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THE LANGUAGE OF PUSHKIN AND LENIN: THE ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN EDUCATING STUDENTS FROM THE DEVELOPING WORLD IN THE 1960s SOVIET UNION

First day in Moscow! First meeting with Russian people, with Russian nature, the weather, with Russian traditions and language! I will always remember that day. I ride on a tram. There are people around me. What are they talking about? I do not know. Strange language! I try to listen but cannot separate one sound from another. How are these people able to understand each other? Maybe this language consists of different sounds. Where are a, v, s, d, e, z, f? I cannot recognize them or separate them from one another. Days went by. I could already ask "What is this? Who is that student?" So day by day I slowly created myself a path to this rich and still unknown forest. And now, finally, I can hear the voice of A. M. Gorky: "Morning. I love to watch how the day is being born. The first ray of sun appears on the sky, and the darkness of the night slowly withdraws to the mountains. The sun is coming!" And not only with Gorky, I can now discuss with hundreds and hundreds of people of culture, art and science. Language opened me a path to the achievements of a great nation.

(An Algerian student on his relation to the Russian language, *Druzhba* 25.5.1962, p. 1)

The goal of this article is to analyze the role of the Russian language in educating students from the developing world in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. As a result of the re-introduction of internationalism¹ as part of Soviet foreign policy from the mid-1950s onwards, thousands of students from all over the newly-independent states of the developing world were encouraged to pursue higher education in the Soviet Union. This group of students was spread between hundreds of Soviet universities and other institutions of higher education, but the single most important among them was the Peoples' Friendship University² in Moscow that was founded in 1960 specifically to promote cooperation between the Soviet Union and the newly independent countries of the developing world in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Rupprecht 2010). Learning Russian was essential for the successful completion of studies in the USSR, but it had also ideological applications. Russian had traditionally held the position of the language of international socialism, and one of the goals of the Thaw era internationalism was to spread the Soviet sphere of influence to the developing world with Russian as the lingua franca of Soviet imagined geography of socialism. The article aims to discuss both practical and ideological questions related to the Russian language and language learning among the international students in the 1960s.

The original sources used in this article consist of archival materials concerning the Peoples' Friendship University and especially its Komsomol organization, as well as the university's student newspaper *Druzhba* ('Friendship'). The archival materials used consist mostly of different kinds of reports on Komsomol activities at the Peoples' Friendship University, as well as material from higher levels of Soviet administration delivered to the university administration and the political organizations within it. *Druzhba* was a biweekly newspaper written by the students and the staff of Peoples' Friendship University. Its articles concentrated on everyday life at the university as well as occasional commentaries on Soviet and international politics. As with all Soviet journalism, the contents of the newspaper were strictly controlled, and the quotes analyzed in this article are closely replicating the norms of speech of the Cold War Era Soviet public sphere. In other words, the quotes analyzed cannot be perceived only as personal opinions of

¹ On Thaw era internationalism, see Gilburd 2013: 382–389; Zubok 2009: 88–120. For a detailed account on internationalism in the case of Soviet-Latin American relations, see: Rupprecht 2015. For cases of solidarity movements towards the developing world in Eastern European countries outside the USSR, see Mark & Apor 2015, Mark et al. 2015.

² Also known as Lumumba University as it was named after Patrice Lumumba, a Congolese political activist.

the interviewed, but more as public commentaries on Soviet educational and international ideals that apply the vocabulary and style used in Soviet journalism.

Early nationalities policy employed within the post-revolutionary Soviet society serves as an example of how the state later approached the developing world and what kind of models of development it could provide for these countries. During the 1920s, the minority nationalities of the Soviet Union were given their national territories and the minority languages an official status as part of the decolonizing rhetoric of the era. These policies demonstrated that Soviet power was not Russian but international (Martin 2001: 10–13; cf. Hirsch 2005). At the same time the Soviet population was divided into two categories based on their level of development. Cultural backwardness, which was a feature of nationalities considered developmentally backward, served as a justification of preferential treatment. The Soviet policies towards these nationalities stressed the importance of education in order to create a national elite consisting of literate, educated titular nationals (Martin 2001: 23–24).

Many elements of the internal nationalities' policy of the 1920s were also applied to cooperation with the developing world. The most important borrowed elements were those describing the Soviet Union as an actor promoting decolonization in contrast to colonial powers, such as imperial Russia or Western colonial powers. The Soviet Union did not perceive itself as an imperial power, as it was an international voluntary union ruled by the principle of friendship of peoples. On the other hand, the Soviet state was openly placing cultures on a hierarchical scale of development, stressing education as a means of creating development both within the Soviet Union and in its cooperating partners globally.¹

The opening of Soviet higher education to international students had started after World War II. Already in the late 1940s there were students from East European Peoples' republics studying in Soviet universities. (Tromly 2014a.) But cooperation² with countries of the developing world in the field of higher education started slowly in the late 1950s, and the foundation of the Peoples' Friendship University in 1960 was a clear attempt to boost this cooperation and increase Soviet influence in the newly-independent countries of the developing world.³ The strategy was also successful, as from merely 46 students in the academic year 1956/1957, the number of students from developing countries in the USSR grew to over 1667 individuals by 1961. In 1963 there were approximately 10000 international students in Moscow, 3500 of them from capitalist and developing countries, mostly from the Third world. 2200 of them studied in the Peoples' Friendship University, which demonstrates the leading position of this university among the students of the developing world. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 336, 39.) By 1970, the university had grown into an institution of approximately 4000 students, 75% of them from 84 developing countries, with 500 foreign and Soviet specialists graduating every year. (TsAODM, f. P-4376, o. 1, d. 79, 49.) All of them completed their education in Russian.

Peoples' Friendship University was the only institution of higher education in the Soviet Union that chose its students independently through a committee that went through applications sent directly to the university. Foreign students placed in other universities came through scholarship programs, offered by different actors, such as the International Union of Students. In both cases there was constant discussion on the educational level of the chosen students, as it was constantly lower than that of Soviet high school students, especially in mathematics and natural sciences. The university administration at Peoples' Friendship University aimed to choose only students who had finished at least high school, but still around 15–25% of new students each year had only unfinished high school studies in their educational background.

¹ On Soviet universities during the Thaw, see Tromly 2014b.

² For an overview on Soviet cooperation with the developing world, see Engerman, 2011. For a more specific account about the Soviet cooperation in Africa, see Mazov, 2010. For discussion on the current state of Cold War studies on a global scale, see Suri 2006 and 2011.

³ See Westad 2005.

Furthermore, a rather small minority of students had already finished the first year of university studies either in their country of origin or in the West. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 294, 107.)

Many of the students arriving to the Soviet Union were also seriously ill: many of them were diagnosed with malaria, tuberculosis, or skin and venereal diseases. Some female students were 5–8 months pregnant when arriving to the Soviet Union. Almost one third of the new students were at some point during the academic year sent to sanatoriums to recover from their illnesses. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 295, 32.) This demonstrates the difficult conditions in the students' countries of origin, but also the problems related to the process of choosing the students, as some of them were in fact incapable of studying.

The low educational level and in many cases poor health of the international students were accompanied by the fact that none of them knew Russian upon arrival to the USSR. The first year of studies was spent in the preparatory faculty, which concentrated on teaching Russian. Later classes of the Russian language were also added to the curriculum of the second year of studies. In addition, already during the spring semester of the first year of studies the students had lectures on subjects such as mathematics, physics, geography, literature and history, depending on their future specialization, to compensate their weak educational background and to learn the specialized vocabulary of their field. Still, it was noted that poor knowledge of Russian affected the students' performance in their studies especially during the first few years, but in certain cases even when they were defending their theses after 5–6 years of studying in the Soviet Union. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 338, 82–85.)

It was constantly noted that despite the other disadvantageous factors affecting the students' performance, it was in particular their weak skills in the Russian language that prevented them from studying properly. There were more language-related problems in lectures of humanities and social sciences, while more technical fields of study were easier to adopt even with weaker Russian skills. To improve the situation especially during the first year of studies, the professors tried to use as many loan words from Latin as possible to improve the students' understanding. In addition, Soviet students with knowledge of foreign languages took part in the lectures by helping to translate words and concepts into foreign languages. Even the professors themselves tried to learn the central concepts in French, Spanish, and English to enhance the learning process. At the same time, it was noted that while knowledge of foreign languages was a benefit for the teachers, it was not obligatory. And indeed, even among the teachers of the preparatory faculty who worked with the international students from the first days after their arrival to the Soviet Union, only a small minority had even basic knowledge of any foreign language. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 338, 87–89.)

A concrete example of the problems related to language was the situation of Ceylonese students at the Peoples' Friendship University in the early 1960s. Most of the students spoke only Sinhalese without any knowledge of English, and there were no Russian-Sinhalese dictionaries available. It was noted by the university administration that the students were struggling with their studies especially during the second term of the preparatory faculty year when they started to study natural and social sciences in Russian. On the other hand, the students mentioned that they really liked their teachers of the Russian language and already in 1961 three of their teachers were learning Sinhalese. The students also tried to come up with a Russian-Sinhalese dictionary by themselves to help the future Ceylonese students. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 407, 41–45.)

These problems with both the teachers' pedagogical knowledge as well the study materials available were also noted by the central administration responsible for higher education and work with international students. Already in 1962, the Ministry of Higher Education gave an order to radically increase the number of places in university study programs for teachers of Russian as a foreign language. Also the pedagogical competence of teachers currently working in different Soviet universities had to be elevated. The learning tools available in different uni-

versities had to be improved and there was also a need for new textbooks of the Russian language aimed at speakers of different languages. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 310, 78–82.) While the Peoples' Friendship University was a showcase institution of Soviet higher education and international cooperation with language laboratories and a comprehensive library, the situation was more primitive in smaller universities of the Soviet republics in terms of both technical equipment and availability of teachers trained to work with foreign students.

The following excerpts of an article published by the student newspaper *Druzhba* describe the experiences of Indian students in the preparatory faculty at the same time providing some insights to the methods used with the international students:

I felt like a 7-year-old kid going to school. There were seven of us in one group, and we were shown some letters of the Russian alphabet. Our teacher explained to us very well, how to write each of the letters and how to pronounce each sound. She listened to us carefully and patiently corrected our mistakes. I do not think Russian language is difficult. [--] At the moment all these letters seem very strange to me, it is difficult to pronounce the sounds. In order to learn how to pronounce correctly, we listen to records in the evenings and try to repeat the words by ourselves. Our teacher speaks good English, so it is easier to follow the lessons. (Druzhba 24.10.1965, p. 3.)

Especially in the preparatory faculty students were placed in small groups of less than ten people based on their mother tongue. In many cases students from the same country studied together. In addition to the textbook, the students had access to language laboratories and were able to practice their pronunciation with the help of a record player. And as this excerpt shows, some teachers were also fluent in foreign languages, which made communication with the students easier. The students were also strongly encouraged to practice their spoken Russian with the Soviet people, as this excerpt of an article written by a teacher of the Russian language states:

By coincidence I happened to meet two students on the bus and had a talk with one of them. The other one only listened and nodded his head in agreement. I asked him why he was so quiet. – I do not speak good Russian, he said. These two students were from the same group, came from the same country and had started their studies at the same time. What was the problem? Why did one of them speak more or less freely in Russian, while the other one remained quiet? This student was afraid of making mistakes and was shy to speak to Russians. And was only doing himself harm. In the auditorium the teacher gives only the basics of practical knowledge of Russian. The rest is up to the student to practice independently. You should speak Russian everywhere: on the street, in the metro, on the bus. Listen to the radio, go to the movies and theatre. And read, read. Read the signs on shop counters, newspapers, brochures, books. (Druzhba 25.5.1962, p. 1.)

In other words, even the teachers realized that the amount of teaching of the Russian language provided by the university was alone not enough for building strong language skills. In order to be able to study subjects such as mathematics or geography after only half a year of studying Russian and taking into account the poor educational background of many students, they were required to learn the language very fast. Thus, activities to practice and use Russian also outside the classrooms were strongly encouraged. Despite the fact that the Peoples' Friendship University had in many ways one of the best learning environments for learning Russian as a foreign language in the 1960s Soviet Union, surprisingly many students faced problems especially in their spoken language even after years of living and studying in the Soviet Union. For some students, such as the first group of Ceylonese students in the beginning of 1960s, this was partly due to the lack of suitable study materials available in the language spoken by the students, but in many other cases the problems were caused by the lack of communication with Soviet students.

The number of Soviet students in Peoples' Friendship University varied drastically from approximately 10% in the first years to almost a third in the 1970s. In 1962, the guidelines of the university stated that Soviet students should be chosen from different parts of the Soviet Union, as the university was expected to be an all-Union showcase institution of international education. The plan gave the following quotas: 45 students from Russia, 29 from Ukraine, 10 from Belarus, two students from each of the Caucasus states, three students from Kazakhstan and two from other Central Asian states, one student from each of the Baltic states, and one student

from Moldova. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 295, 60.) The candidates were expected to have at least two years of work experience and good knowledge of foreign languages. They were supposed to be members of the Komsomol or the party, and most importantly, have good abilities to combine university studies with active societal work with the international students. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 295, 1.) In reality, out of the 100 new Soviet students in 1961, 83 were from Russia, the majority of them either from the city of Moscow or the area surrounding it. From Central Asia arrived three students from Kazakhstan. Many areas listed in the guidelines, including all Baltic and Caucasus states, could not send any students to the university. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 295, 31.)

In the mid-1930s the approach towards minority nationalities changed and the Russians were perceived as “the first among equals” among the Soviet nations and the role of other nationalities was to follow the example set by them. The Soviet Union was described as a historically constituted community of nations, where the Russians had a leading role, while the other nationalities were exoticized. Since the Soviet state was international, Russian national identity was also defined as socialist and international. In other words, Russian national identity was submerged into the Soviet whole. All non-Russians of the Soviet Union were required to learn Russian and familiarize themselves with Russian culture. The Russian people, language and culture served to unify the Soviet Union and Soviet citizens of other nationalities were encouraged to identify their national interests with Soviet interests.¹ The role of the Russian language as a means of international communication was stressed. Russian served both as a language of mutual communication of the different Soviet nationalities and the language of world socialist classics. (Martin 2001, 442–443, 452–457, 461.)

An Indian PhD student repeats these themes in his article on why he likes the Russian language:

What makes Russian language mighty? In my opinion it is first and foremost the language of Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Sholokhov and other giants of Russian literature. It is also mighty because it is the language of October, the language of Lenin, the language of the people that was the first to construct socialism: it is the language of great deeds and the language of science. (Druzhba 29.6.1979, p. 4)

Brigitte Studer has found similar themes in her analysis on the life of international Comintern workers in Moscow in the 1920s and early 1930s.² While in the early stages of international cooperation knowledge of Russian was not required from foreigners residing in Moscow, since the 1930s Russian was increasingly promoted as the language of socialism. Knowledge of Russian became a sign of political loyalty, and foreigners were also expected to learn the “politlanguage”, the way and vocabulary of speaking politics within the Soviet sphere. (Studer 2015, 71–72, 133.) Thus, certain patterns from post-revolutionary and Stalinist periods, such as the canon of Russian writers and stress on Lenin and October, can be seen to repeat in the Thaw atmosphere especially in terms of public speech to protect the ideological core of the Soviet system.³ The style of speaking was clearly replicating the language used in publications such as *USSR in construction* that was published in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s and provided a propagandistic view to the happy everyday life in the socialist state. This style of language was visible in all Soviet published materials, and the student newspaper *Druzhba* was no exception. As the excerpts analyzed demonstrate, the students interviewed constantly replicated the desired norms of public communication by their choice of words, examples, and concepts as well as the overall style of these public comments.

The idea of Russian as the language of socialism was also visible in the working culture of Peoples’ Friendship University. The overwhelming majority of Soviet students chosen to study

¹ For more discussion on the topic, see Blitstein 2006a and 2006b, Shaw 2016.

² On the everyday life of Africans in Moscow during this period, see Matusevich 2008 and McClellan 2007.

³ On Soviet language usage [hiukan, parilla sanalla tarkemmin, mitä kielenkäyttöä Thom käsittelee], see Thom 1987.

together with the international students were Russian, while many developing areas of the USSR or the languages of their peoples were not present at all.¹ This creates an interesting dichotomy of modernization and development within the Soviet society presented to the international students: in Moscow, they were expected to experience and learn from the highest stage of socialism together with their Russian peers.² The cultural program organized for the students concentrated strongly on classic and Soviet literature in Russian, and on Russian art and music. Russian was the language of their studies and the language of mutual communication with their Russian and international peers at the university and on a larger scale, with all the peoples of the Soviet Union.

Still, this stress on the Russian language and culture was a relatively new phenomenon even within the Soviet state. Only since 1938 had it been obligatory to study Russian in non-Russian schools of the Soviet Union, and in fact knowledge of Russian that the non-Russian children gained in schools remained poor for the next decade due to the lack of textbooks and competent teachers. Also the war influenced the situation, causing an even more serious demand for educated teachers in different parts of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Russian was the language of the Red Army, so in this sense the war also created a new generation of Russian speakers from the men who served in the army. Only after Stalin's death in 1953 there was a clear increase in the official efforts devoted to expanding the role of Russian as the language of the Soviet people. Only after the educational reforms of 1958 was the native-language education in autonomous republics reduced, and non-Russian parents had the chance to send their children to a Russian school. (Blitstein 2001, 253–254, 266–267.)

The non-Russian nature of certain Soviet republics was also visible to the foreign students staying in these republics. In a report sent to the Komsomol Central Committee in 1961, it was noted that in Tbilisi Georgian students were confusing the international students by talking about Russian imperialism. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 269, 34–37.) In medical universities of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic some lectures were given in Ukrainian, though the foreign students had only been taught Russian (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 337, 73). It was also noted in several reports that in republics such as Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan many local students spoke very poor Russian, which did not allow the international students to practice their spoken language skills with their peers.

On the other hand, the non-Russian languages of the Soviet Union also had an impact on certain foreign students, as this Pakistani student's comment on why he originally got interested in the Soviet Union demonstrates:

The culture of Central Asia is close to my culture. The Uzbek language and Urdu have approximately 40% of common vocabulary, so already at home I was listening to radio broadcasts from Tashkent and could understand them. They told me a lot about the Soviet Union and created a wish to live here for some time. (Druzhba 12/1967, 4.)

The role of developing parts of the Soviet Union, especially Central Asia,³ was to serve as an example for the developing world to follow. Groups of students from the developing world, also from Peoples' Friendship University, were taken on excursions to Central Asia to see the development that had taken place during the socialist period. Usually these excursions to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan included visits to local kolkhozes, factories, universities and other educational institutions. Visiting modern cities such as Tashkent (Stronski 2010) or Alma-Ata provided the students with a view on how their countries could also develop under the socialist

¹ However, in the 1950s and 1960s Soviet Central Asian citizens were in many cases used as mediators of Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East. See: Kirasirova 2011.

² On experiences of Central Asian and Caucasian Soviet citizens in Moscow in the 1960s and 1970s, see: Sahadeo 2012.

³ On early decades of Soviet rule in Central Asia, see: Khalid 2015 and Edgar 2004. For a comparative perspective on the topic, see also Khalid 2006.

economic system. The role of the Russian language and culture as the highest form of civilization was overwhelming, while the role of other Soviet peoples was to demonstrate development, movement towards Russia in terms of both economic and cultural factors.

Thus, Soviet students had a major role in providing a good example to the foreign students and introducing them to life in a socialist society. On the level of administration, it was constantly discussed that the majority of students failed to fulfill these expectations. In the university dormitories the goal was that as many rooms as possible should have international and Soviet students living together in order to provide the foreign students possibilities to practice their Russian and make friends with the Soviet students. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 310, 144.) In fact, numerous cases of undesired behavior by Soviet students were recorded in the dormitories by the university's Komsomol. In one particularly descriptive case, an enthusiastic Sudanese student was placed in the same room with a Soviet student. The Sudanese student was eager to discuss politics and practice his Russian with his Soviet roommate, who, on the contrary, did his best to distract the foreign student from these discussions by playing him jazz on his record player. (RGASPI f. M-3, o. 3, d. 264, 89.) In the archival materials this is not a unique case, as it was constantly noted that the Soviet students were not interested in making friends with foreign students, and in some cases it was even noted that prostitutes and other "low-character" individuals of Soviet society were the only contacts with the Soviet people the international students had. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 336, 43-46.)

In this environment, the students were encouraged not only to learn Russian for practical reasons, but also to generate an emotional relation to the language, as this quote from a teacher of Russian language demonstrates:

We would wish that Russian would not only be a language through which you understand science. We would like that you would read in Russian how we, the Russians, love and hate, rejoice and grieve, what kind of a difficult path we have walked and are still walking towards the resolution of the most difficult problems of human life and morality, how we fought for our happiness. (Druzhba 25.5.1962, p. 1.)

A quote from a Jordanian student replicates the same theme:

I entered the university knowing no Russian and not being familiar with the culture of the peoples of the Soviet Union. The reason for this was that the Western propaganda and the politics led by the reactionist politicians in my country prevented acquaintance with Soviet culture, with Russian language and literature, with the books of Pushkin, Lermontov, Gorky and other wonderful Russian writers and poets. But I am sure that a time will come when my people will have free access to the culture of the great socialist country. (Druzhba 25.5.1962, p. 1.)

In other words, the students were encouraged to learn not only from their Russian peers surrounding them in their everyday life, but also, and perhaps more importantly, from the ideals presented in Russian literature and political thought. As in the field of Soviet nationalities' policy, the Russian language and culture was synonymous to the Soviet language and culture, at the same time forming the core of "Soviet reality" that the students were supposed to experience and learn from, not only in their everyday life, but through literary works and other idealized representations. As stated above, it was not only important to understand science in Russian or to be able to make friends in Russian, but to learn from the Russian experience and form an emotional bond with the Soviet Union, which is exactly the process the student's quote is describing. This fits the official ideological goal of the foreign students' education at the Peoples' Friendship University, which was to turn them into "good friends of the Soviet Union". This ideological friendship was hoped to translate into popular support to the Soviet form of socialism in the developing world and was the most important goal of Soviet educational cooperation.

To enhance Soviet political influence and create new socialist political elites in the developing world, students were encouraged to form networks among themselves. It was stressed that Russian was not only the language of Soviet people, but also the language of the international student community within the Peoples' Friendship University:

My wishes change quickly and only in one aspect they are permanent: I want to be fluent in Russian faster. For this goal I do everything I can. I read signs and announcements on the streets, I watch Soviet movies, I speak with

my friends in Russian, I listen to the radio. When I am among Russian people I listen to their discussions without thinking whether it is right or wrong. I know some songs and poems in Russian. I cannot say that I would understand everything, but I still read Soviet newspapers and magazines. I think one must learn to use the dictionary fast and then never stop using it. In winter I learned all the words connected to this season. I remember such wonderful words like frost, snowstorm, skates, skis. And how many "spring" words are there in the Russian language! It is funny to remember now how I once went the clinic and could not answer in Russian to a simple question "What is your name?" It is very good that students from different countries, Africa and Latin America, from India and from Cuba, all speak in the great Russian language. (Comment of a Nigerian student, Druzhba 25.5.1962, p. 1.)

The Indian students study together with thousands of young men and women from dozens of countries around the world. Many of them do not know the mother tongues of each other. The Russian language unites them. With the help of Russian language, we not only study our fields of specialization, but we also learn a lot about each other's countries, their problems, culture etc. These young people are the future of the world. So as Peoples' Friendship University gives them knowledge on different subjects, the Russian language has a major role in creating tighter bonds of mutual understanding among the students. (Druzhba 24.10.1965, p. 3.)

As noted in the first quote, despite his great motivation the Nigerian student seemed to have few possibilities to talk with his Russian peers. Among Russian people he listened to their discussions in secret. Instead, he spoke Russian as a member of the multicultural community of the Peoples' Friendship University, where Russian was used as a lingua franca. Again, it is noted that it is not only important to study one's specialization in Russian, as the Russian language was also a key for networking and building global contacts. These global contacts were carrying political meaning and thus the idea of Russian as the language of socialism is replicated.

However, this idea was constantly challenged by other ideologies present within the student community. Some of the students were openly interested in ideologies such as Maoism or Pan-Africanism¹ and spreading these ideas within the student community and especially among their own countrymen, as was constantly noted the students preferred to make friends and stay in contact first and foremost with students from the same country or continent.²

To tackle these problems, the educational authorities of the Soviet Union came up with several possible improvements in the process of choosing the students and providing them education in the Soviet Union. The Soviet embassies that were responsible for promoting the information about study opportunities in the Soviet Union through local organizations and media were constantly criticized for not doing their work properly in questions related to foreign students. The students arrived to the USSR unprepared, expecting luxurious conditions of living and high scholarships. It was constantly noted that Russian should be taught already in the countries of origin to diminish problems caused by the lack of knowledge of the Russian language while in the USSR. The importance of the work done in preparatory faculties was stressed and it was noted that separate preparatory faculties for students aiming to study humanities and technical fields would be useful in order to absorb the specialized vocabulary already during the preparatory faculty. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 310, 45–47.)

On the other hand, the Komsomol noted that the preparatory faculties concentrated too much on just teaching the language, when in fact it would have been equally important to provide the students with political and ideological education at the same time. According to Soviet authorities, many students had not realized that the Soviet Union was still in the process of building socialism and this required hard work. When facing problems such as bureaucracy or racism, many students started to question the Soviet model of development. The majority of African and Arab students came from bourgeois families and some of them had spent time in London and Paris before arriving in the USSR, thus adopting an anti-Soviet attitude. This is the reason these groups more than others required individual education that would take into account their social background and national features. Thus, besides classroom activities, also

¹ On ideological disputes between the Soviet and African intellectuals, see Katsakioris 2006. On the forms of activism among the African students, see Katsakioris 2007.

² On African student activism in the 1960s Moscow, see Hessler 2006.

activities during the students' leisure time were of major importance. These included lectures, meetings, informal gatherings, and holiday programs. (RGASPI f. M-3, o. 3, d. 264, 96.)

To fulfill the ideological goals set for the language education, the authorities stated that articles from progressive newspapers would be useful study material for the students to practice their reading and to learn new vocabulary. On the other hand, it was noted that there should be more textbooks on the basics of natural sciences and other fields available in foreign languages to enable the students to learn essential contents of their fields of study faster. In addition, more ideologically suitable novels and progressive newspapers and magazines in foreign languages should be available to the students, as this might diminish the amount of smuggling anti-Soviet material to the dormitories. (RGASPI f.1, o.46, d.310, 48–49.) Just one example of this smuggling were the activities of Chinese students in Moscow. They were actively spreading Maoist literature in 20 different languages among the international student population of Moscow.¹ (RGASPI f. M-3, o. 3, d. 264, 87.)

To answer these counter propaganda threats, the Soviet administration employed also actors outside the university to provide ideological education to the international students. One of the most important examples of these was the Friendship House (Dom Druzhby) located in central Moscow. The basis for the education it provided was created during the Russian language classes of the preparatory faculty. The House also aimed to reach students beyond the second year of studies, when they finished their classes of the Russian language at the university. The activities included lectures and discussions, also in foreign languages such as English, French, Spanish, Arabian and Vietnamese. The themes were mostly connected to the Soviet Union or to the Soviet cooperation with the developing world. In addition, the House organized cultural programs, such as concerts and film screenings, and hosted student-organized seminars for African, Latin American, and for a short period of time also Arab students. The activities of these seminars were in many cases multilingual, aiming to bring together foreign students and Soviet students interested in these specific geographical areas. (RGASPI f. M-1, o. 46, d. 336, 129–141.)

In conclusion, it can be said that the position of the Russian language both as the lingua franca of the multinational Soviet Union and as the language of international socialism is very visible in the rhetoric on why it was important for international students to learn Russian. They were strongly encouraged to not only use Russian for their everyday life and studies, but also to create an emotional bond to the language and thus to the Soviet state. The most important representations of the Russian language were the Russian revolution and Leninist thought, and also classical Russian literature such as the works of Pushkin and Tolstoy. Thus, the pattern strongly replicated the idea of the Russian language and culture as the language and culture of the Soviet Union. Other Soviet languages and cultures served as examples of development and movement towards Russia in terms of economy and culture. This was also the model of development presented to the developing world.

The Soviet model of development presented to the students alongside the goal of making them into “good friends of the Soviet Union” served the Soviet goal of creating a new educated group of Soviet-minded and politically active citizens in the developing world. In order to enhance these political goals, the students were encouraged to create global networks that used Russian as the lingua franca. Still, the learning environment at the Peoples' Friendship University and in the 1960s Moscow in general remained multilingual. Some students had little contacts with their Soviet peers and instead made friends with either their countrymen or people from the same continent. In addition, actors such as foreign embassies or the Chinese student community in Moscow provided the students with anti-Soviet material in several languages. Thus, also the Soviet administration organized bilingual events to bring together Soviet and

¹ On the Chinese influence on the Third World, see Jian 2013.

foreign students and aimed to provide the students with progressive literature and newspapers in foreign languages.

However, most problems related to learning Russian were not ideological, but in many cases very practical, even though the Peoples' Friendship University as well as the higher levels of Soviet administration of higher education constantly worked to improve the situation. Despite their poor educational background and health problems, the students were expected to learn enough Russian in half a year to be able to start studying the basics of their future specialization as well as the specialized vocabulary of their field already in the spring semester of their first year of studies. In some cases, lack of dictionaries or other necessary study materials caused additional problems and the universities tried to support the students in the beginning of their studies by translating the central concepts of lectures and by providing some study materials also in foreign languages. Even the teachers of the Russian language noted that the time spent in classroom was alone not enough for building a strong knowledge of Russian. Thus, the students were encouraged to dedicate their time outside the classroom to Soviet literature, films, and media products. This also served the goal of creating an emotional bond to the language, though it was noted that also the contents of the Russian language classes should support the ideological goals of the education. Thus, there was a constant imbalance between the students struggling in their studies due to weak knowledge of the specialized terminology in Russian, and the requirements of the Soviet administration to include even more ideological contents in the language classes in order to support the political goals of education.

Still, the vast majority of students were able to complete their studies in Russian, graduate and find work in their field. A doctor from Nigeria sent a letter to *Druzhba* magazine, saying that in the hospital he was working in everyone lived "happily and in harmony, just like in Moscow", as there were many specialists in the hospital who got their higher education in the Soviet Union. They also spoke Russian among themselves, as it was their working language. (*Druzhba* 29.12.1971, p. 4) Thus, it is clear that the process of learning Russian produced a variety of different results. While a minority of students was struggling with the language and had little contacts to the Soviet people, the majority of them gained a strong knowledge of the language and kept using it at least to some degree after returning to their countries of origin. Thus, the goal of creating international Russian-speaking networks that were supporting the Soviet ideas of socialism was at least partly accomplished.

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