Peter Kenez, Stephen F. Cohen, David Brandenberger, Ewa M. Thompson and Serhii Plokhly. Yet the most important works on the events preceding the outbreak of the Second World War and during the war itself are those by the Russian scholar Vladimir Nevezhin, who stood out as a consummate researcher and expert on the mechanisms of the Soviet propaganda machine.¹ As well as examining the nature and content of the propaganda, Nevezhin also critically analysed the activity of the “machine and cogs”,² meaning the institutions and the role of individual decision makers in launching and conducting propaganda campaigns, including the “march of liberation of the Red Army” in September 1939.

Scholars agree that preparations for the “liberation of the Ukrainian and Belarusian half-brothers” began with Germany’s aggression against Poland and were pursued simultaneously in the military, economic and propaganda-political fields. In the last of these domains, they have analysed press materials published in publications and documentation produced by government institutions, military organizations, and, to a lesser extent, memoir literature.³ We will therefore not revisit well-known issues and conclusions that have long operated in the historiographical circulation.

¹ Vladimir Nevezhin, *Sindrom nastupatel'noj vojny. Sovetskaja propaganda v preddverii "svjaščennykh boev", 1939–1941 gg.* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1997); id., “*Esli zavtra v pochod...: podgotovka k vojne i ideologičeskaya propaganda v 30-h-40-h godach*” (Moskva: Eksmo, 2007); id., *Tajne plany Stalina: propaganda soviecka w przededniu wojny z Trzecią Rzeczą 1939–1941*, trans. by Jan J. Bruski, (Kraków: Arcana, 2001).

² The above paraphrase refers to the work of the Russian historian and dissident Mikhail Heller; see the first Russian edition published in London: Michail Geller, *Mašina i vintiki. Istorija formirovanija sovetkogo čeloveka* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd, 1985).

³ Nevezhin is among those who analyse these preparations in detail. See: Niewieżyń, *Tajne plany Stalina*, pp. 79–94. See also: Natalija Lebedeva, ‘Sentjabr’ 1939 g: Pol’sa meźdu Germaniej i SSSR’, *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, 4 (2009), 231–50.

What seems to be a less researched aspect is the activity of academic institutions and the role of individual scholars deliberately involved or forced, for various reasons, to participate in developing the academic justification for the territorial conquests and changes to the borders of the USSR. I will attempt to determine which factors affected the academic and ideological positions of scholars caught up in the gears of great politics. I will be particularly interested in the role of individual scholars and the expert assistance they provided to various propaganda institutions in their campaigns designed to construct specific ideas and public moods. The knowledge and authority of “old-school” scholars, often hailing from the pre-revolutionary tradition, were essential for developing the historical narrative, legitimizing the policy turn, and reinforcing the propaganda message.

INSTITUTIONS OF THE “IDEOLOGICAL FRONT”

The late 1930s marked a clear watershed that finalized the process of building the propaganda and ideological apparatus in the Soviet Union. Centralized and extensive propaganda and organizational structures were built that encompassed all echelons: top-level (the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (AUCP(b) Propaganda and Agitation Administration, the Red Army Political Administration, the Central Literature and Publications Bureau,⁴ and political bureaus in people’s commissariats (ministries); medium-level (AUCP(b) propaganda and agitation administrations at Soviet republic level, political administrations at military district level, various political education departments (*politprosveshcheniye*)⁵; and lower-level (propaganda divisions of AUCP(b) district and regional committees, political schools for AUCP(b) and Komsomol members, etc.

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, the unquestioned authority in the formation of historical ideology in the USSR was the then general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin. Stalin’s ideological opponents vanished from the political scene while he directly participated in the writing of the canonical version of the history of the AUCP(b), which was also an interpretation of Russia’s general history since the end of the nineteenth century. The “leader of the working masses of the world”, along with his retinue in the form of Andrei Zhdanov, Lev Mekhlis and other party dignitaries, personally inspired and set the guidelines for propaganda and oversaw its implementation. Other,

⁴ PURKKA – Politicheskoe upravlenie Raboče-Krest’janskoj Krasnoj Armii; Glavlit – Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel’stv.

⁵ Politprosveshchenie – political education system encompassing knowledge on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, the history of the AUCP(b) and current politics.

lower-status "cogs" played the role of the transmission belt that relayed the leader's orders. Of course, the Soviet dictator had to make use of analytical material supplied by various agencies. He did so using an extensively developed state and party apparatus and institutions of the ideological front, largely pursuing propaganda activities and expert support from scholars, journalists and academic institutions.

In matters of information policy and international propaganda, in particular regarding Polish issues, apart from the NKID⁶ (e.g., the Information and Press Department), an important role was also played by numerous Komintern structures,⁷ and in the early 1930s by the AUCP(b) Central Committee's Bureau of International Information. A particular role was played by Soviet intelligence agencies: the IV (Intelligence) Administration of the Red Army Headquarters, and after organizational changes the Information/Statistics and Intelligence Administration, as well as the Foreign Department of the OGPU⁸ and then the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD.

The AUCP(b) CC's Bureau of International Information, established on Stalin's initiative in spring 1932 with Karl Radek at the helm, in addition to supplying objective analytical information without ideological adjustment, was to concentrate its efforts on realizing political and strategic military tasks in the Moscow–Warsaw–Berlin triangle.⁹ The bureau collected information and canvassed moods using the services of agents operating in the West in the guise of diplomats and journalists. One example was Stefan Jan Nejman (Rajewski), who served as adviser to the USSR embassy in Berlin; he was also a representative of the TASS press agency in Paris and head of the government newspaper *Izvestia's* foreign department.

Following this brief outline of the propaganda structures and institutions of the ideological front, let us turn to the fundamental research problem of this study, which is the role of individual scholars and academic institutions in creating and reinforcing the historical propaganda message, with a particular focus on Polish issues.

⁶ NKID – Narodnyj komissariat inostrannykh del (People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs).

⁷ For more on this subject see: Grant Adibekov, Eleonora Sachnazarova, and Kirill Širinja, *Organizatsionnaja struktura Komintern, 1919–1943* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 1997); Piotr Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Droga do władzy 1941–1944* (Warszawa: Fronda PL, 2003), pp. 33–38; Natalia Lebediewa, "Komintern i Polska w latach 1919–1943", in *W drodze do władzy. Struktury komunistyczne realizujące politykę Rosji sowieckiej i ZSRS wobec Polski (1917–1945)*, ed. by Elżbieta Kowalczyk, and Konrad Rokicki (Warszawa: IPN, 2019), pp. 163–210. Komintern's effective activity in the Soviet-Polish propaganda war is also discussed by the Polish scholar Aleksandra J. Leinwand, "Z dziejów eksportu propagandy: Komintern w wojnie z Polską w 1920 roku", *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 111:4 (2004), 83–107.

⁸ INO OGPU – Inostrannyj otdel Ob'edinennogo Gosudarstvennogo Političeskogo Upravlenija – Foreign Department of the Joint State Political Directorate.

⁹ Oleg Ken, "Karl Radek i Bjuro międzynarodowej informacji CK VKP(b), 1932–1934 gg.", *Cabiers du Monde russe*, 44 (2003), 135–77. The Russian scholar, an expert on the history of Polish-Soviet bilateral relations in the interwar period, suggests that Radek exploited his status as Stalin's special envoy and then head of the foreign department of the influential newspaper *Izvestia*, seeking to weaken the influences of the anti-Polish party in the top political level of the Kremlin. Cited in Ken, "Karl Radek", p. 173. In notes to Stalin, Radek argued that there were no imperial plans regarding the Soviets in Poland and favoured improving Warsaw-Moscow relations by softening anti-Polish themes in Soviet propaganda, establishing a Polish-Soviet cultural cooperation society or joint publication of documents on Polish uprisings. See: "Nr 6. 1933 grudzień 3, Moskwa – Załącznik do informacji Karola Radka skierowanej do Stalina dotyczącej nowego etapu w stosunkach polsko-sowieckich", in *Geneza paktu Hitler-Stalin. Fakty i propaganda*, ed. by Bogdan Musiał and Jan Szumski (Warszawa: IPN, 2012), pp. 125–30 (here: 128).

BACK TO THE PAST, OR THE IMPERIAL PARADIGM OF HISTORY

It is worth emphasizing that the history of Poland was studied in the Soviet Union before 1939 primarily from the perspective of research on the history of the workers' movement, seen as an equivalent of the communist movement, at ideological academic institutions such as the Polish Institute of Proletariat Culture in Kyiv and its sister Institute in Minsk.¹⁰ Only in the second half of the 1940s were specialist institutions set up within the Soviet Academy of Sciences, at which, in agreement and close cooperation with the AUCP(b) CC, evaluations and expert reports were produced and concepts of Polish history and positions regarding important historical periods and problems were prepared. In interwar Poland, meanwhile, there were several research centres devoted to Soviet¹¹ and communist¹² studies.

In the second half of the 1930s, the Stalinist variant of the Marxist-Leninist historiographical concept as a way of understanding the process of history was finally established in Soviet historical research. Following a decision of party and state authorities from 1934–35 concerning the teaching of history, organizational changes were introduced that finalized the process of building a centralized system. In 1936–37, the Institute of History of the Soviet Union and the Institute of History of Material Culture were established at the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The same solutions were implemented in the individual Soviet republics, but local issues were taken in to account. In Soviet Ukraine, where the status of national history was greater than it was in the Byelorussian Soviet Republic, a separate Institute of the History of Ukraine was set up in 1936 as part of the History

¹⁰ An aspect that has scarcely been researched is the activity of party research institutions, which, despite their often-dubious academic merit, held an important place in the research on Polish history that took place in the 1920s and 1930s in the Soviet Union. We can mention here the Polish Party History Commission at the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute (IMEL) in Moscow, which in 1926–34 published documents and articles on the Polish workers' movement in the journal *Z pola walki* (From the battlefield).

¹¹ The history and Soviet studies output of the Eastern Europe Research Institute (INBEW) were examined in a monograph by Marek Kornat: *Polska szkoła sowietologiczna 1930–1939* (Kraków: Arcana, 2003). Henryka Ilgiewicz's book, in addition to the history of the INBEW, also discusses the organizational and personnel situation of the School of Political Sciences (SNP). See: Henryka Ilgiewicz, *Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej oraz Szkoła Nauk Politycznych w Wilnie (1930–1939)* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2019). Paweł Libera's article, meanwhile, focuses on the political aspect of the IBEW and SNP's operation as well as the influence the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Second Department of Polish General Staff exerted on the institutions. See: Paweł Libera, 'Polityczne aspekty funkcjonowania Instytutu Naukowo-Badawczego Europy Wschodniej i Szkoły Nauk Politycznych w Wilnie (1930–1939)', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 53:4 (2021), 67–84. See also: *Polsko-radzieckie stosunki kulturalne 1918–1939. Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. by Wiesław Balcerak (Warszawa: 'Książka i Wiedza', 1977), pp. 699–712. On the beginnings of Sovietology: *Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej w Wilnie (1930–1939). Idee – ludzie – dziedzictwo*, ed. by Jan Malicki and Andrzej Pukszto (Warszawa: WUW, 2020).

¹² Among the works discussing Polish social communist studies institutions which examined the ideological and political foundations, and the methods and tools of spreading propaganda by various bodies which were in fact Soviet intelligence agencies (such as International Red Aid (MOPR), we can cite Karol Sacewicz's monograph, and in particular the chapter on the Institute of Scientific Research on Communism (INBK). Karol Sacewicz, *Komunizm i antykomunizm w II Rzeczypospolitej: państwo–społeczeństwo – partie* (Olsztyn: Instytut Historii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warmińskiego-Mazurskiego, 2016), pp. 28–41. On the INBK see also: Jacek Puchalski, 'Instytut Naukowego Badania Komunizmu w Warszawie (1930–1939). Program, organizacja, zbiory prace księgoznawcze', in *Bibliologia polityczna. Praca zbiorowa*, ed. by Dariusz Kuźmina (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SBP, 2011), pp. 214–243.

and Philology Department of the Ukrainian Soviet Academy of Sciences. This Kyiv-based institute also included a section focusing on Western Ukraine. No separate institute of the history of Belarus was set up in Minsk, but the Institute of History of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences (subsequently the Institute of History of the BSRS Academy of Sciences) operated from 1929, with a separate section for research on Western Belarus.¹³

Changes at the political centre brought fundamental transformations in the field of historical research, and the imperial paradigm of history that had been developed by nineteenth-century Russian historiography gradually came back into favour. The school of Mikhail Pokrovsky – an outstanding Bolshevik historian who introduced an entirely new approach to the entirety of Russian history from the perspective of economic materialism based on the idea of class struggle – was denounced, with the atmosphere of a witch hunt forming around the deceased scholar and his students. Among other things, Pokrovsky emphasized the imperialist nature of the policy of Moscow rulers, criticizing the well-established theory in Russian historiography regarding “gathering the lands of Rus” around the Grand Duchy of Moscow.

In addition to establishing dogmas on historical formations and the interlocking discussions about the origins of feudalism, one of the main problems was justifying the multinational character of the Soviet Union. The concept of one big, happy family of “USSR nations” required academic rationalization of the bonds between the community of nations, especially Slavic ones.

Recognizing Kievan Rus’ as the cradle of common statehood was the basis for acknowledging Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians as integral parts of the same nation. Research on the origin of the “Old Ruthenian nation” (Rus: *drevnerusskaya narodnost’*),¹⁴ instigated following a series of decisions by state and party authorities, took place in the context of a multi-volume history of the USSR, chiefly at the Institute of History (IH) of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In 1939, a special research group was set up at the N. Marr Institute of the History of Material Culture (IIMK) to investigate the East Slavic ethnogenesis in conjunction with work on the first volume of the publication *History of the USSR*. Work taking place in Moscow and Leningrad on developing the concept of a common origin of East Slavs, identified and used interchangeably with the “Ruthenian

¹³ Rajnèr Lindnèr, *Historyki i ũlada. Nacyjatvorčy pracès i histaryčnaja palityka ũ Belarusi XIX–XX st.* (Sankt-Pecjarburh: Neũski prascjah, 2005), pp. 201, 216.

¹⁴ Terminological issues could form the basis of separate studies, as alongside such concepts as “*drevnerusskiy narod*”, alluding to the paradigm of the “*triyediniy narod*” developed in Tsarist Russia, work on the concept in the 1930s and ‘40s also produced additional terms such as “*drevnerusskaya narodnost’*” and “*obshherusskaya narodnost’*”.

nation”, provided a solid foundation for the notion of one nation in the political sense.¹⁵

By 1939, an academic framework that conceptualized the common origin of the three brotherly nations – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians – all traced back to Kievan Rus’ had not only been put in place but had also been consolidated in Soviet historical research and education with the publication of a series of textbooks. As the Ukrainian scholar Natalia Yusova notes, 1939 was known in academic circles at the time as “the year of history textbooks”¹⁶ as it was then that textbooks and teaching materials for higher education institutions were published. Particularly significant was the publication of the first volume of *History of the USSR*, where the origin and territorial expansion of the Russian Empire was integrated into the paradigm of the history of nations of the Soviet Union, connected by strong ties and joined by shared historical fortunes.¹⁷ The Tsarist policy of “gathering lands” was also rehabilitated, along with ideas of “voluntary annexation” and “unification of lands separated by force” with Russia.

To develop new perspectives corresponding to the main premises of the Stalinist variant of Marxist-Leninist theory and tying in with selected elements of imperial Russian historiography, it was essential to find scholars with a high level of knowledge and authority who were capable of developing a historical narrative to legitimize the policy turn. The older generation of scholars born in the mid-nineteenth century and specialists in the history of the former Rus’ (Sergei Platonov) and historical Lithuania (Matvei Lyubavsky) were sentenced under trumped-up charges as part of the so-called Academic Trial, resulting in them being stripped of their titles and degrees and exiled to distant corners of the USSR. Their fate was shared by their younger colleagues Sergey Bakhrushin and Vladimir Picheta, who had obtained their education and academic degrees in the late period of the Russian Empire. Platonov and Lyubavsky died in exile, while Bakhrushin and Picheta were permitted to resume academic work after a few years of exile. Others, such as Boris Grekov, the historian of Kievan Rus’, despite being included as a plotter in the investigation into the Academic Trial, were ultimately freed after questioning and a month’s detention.¹⁸

¹⁵ An important role in forming the basis of this concept was played by the leading Russian historians Boris Grekov, Nikolai Derzhavin and Vladimir Mavrodin, as well as the Ukrainians Kost Guslistyj and Fedir Yastrebov.

¹⁶ Natalija Jusova, *Henezys koncepciji davn’orus’koji narodnosti v istoričnij nauči SRSR (1930-ti – perša polovyna 1940-ch rr.)* (Vinnycja: TOV Konsol’, 2005), p. 163.

¹⁷ *Istorija SSSR. S drevnejšich vremen do konca XVIII v.: učebnik dlja istoričeskich fakul’tetov gosudarstvennyh universitetov i pedagogičeskich institutov*, ed. by Vladimir Lebedev, Boris Grekov, and Sergej Bachrušin, 2 vols (Moskva: Socëkgiz, 1939), I.

¹⁸ According to Russian researchers, the question of the scholar’s unexpected release from detention is yet to be satisfactorily explained and leaves many questions unanswered. See: Jurij Krivošeev, ‘Boris Dmitrievič Grekov i ‘Akademičeskoe delo’, *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Istorija*, 4 (2016), 237–58.

"STICK AND CARROT" POLICY

Using a "stick and carrot" policy, by Stalin's grace a few historians hailing from the pre-revolutionary school were reinstated from exile to academic work with the task of building the academic foundations of Soviet neoimperialism and legitimizing its expansion.¹⁹ The life of the aforementioned historian Vladimir Picheta seems to be an excellent example of harnessing a scholar with a pre-revolutionary background and accepting the Marxist conception of history into the cogs of great politics. Born in Poltava in 1878, Picheta came from a mixed Serbian-Ukrainian family. He received his historical education at the Faculty of History and Philology of Moscow University, where he later taught as a private lecturer (Rus: *privat dotcent*). Picheta's academic interests focused on the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Having steered clear of politics in the tempestuous period of sociopolitical transformation in Russia, he decided to remain in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution and collaborate with the new authorities. This decision had a crucial impact on the rapid development of his professional and academic career.²⁰

In 1921, Picheta was appointed rector of the newly opened Belarusian State University in Minsk in Soviet Belarus; he was strongly committed to the popularization of the idea of Belarusianness based on academic foundations. For the next eight years, both in the USSR and abroad, he actively promoted research on the history of the Lithuanian and Ruthenian lands, participating in academic events and congresses in Germany, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries. He was regarded as the doyen of Belarusian Soviet historical research. At the time he was also keenly interested in the history of Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland and other Slavic states. As a representative of the new progressive Soviet "workers of science", he took part in anti-Polish propagandist campaigns that defended the rights of the Belarusian "working masses" in the Second Polish Republic.²¹

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Picheta's promising career suddenly collapsed. Amid the strict political course and battle against "nationalist deviations", the scholar was dismissed from all his positions, stripped of

¹⁹ Apart from Picheta and Bakhrushin, one of the best-known examples of forced involvement in academic and service activity is the Russian historian Jevgeny Tarle. Arrested as part of the Academic Trial and sentenced to exile in Kazakhstan, after a few years he was pardoned and reinstated. In addition to his fundamental work on Napoleon, on Stalin's commission he planned to write a three-volume book entitled *The Russian nation's fight with aggressors in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. Before the Soviet dictator's death, he succeeded in completing the first volume, on the Great Northern War and Swedish invasion.

²⁰ Jan Szumski, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa: przyczynek do polsko-radzieckich relacji naukowych', *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 47 (2010), 129–58 (here: 131).

²¹ See *Apel komitetu pisarzy i robotników nauki Białorusi radzieckiej dla obrony Białoruskiej Robotniczo-Włościańskiej Hromady do mas pracujących i inteligencji ZSRR i całego świata protestujący przeciwko represjom władz polskich wobec ludności białoruskiej*, 24 February 1929. Cited in *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich. Maj 1926 – grudzień 1932*, ed. by Natalia Gašiorowska-Grabowska and Iwan Chrienow, 12 vols (Warszawa: 'Książka i Wiedza', 1963–1986), V (1966), pp. 406–08.

his titles and degrees, arrested by the OGPU as part of a sham investigation, and sentenced to five years' exile in Vyatka. In 1934, after being moved to Voronezh, he was allowed to teach at the local Pedagogical Institute. A year later he received permission to work in Moscow, where for the next few years he lectured at various Moscow higher education institutions, and in 1937 he became an employee of the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. According to some data, Picheta's acquaintance with the Czechoslovak politician Edvard Beneš played a not insignificant role in his pardoning.²² He gradually had his former titles and degrees restored, and in 1939 he was elected as a corresponding member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

The fateful year 1939 brought the next stage in this historian's career, signalling a return to favour. In spring of that year, *Izvestiya*, the press organ of the Central Executive Committee and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, published an article by Picheta in which he argued for the need to research, on the basis of Marxist methodology, the history of Slavic nations in combination with the history of Russia. Knowing how Soviet academia operated at the time and the practice of publishing articles in the central press organs, we can assume with a high degree of certainty that the decision to include this article was made by the so-called "decision-making elements", while this scholar was to use his authority to back this initiative.

A Slavic studies section was established at the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. As the unit's director, while presenting its plans for the next two years to the Academic Council, Picheta mentioned preparing a synthesis of Polish history.²³ It may be a simple coincidence, but it was also at this time that an intensive exchange of correspondence was taking place between Berlin and Moscow regarding the possibility of expanding economic contacts and diplomatic rapprochement.²⁴

After the German-Soviet alliance following the pact of 23 August 1939, new orders from Moscow in September that year dictated that the definition of the war in progress should be changed to "imperialist and unjust

²² The American researcher Elizabeth K. Valkenier argues that Picheta's return to Moscow was made possible by Beneš's patronage. Apparently the then Czechoslovak foreign minister asked about the scholar during an official visit to the USSR. See Elizabeth K. Valkenier, 'Stalinizing Polish Historiography: What Soviet Archives Disclose', *East European Politics and Societies*, 7 (1992), 109–34 (here: 111).

²³ Jan Szumski, *Polityka a historia: ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa: Aspra-Jr, 2016), p. 105.

²⁴ Bogdan Musiał, "Trudne początki zbliżenia niemiecko-sowieckiego", in *Geneza paktu*, pp. 72–74 (here: 73). Of course, the strategic plan for war in Poland had been prepared and authorized in Berlin as early as April that year, and published Soviet intelligence documents show that Moscow was well informed about the German preparations and the Third Reich's efforts to ensure Soviet neutrality. See: 'Podgotovka germanskogo napadenija na Pol'su: iz Sbornika perevodov agenturnych donesenij po voenno-političeskim voprosam 5 Upravljenija RKKa, 4 ijunja 1939', in *Voennaja razvedka informiruet. Dokumenty Razvedupravljenija Krasnoj Armii. Janvar' 1939–ijun' 1941 g.*, ed. by Viktor Gavrilov (Moskva: Meždunarodnyj fond "Demokratija", 2008), pp. 104–05.

from both sides".²⁵ This definition was binding more or less throughout the entire Soviet period, where in encyclopaedias one could read that "the Second World War, the consequence of the mutual battle of capitalist states, began as imperialist from both sides – Germany and Japan as well as England and France".²⁶

At this point it is worth making a slight digression on the use of the concept of "war" for propaganda purposes in the context of Polish-Soviet relations. The Kremlin's lingering belief in the permanent threat from Poland – reinforced in a period of major events in domestic politics and worsening conflicts in international relations – was often associated with Ukrainian and Belarusian issues. In summer 1926, OGPU chairman Felix Dzerzhinsky wrote in a letter to his successor Genrikh Yagoda that: "Pilsudski's coup, it seems obvious to me at the moment, is a manifestation of nationalist forces in Poland directed against 'Russia', that is us, entirely supported by England [...] The object of the Polish conquest will be Belarus and Ukraine, and respectively Minsk and Kiev as their capitals". A few years later, at the time of the so-called "war alarm" in March 1930,²⁷ there were quite serious concerns in the Kremlin that the anti-kolkhoz speeches of peasants in the border regions of Belarus and Ukraine could lead to military intervention from Warsaw.

The threat of the supposed aggression of "Polish fascism" was used primarily for intra-party sparring and to create a "siege mentality" to mobilize society. The propaganda and ideological construction of the "proletariat and internationalist war", with its ultimate objective being global revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat, was replaced in the mid-1920s by the slogan of "self-determination of nations until detachment", targeted at national minorities. It is interesting that, in Poland's case, this slogan was only invoked for Upper Silesia and the Lithuanian minority, before being expanded to include Pomerania. The right to "self-determination" was therefore not due to Belarusians and Ukrainians, whose aspirations were defined from above by the Third Congress of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland (KPRP) in January–February 1925. It was at this time

²⁵ Although anti-Polish slogans had always been an integral part of Bolshevik propaganda, changes in the propaganda line were often so surprising that they caused consternation with the abrupt turn in the situation both within the USSR and in the foreign communist movement. Often cited with regard to Poland is a statement by Stalin from 7 September 1939, recorded in the diary of Georgi Dimitrov, general secretary of the Executive Committee of Comintern: "Historically the Polish state was a nation state. That is why the revolutionaries defended it from partitions and enslavement. Today it is a fascist state which oppresses Ukrainians and Belarusians. Therefore, the destruction of Poland means that there will be one bourgeois fascist state less". This was a real shock for many communist parties, which called in the first days of the war to fight "German fascism" and defend Poland's independence. For more, see: Bernhard H. Bayerlein, *"Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!": Vom Ende der linken Solidarität. Komintern und kommunistische Parteien im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1941* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2008).

²⁶ *Istorija vtoroj mirovoj vojny 1939–1945. Zaroždenie vojny. Bor'ba progressivnyh sil za sochranenie mira*, ed. by Grigorij Deborin et al., 12 vols (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1973–1982), 1 (1973), p. 11.

²⁷ See: Oleg Ken, "Alarm wojenny" wiosną 1930 roku a stosunki sowiecko-polskie, *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 35 (2000), 41–74.

that the slogan of annexing “Western Ukraine” and “Western Belarus” to the USSR was first put forward.²⁸

This slogan was connected to the anti-Polish propaganda which, depending on the current circumstances and the international situation, the Soviet propaganda machine pursued with varying intensity throughout the interwar period. The culmination of the anti-Polish propaganda campaign came in September 1939 with the emergence of an array of new rhetorical devices and ideological and propaganda phrases. First and foremost, we should mention the categories of the “liberation march” conducted as part of a “just offensive war”.

Anti-Polish propaganda, apart from the well-known slogans about the threat of the supposed aggression of “Polish fascism”, the criminal nature of the Polish state and the moral decline of Polish elites, increasingly emphasized themes of the national and class oppression of Ukrainians and Belarusian, which around mid-September turned into anti-Polish hysteria. Poland was portrayed as the “oppressor” of enslaved nations and a “war-monger”. Ewa Thompson, based on analysis of the leading Soviet periodicals (*Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, and *Literaturnaia gazeta*),²⁹ confirms that the anti-Polish campaign was accompanied and supported by two smaller pro-Belarusian and pro-Ukrainian ones. These were shorter and were more meant to heighten anti-Polish moods in the newly annexed lands than to be an expression of actual support for Ukrainians and Belarusians.³⁰

TROUBADOURS OF THE EMPIRE³¹

The aggression against Poland was presented in propaganda materials as a “just war” with the objective of liberating the honourable blood brethren – the Ukrainians and Belarusians – from the yoke of oppression. It was here that Vladimir Picheta came along with academic succour for the agitators and propagandists. At party headquarters, he was regarded as a specialist in Ukraine and Belarusian history, especially the western territories.³² Literally a few days after the Soviet aggression against Poland of 17 September 1939, the aforementioned *Izvestiya* published an article by Picheta with

²⁸ Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, pp. 28–29.

²⁹ Ewa M. Thompson, ‘Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939–1941’, *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 385–99.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

³¹ This term is a reference to the Polish title of Ewa M. Thompson’s book published in English as *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000). Ewa M. Thompson, *Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, trans. by Anna Sierszulska (Kraków: Universitas, 2000).

³² In addition to academic publications made before the revolution and in the 1920s (cf. Vladimir Pičeta, ‘Istoričeskie sud’by Zapadnoj Belorussii’, in *Zapadnaja Belorussija. Sbornik statej: kniga 1* [Minsk: BGI, 1927], pp. 44–90), after arriving in Moscow Picheta also prepared a special subject programme on the history of Belarus and Ukraine for higher education institutions. See Vladimir Pičeta, *Programma special'nogo kursa po istorii Belorussii i Ukrainy* (Moskva: MGU, 1938).

the telling title "Ukrainian brothers and Belarusian brothers". In addition to articles in the central press and that of the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet republics and academic journals,³³ this historian incessantly spoke at rallies and meetings and on the radio. In summer 1940, 10,000 copies of a pamphlet were published in which he presented his main arguments, which were borrowed from his previous propaganda works.³⁴

He begins with an introduction: "Western Ukraine [...] and Western Belarus [...] are eternal lands of Rus', once part of the 'Rurikid empire'. In an ethnic sense, this population used to form one whole with other East Slavic tribes". Historical propaganda articles on Western Ukrainian themes published at this time opened similarly.³⁵ This kind of narrative was also reproduced in texts published in autumn 1939 by other authorities of Soviet historical research, including Boris Grekov, who indicated the need for in-depth research on the history of the Cherven Cities, treated as a synonym for the concept of the Kingdom of Halych-Volhynia or the Kingdom of Ruthenia.³⁶

In the model outlined by Picheta, the history of the Western Ukrainian and Western Belarusian lands began with the Rurikid dynasty, detailing the history of the Kingdom of Halych-Volhynia, then considering them in the context of the history of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and from the sixteenth century onwards exclusively in the paradigm of the class and national struggle with lordly Poland. Even the partitions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not change this – it was still the "Polish" lords who were the main oppressors. The final chord of these centuries-long struggles was the liberation of these "blood brothers" from centuries of oppression. And if the presentation of events from the previous periods could be roughly classified as the historian's personal version, Picheta's narrative regarding the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939 repeated the main arguments of the Kremlin's propaganda message as follows: "amid conditions of the collapse of

³³ Vladimir Pičeta, 'Brat'ja-ukraincy i brat'ja-belorusy: (iz istorii narodov Ukrainy i Belorussii)', *Izvestija*, 21 September 1939; id., 'Zapadnaja Belorussija: istoričeskaja spravka', *Moskovskij bol'shevik*, 30 September 1939; id., 'Istoričeskij put' Zapadnoj Belorussii i Zapadnoj Ukrainy', *Molodoj bol'shevik*, 18 (1939), 45–50; id., 'Istoričeskij put' narodov Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Oktjabr*, 10/11 (1939), 3–11; id., 'Osnovnye momenty v istoričeskich sud'bach narodov Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Istoričeskij put' Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii*, Mikrofonnye materialy Vsesojuznogo radiokomiteta № 114 (Moskva, 1939).

³⁴ Vladimir Pičeta, *Osnovnye momenty istoričeskogo razvitija Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii* (Moskva: Sotcegiz, 1940), p. 3.

³⁵ Traditionally, the introduction would begin with a statement such as "Western Ukraine – the Halych Land and Volhynia – were eternal Ruthenian lands inhabited for time immemorial by Ukrainians and Russians. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries, they were part of the Kievan State. As we know, it was at this time that the Great Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Belarusian nations were formed and the might of the great Russian nation was forged". Cited in Dmitrij Min, *Zapadnaja Ukraina* (Moskva: Gospolitizdat, 1939), p. 4.

³⁶ Boris Grekov, 'Drevnejšie sud'by Zapadnoj Ukrainy', *Novyj mir*, 10–11 (1939), 248–56 (here: 250). See also Marcin Wołoszyn, 'Zaraz po wojnie: z historii badań nad pograniczem polsko-ruskim w latach 1945–1956 (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem grodów czerwieńskich)', *Przegląd Archeologiczny*, 65 (2017), 199–224 (here: 202).

the economy, hunger and oppression of the masses as well as widespread dissatisfaction, the circles ruling Poland began war with Germany [sic].³⁷

Picheta's expert knowledge was also used when it came to marking out the administrative border between the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet republics, taking into account the territories newly annexed by the Soviet Union. In mid-September 1939, Picheta prepared the extensive study "Article on the [history of] the southern border of the BSSR", with a copy being sent to AUCP(b) CC secretary Georgy Malenkov. In a note, the historian rejected the ethnographic criterion for defining borders used in the works of "bourgeois linguists [Alexei] Shakhmatov, [Yefim] Karsky, [Timofey] Florinskiy, [Aleksei] Sobolevski, [Mykhaily] Hrushevsky", and he described Hrushevsky's views as "nationalist-chauvinistic".³⁸ In Picheta's view, the borders between the Belarusian and Ukrainian Soviet republics should run in line with the "old" administrative boundaries. These "old" boundaries approximately coincided with the line dividing the Polish Crown from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, after the partitions, the Grodno and Minsk governorates on one side and the Volhynian and Kiev ones on the other.

As well as Picheta, who represented the Soviet Academy of Sciences, a study was also prepared by a team of experts from the Belarusian Soviet republic's own academy, comprising Iosif Lochmel (historian), Moisei Grinblat (ethnographer), and Timofei Lomtev (linguist). The contents of this report and, most importantly, the conclusion were identical to the findings from Picheta's expert statement. The report compiled by the Belarusian experts noted that the border between the Belarusian and Ukrainian republics "should run along the southern boundary of the former Grodno and Minsk governorates, or – which essentially amounts to the same thing – with the southern boundary of the Polesia voivodeship of the former Polish state, excluding the Koszyrski district, which was previously part of the Volhynia voivodeship" (emphasis mine – J.Sz.).³⁹

According to the memoirs of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (CP(b)B), Panteleimon Ponomarenko, during his visit with Nikita Khrushchev (then first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party) and Stalin on 22 November 1939, discussed the question of the administrative borders between the two

³⁷ Pičeta, *Osnovnye momenty*, p. 126.

³⁸ '№ 54, Dokladnaja zapiska V.I. Pičety v rukovodjaščie partijnye organy po voprosu razgraničeniya territorij Belorussii i Ukrainy', in *Gosudarstvennye granicy Belarusi: sbornik dokumentov i materialov (nojabr' 1926 – dekabr' 2010)*, ed. by Vladimir Snapkovskij, Aleksandr Tichomirov, and Aleksandr Šarapo, 2 vols (Minsk: BGU, 2012–2013), II (2013), pp. 83–90.

³⁹ Tlumachalaya zapiska 'Da pytan'nja ab ustalavannja mjažy pamiž BSSR i USSR na terytoryi Zachodnej Belarusi i Zachodnej Ukrainy' padryhtavanaia supracounikami AN BSSR, ne paz'nei nizh 20 XI 1939, in *Vyzvalenne i zanjavolenne. Pol'ska-belaruskae pamežža 1939–1941 hb. u dakumentach belaruskich archivaŭ*, ed. by Aljaksandr Smaljančuk (Minsk: Zmicer Kolas, 2021), pp. 96–100 (here: 100). The authors of the note incorrectly include the Koszyrski district in the Volhynia voivodeship, whereas in fact it belonged to the Polesia voivodeship of the Second Polish Republic.

republics. Records of entrances and exits from Stalin's office, however, show that Khrushchev and Ponomarenko visited the leader the following day, 23 November, entering together at 20.55 and leaving at 21.50.⁴⁰

The initial plans entailed inclusion of Brest, Pinsk, Kobryn and most of the Białowieża Forest in the USSR. Ponomarenko claimed that Stalin deemed this division to be an "inappropriate nationality policy" during the audience, claiming that "public opinion will not understand it". As a result, the Soviet dictator drew a border on the map himself that was almost entirely consistent with Ponomarenko's proposals, based on the report by Picheta and the Belarusian Academy of Sciences experts, leaving the Koszyrski district with Kamień Koszyrski on the Ukraine side and a "small incision in the north" in a green part of the map. The reason for this was, apparently, to satisfy at least part of the Ukrainian Soviet republic's demand for wood.⁴¹

Picheta's expert work encompassed a broader range of assignments. On the request of the Soviet NKID, he was tasked with evaluating whether it was appropriate to return to the Lithuanian Republic archive materials and book collections taken to Minsk and Moscow from Vilnius in October 1939 (March 1940). As part of a commission appointed by the Central Archival Administration of the Soviet NKVD, he also verified around 20 tonnes of archives taken in December 1939 to the Central State Special Archive (June–July 1940) and issued opinions on the worthlessness of the division of exhibits from the Historical Museum in Grodno (October 1940).⁴²

Despite this strong engagement in current political affairs as an expert, Picheta's position was still uncertain. In December 1939, the Belarusian NKVD people's commissar Lavrentiy Tsanova submitted several reports on the historian to the first secretary of the republic's party central committee, Ponomarenko. He informed about the scholar's critical evaluations of the Red Army and sympathies for Poland. In his diary in February 1945, Picheta confirms that in autumn 1939 he was accused of Polonophilia, which in those times was practically synonymous with anti-Sovietism.⁴³

In the agent's materials, Picheta's comments, as recorded by NKVD informers, are as follows: "I do not agree with the policy of the Soviet authorities and will not agree, I can't stand them. Everywhere there are boors and nobody else. The USSR is a fascist torture chamber, not a socialist

⁴⁰ *Na prieme u Stalina: tetrady, žurnaly zapisej lic, prinjatych I. V. Stalinyim 1924–1953 gg.*, ed. by Anatolij Černobaev (Moskva: Novyj chronograf, 2008), p. 281.

⁴¹ Georgij Kumanev, *Rjadom so Stalinyim. Otkrovennye svidel'stva: vstreči, besedy, interv'ju, dokumenty* (Moskva: Bylina, 1999), pp. 298–300. Cited in '№ 55. Iz vospominanij byvshego pervogo Sekretarja CK Kompartii Belorussii P. K. Ponomarenko ob ustanovlenii gosudarstvennyh granic meždu BSSR i USSR', in *Gosudarstvennye granicy Belarusi*, pp. 91–94.

⁴² Michail Šumejko, 'Naučno-pedagogičeskaja i obščestvennaja dejatel'nost' V.I. Pičety nakanune i v gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny', in *Pičetovskie čtenija – 2020: vojny v istorii čelovečestva. K 75-letiju Pobedy nad fašizmom: materialy meždunarodnoj naučno-prakičeskoj konferencii*, Minsk, 21 okt. 2020 g., ed. by Aleksandr Kochanovskij, Michail Šumejko, and Oleg Janovskij (Minsk: BGU, 2020), pp. 33–45 (here: 37, 39).

⁴³ Szumski, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa', p. 154.

country. Everything they write in newspapers is idolatry and idiocy". Asked why he gave the authorities his support, Picheta answered: "I only do it to stay alive".⁴⁴

Picheta's final entries in his diary soon before his death confirm just what a distorted world the "troubadours of the empire" of the time inhabited: "I worked for the good of the nation in the past, and again I'm working for a future 'socialist paradise' that will never come. This is demagogic delusion of the masses. We are great monks (Rus: molchalniki) who vow silence. We are allowed to sing 'Hallelujah' and 'Hosanna', but God forbid we tell the truth and say what is said in private, when you are certain that no one will inform on you".⁴⁵

In late September and early October 1939, academic sessions were held in Moscow, Kyiv and Minsk at the headquarters of the Soviet, Ukrainian and Belarusian academies of sciences, with the papers being published soon afterwards in academic journals and joint publications.⁴⁶ The tone of the campaign was set by the Moscow scholars. Apart from Picheta and Grekov, a Soviet lawyer and full member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Ilya Trainin, contributed a major article, arguing after lengthy deliberations on the legality of the incorporation of the eastern lands of the Second Polish Republic that "the nations liberated by the Red Army joined the common family of Soviet nations, and there is no power today that could break this great voluntary alliance".⁴⁷

The main thrust of the texts produced by Soviet historians from the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet republics was undisguised distaste towards the Polish state in its various incarnations, from ancient times to the Poland reborn in 1918. They repeated almost word for word the propaganda message about the "bankruptcy of the Polish state", the "monstrous bastard of the Versailles Treaty that existed at the cost of oppressed non-Polish nationalities", and about the war into which "imprudent rulers drove" the Polish people, and so on. They highlighted the artificial and even criminal nature of the former Republic, stressing the class and national oppression of the enslaved nations – the Ukrainians and Belarusians – chaos and anarchy, and lack of capacity for independent existence. The main idea of these works was clearly anti-Polish and anti-Western, with the historians' role reduced to legitimizing the official version of events.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Šumejko, 'Naučno-pedagogičeskaja', p. 35.

⁴⁵ Szumski, 'Władimir Piczeta i Żanna Kormanowa', p. 158.

⁴⁶ See: Grekov, 'Drevnejšie sud'by Zapadnoj Ukrainy', pp. 248–56; *Zachodnjaja Belarus' pad panskim hmetam i jae vyzvalenne*, ed. by Nikolaj Nikol'ski, and Iosif Ločmel' (Minsk, 1940); *Zachidna Ukrajina*, ed. by Serhij Bjelousov and Oleksandr Ohloblyn (Kyjiv: AN USSR, 1940).

⁴⁷ Il'ja Trajnin, 'Nacional'noe i social'noe osvoboždenie Zapadnoj Ukrainy i Zapadnoj Belorussii', *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR*, 8–9 (1939), 1–24 (here: 24).

⁴⁸ Nikolaj Mezga, 'Vossoedinenie Zapadnoj Belarusi s BSSR i Zapadnoj Ukrainy s USSR v otrazhenii sovetskogo istoriografii 1939–1941 gg.', *Časopis Belaruskaha dzjaržainaha ūniversyteta. Historyja*, 3 (2017), 55–60 (here: 59).

CONCLUSION

The practice of the operation of the apparatus of power in Soviet Russia and the USSR showed that without the help of "bourgeois specialists" or "poputchiks" the forced modernization of the economy and society could not be achieved. The same was true in research of history. Despite the emergence in the historical field of graduates of the Institute of Red Professors and the Sverdlov Communist University and other institutions with party ties that toed the party line, the new generation of regime historians (Rus. *vydvizhenets*) were unable to ensure lasting academic foundations in accounting for the turn in perception of Russia's imperial heritage and its territorial expansion policy.

The experiences of exile and the awareness of constant threat had a major impact on the attitudes of the products of the old Russian historian school who survived the flames of revolution. The adoption of Marxist methodological tools formally completed the "ideological rebuilding" of the pre-revolutionary scholars, some of whom, incidentally, arrived at Marxism from the positivist and neo-positivist trends.

The paradigm of history that was built alluded in the civilizational dimension to the tradition of "Slavic community" with its roots in the period of Kievan Rus', emphasized the processes of Polonization and conversion to Catholicism, and underlined Ukrainians' and Belarusians' constant aspiration to join with the Great Russian. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania then was a state founded by Lithuanian liege lords as a result of conquest, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a state of Polish nobility and magnates where exploitation and oppression of enslaved nations were rife. The Ukrainians' and Belarusians' centuries of shared history as part of the former Commonwealth were seen as essentially wasted time, viewed solely in terms of national oppression and class struggle with the Polish magnatery. In this paradigm, the partitions of the Commonwealth were entirely justified, and inclusion of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands in the empire of the House of Romanov was a "historically progressive act".⁴⁹ Similar arguments were used to justify the Soviet aggression against Poland in September 1939.

⁴⁹ In the case of the history of the Ukrainian lands, the Pereiaslav Agreement of 1654 and Khmelnytsky's decision to join Tsarist Russia were treated as symbols of unity and a precursor of the ultimate unification of all Eastern Slavic lands under Moscow's control. The task of Ukrainian historians and ideologues was to present the alliance with Moscow as the culmination of Ukrainian history and reconcile the historical mythology of his nation with the imperial narrative of the centre. Serhij Jekel'čyk, *Imperija pam'jati. Rosijs'ko-ukrajins'ki stosunky v radjans'kij istoričnij ujavi* (Kyjiv: Krytyka, 2008), pp. 69–70.

As one of the scholars dealing with the subject of East Slavic nations, Vladimir Picheta played a prominent role in expanding and elaborating the concept of the single (Rus. *yedinyi*) Ruthenian nation as a common progenitor for Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. The political importance of this construction increased markedly in September 1939, when the Soviet aggression against Poland was treated no longer in terms of export of revolution and bringing help to the global proletariat but as an act of historical justice – combining the missing parts (Western Ukrainian and Western Belarusian) with Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians into one whole.

In the new paradigm of history, the centuries-long common struggle of brethren nations with invaders ended with the unification of all lands within a uniform state organism. Despite continual curbs in the form of being part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or Commonwealth, the entire course of history led to the three nations ultimately coming together into one whole. Kievan Rus', as the genesis of the Soviet Union, was reborn in the strengthened and expanded format of the "nations of the USSR" with a leading role for the Russian nation. History thus came full circle.

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