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Introduction

The papers collected in this thematic section of “*Studi Slavistici*” exemplify the response to the Call for Papers the editorial board launched in summer 2016. Our shared idea was to add a rather different voice to the supposedly big chorus that was expected to celebrate the centenary of the Russian Revolution. We therefore chose to look at cultural revolution(s) from a sociolinguistic perspective, particularly as they were, and are still today, reflected in the issue of writing systems: how the epochal changes produced after the Bolshevik revolution and, seventy years later, the collapse of the Soviet Union, are echoed in the choice of alphabets or orthographic rules. The focus of our attention became the ways in which the new revolutionary climate changed or influenced the “writing world” in its many facets, such as the war against illiteracy, the creation of new alphabets and writing systems for the peoples of the Soviet Union, the debate about the possible abandonment of the Cyrillic alphabet in favor of the more international and revolutionary Latin alphabet, and the way it was imposed in the cultural struggle of the central power against any form of national self-identification and definition within the country.

The editorial board of “*Studi Slavistici*” asked a small group of its members, happily joined by Maria Di Salvo, to formulate and propose the guidelines of the planned issue to the scientific community. We decided not to suggest a theoretical framework or to give practical recommendations as to the structuring of the papers; we only outlined some topics that it would be interesting to tackle:

- graphic and/or orthographic reforms
- language policy particularly in relation to writing systems
- Latinization, Cyrillization
- Marr’s analytical alphabet
- the birth of phonology as a field of applied work
- problems of (phonetic) transcription and transliteration

It was a great pleasure to see that our proposal aroused considerable interest among scholars: we received dozens of proposals, covering almost all the theoretical aspects and areas we were interested in.

Unfortunately, as inevitably occurs in such cases, not every author was able to submit his/her contribution, nor was every submitted contribution accepted for publication in the present volume. The result were fourteen papers, differing both thematically and methodologically, written in several languages (English, French, Italian and Russian), in which general questions as well as concrete cases are examined and discussed.

Thus, the papers collected here represent a wide variety of interesting fields. In addition to two opening articles by VLADIMIR MICHAJLOVIČ ALPATOV and DANIEL BUNČIĆ, in which the political and sociocultural implications of alphabet reforms are investigated, four contributions are dedicated to different aspects of the Ukrainian alphabet and orthographies. The papers proceed with a quantitative analysis of the post-Soviet reintroduction of the previously banned letter *r*, based on a corpus of legal texts (LIANA GOLETIANI); language policy in the 1920s-1930s, considered both from a general point of view (ROMAN HORBYK and OLENA PALKO) and with respect to different spelling reforms (KATERINA KARUNYK); and, finally, the *vexata quaestio* of the establishment of a unitary orthography (GIOVANNA SIEDINA). ALLA KOŽINOVA's paper deals with the multilingual and multigraphic situation in Belarus, while three more articles tackle questions to do with alphabets related to non-Slavonic languages of the former Soviet Union, namely the creation of alphabets for Paleosiberian languages (PAOLO OGNIBENE), the Armenian orthographic reform of 1922 (IRINA MARCHESINI) as well as Evgenij Dmitrievič Polivanov's criticism of the Abkhaz analytical alphabet (ALEKSEJ VIKTOROVIČ ANDRONOV, ELENA IL'INIČNA SIMONATO and VITTORIO S. TOMELLERI).

Other contributions treat further relevant topics, such as the theoretical (and practical) Soviet dispute over phonology in the 1920s-1930s, viewed as an important contribution to modern research rather than historically (ALEKSEJ VIKTOROVIČ ANDRONOV); they discuss the question of constructed international languages in the work of the Soviet linguist and orientalist Nikolaj Vladimirovič Jušmanov (SÉBASTIEN MORET), provide an imagological approach to the analysis of Cyrillic before and after the orthographic reform of 1917-1918 (SHAMIL KHAIROV), or examine the different stylistic possibilities offered to contemporary authors by the graphic variation of Latin and Cyrillic in contemporary Russian literature (KLAVDIJA ALEKSEEVNA PROKOPCZUK).

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the contributors and the anonymous reviewers for their painstaking and patient work and hope that the reader(s) will find here informative material and stimulating ideas.

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