

## The Cult of Lenin and “Soviet Folklore”

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In discussing the folktale, we should remember the words of V. I. Lenin: “Every folktale includes some elements of reality...” Even a very brief survey of the folktale convinces us that this statement is true.

Vladimir Propp

As a rule, when historians of culture, students of literature, and folklorists discuss the problem of falsification and mystification, they do so either from an exclusively “technical” point of view (i.e. in the light of historical and textual authenticity, or lack of authenticity, of a specific literary work) or in a broader historical and social context (looking at the personal motives of the falsifier and the social functions of the falsification, its role in the history of literature and ideology and so on). However, the problem has another aspect, since the question of the authenticity of a text studied by this or that discipline is related not only to the text itself but to the specifics of the discipline as well.

In the following essay I shall try to use all three approaches in discussing what is termed “Soviet folklore” and its relationship to the cult of Lenin. Both subjects require some preliminary comment, but, first of all, it is necessary to say a couple of words about the social and ideological functions of folklore study as discipline and cultural praxis.

From a phenomenological point of view, right from the birth of the term “folklore” (and, particularly, in empires and totalitarian states) there have existed “two folklores.” The first, which I shall term “folklore 1” (F<sup>1</sup>) is oral popular culture that is not controlled or sanctioned by the cultural elite. “Folklore 2” (F<sup>2</sup>), on the other hand, consists of texts approved by society, officially and/or conventionally designated as folklore, and recorded in or on special data media, such as wax cylinders, CDs, academic and popular publications of folksongs and folktales, scholarly essays and books etc. The irony is, however, that the postulated “folkloric nature” of F<sup>1</sup> stems from the latter’s freedom from control exerted on it by an individual or social group, while the actual nature of F<sup>2</sup> is related to the controls imposed on it by professional communities of scholars, writers and musicians, as well as politicians and cultural workers (and this is the reason why many folklorists in Russia argue bitterly over whether a text or a group of texts can be considered “folklore”).(1)

At first glance, it would appear that F<sup>2</sup> is directly related to F<sup>1</sup>, since F<sup>2</sup> takes shape and is amplified by fragments of F<sup>1</sup> that have been expropriated or “collected.” However, the situation is in fact more complicated. On the one hand, F<sup>2</sup> also influences F<sup>1</sup>: S. A. Shtyrkov has suggested calling this process “secondary folklorization” [Shtyrkov 1999: 27]. On the other, F<sup>2</sup> is expanded not merely by the addition of F<sup>1</sup> fragments but

also with falsified texts, deemed “authentic.” Such texts are especially interesting to the researcher, because they reflect in the purest form those social and ideological tendencies and expectations which ensure the existence of F<sup>2</sup> as a functional cultural phenomenon.

From this point of view, it is particularly interesting to discuss the efforts to construct what was called “Soviet folklore” (late 1920s to the 1950s). What was created then was symptomatic not just of the imperial culture of the Stalin period, but also of mainstream Russian folklore study as a whole from its emergence to the end of the twentieth century. In fact, these falsified texts, which are, one might say, those least “spoiled” by the influence of peasant culture, permit us to see what generic, thematic, and ideological modes, tendencies, and priorities were ascribed to F<sup>2</sup> by its publishers, researchers and consumers. Obviously, the officially declared ideological need for a Soviet folklore and the high social status of folklore study in the Stalin era were both grounded in cultural models and values formed in the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the other hand, political suppression and near total isolation from international scholarship forced post-Stalin and even post-Soviet Russian folklorists into using and combining, for the most part, both “Soviet” and “pre-Soviet” conceptions of what “a folklore text” should look like, and what its social significance and aesthetic value were. Paradoxically enough, one could say that this Soviet fakelore is a distillation of “authentic Russian folklore” (in the F<sup>2</sup> sense).

Beyond paradox, however, we should bear in mind the immediate cultural context of “Soviet folklore,” that is the formation of a “Soviet mythology,” “Soviet rituals,” “Soviet cults” and other elements of “Soviet metanarrative” in the 1920s and 1930s. Although this problem has been widely discussed in recent decades, its anthropological aspects have been less studied. In my view, the cult of Lenin, which was one of the first specific manifestations of “Soviet mythology,” proffers a key to the understanding of cultural processes in Soviet Russia in the first decades after the Revolution. At the same time, the appearance of fakelore about Lenin was the first stage in the emergence of “Soviet folklore.”

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“Soviet folklore” became a matter of public interest in the mid-1920s and faded away soon after Stalin’s death. The end results of this “creative work by the liberated *narod* (folk)” were discussed in the collective volume, *Ocherki russkogo narodnopoeticheskogo tvorchestva sovetskoi epokhi* (Studies in the Russian Folk Poetry of the Soviet Epoch), published by the Academy Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) in 1952 [Astakhova et al. 1952]. It stimulated a lively but none too sensible discussion of what should be considered contemporary folk creative work, what features were characteristic of the “artistic culture of the Soviet people” and so on.(2) The arguments continued in the 1960s, but by the end of the decade both discussions about “Soviet folklore” and publications or republications of examples of it had stopped. However, a number of texts of this nature were republished in readers up to the 1980s [Miller 1990: 105–06].

In recent years “Soviet folklore” has once more begun attracting the attention of researchers, although the number of publications on the topic remains comparatively small. In 1990 Frank Miller published a monograph on the pseudo-folklore of the Stalin era [Miller 1990]. Although Miller’s work provides a full and unbiased picture of “folklore for Stalin,” it mainly deals with the historical facet of the problem, and does not

consider its anthropological aspects. Four years later, the Russian State Folklore Center issued Fol'klor Rossii v dokumentakh sovetskogo perioda (Russian Folklore in Documents of the Soviet Era), a useful collection, if haphazardly compiled and with inadequate commentary [Efanova et al. 1994]. The contents include verbatim reports of meetings in the N. K. Krupskaja Union House of Folk Creation, in the course of which scholars, writers and publicists discussed the “organizational integration” of literature and folklore, “methods of mass work with narrators,” “directions in the development of Soviet folklore,” and so on. Most recently, in 2002, the Russian folklorist T. G. Ivanova assembled a representative selection of “Soviet folklore,” adding detailed commentaries and a large introductory article [Ivanova 2002: 403–968].

The article by Ivanova warrants detailed discussion. Although the author provides a number of interesting observations about some particular issues (e.g. the immediate cultural context of the “*pokoinishnyi voi po Leninu*” (funeral lament for Lenin), recorded in Irkutsk in 1924, her theoretical position is somewhat contradictory and her interpretation of certain texts very controversial. On the one hand, Ivanova is all too aware that for the most part “Soviet folklore” of the 1930s saw light of day thanks to the efforts of professional or amateur folklorists, who by various means forced “folk singers and narrators” to create or “make their own” “Soviet tales” (*skazy*), “Soviet laments,” “new epics” (*noviny*), and so on. At the same time, Ivanova argues that “epic folk narratives developed in pro-Soviet social groups did exist” [Ivanova 2002: 404], and claims that “Russian folktales about Lenin and the Civil War” are “authentic specimens of Russian folklore,” although even the clearly pro-Soviet folklorist M. K. Azadovskii stated in his essay “Lenin v fol'klor” (Lenin in folklore), written in 1934, that “these texts were nothing but forgery, making dishonest use of Lenin’s name” [Azadovskii 1934: 884]. I shall return to these texts below, but at this point it is essential to remark that even primary textual criticism leads to the conclusion that they were falsified. Nor are the additional arguments produced by Ivanova any more convincing. She insists that “attempts to adapt the folktale form to accommodate a new, openly political content took place long before the Soviet folklore directives of the 1930s” [Ivanova 2002: 427]. Of course, in both medieval and modern historical periods Russian peasant culture often reacted to political events and processes, and, obviously, the existence of “pro-Soviet folklore” in the 1920s and 30s cannot be denied. However, the form and subject matter of the folktale are particularly unsuitable for conveying political ideas and constructing social meaning; this role was played by other types of oral and written folklore well known to students of popular culture of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries.(3)

I have discussed the article by Ivanova in such detail because she touches upon the problem of the mutual relations between the communist folklore of the late 1920s and the cult of Lenin. One must emphasize that the victorious expansion of “Soviet folklore” began with the publication of falsified folktales about Lenin. Therefore a few words about contemporary studies of Russian “mythological Leniniana” are a necessary preliminary to the analysis of particular texts. The best known and probably the most serious treatment of this topic is to be found in Nina Tumarkin’s monograph of 1983 [Tumarkin 1983]. Undoubtedly, the American scholar produces a thorough and competent analysis of both the genetic components of the Soviet cult of Lenin and the main stages in its historical evolution. However, I am not convinced that the basic idea of comprehensively reconstructing the Lenin cult as a total cultural phenomenon is in essence a promising one. The

problem is related not only to the fact that the range of data to be considered and analyzed in such a reconstruction is simply immense, but also that the cultural forms themselves, ranging from rhetoric to rituals and representing the distinctive character of the veneration of Lenin in the Soviet Union are not as homogeneous, simple and transparent as, for example, in the Stalin cult. In particular, it is not easy to work out the extent to which traditional religious motifs, quasi-scientific expectations of the resurrection of the dead, and literary rhetoric influenced the topos of Lenin's "life eternal" and the mummification of his body [Panchenko 1996: 166–202, Adonieva 2001: 135–37]. In other words, the cult of Lenin should be considered not only as a set of banal religious and mythological archetype, as has been done by another scholar of "mythological Leniniana," Mikhail Vaiskopf [Vaiskopf 2001: 336–66], but also as an area of confrontation and interaction between different discourses and rhetorical systems.

Strangely enough, the notion of the universal mythological character of the Soviet cult of Lenin (which stems in fact directly from Bolshevik rhetoric of the 1920s) was so attractive even to non-Soviet scholars that they have willingly supported the idea of the "folk veneration of the leader," that, allegedly, was reflected in peasant tales about Lenin. Both Tumarkin and Vaiskopf are convinced that falsified "folktales about Lenin" are authentic folklore texts, representing the Bolshevik leader in habitual mythological forms. The "mythological" and "folkloric" features of these texts will be discussed below, but first, another question needs airing: what did the peasants themselves actually say about Lenin?

It is natural to assume that Lenin could not fail to figure in the rural and urban folklore of the first Soviet decades. It is easy to find examples of authentic (both anti-Soviet and pro-Soviet) folklore texts in old and new publications. I am not sure in which social group the rhyme about "Il'ich's red arse" (*krasnaia zhopa Il'icha*) circulated [Azbelev 1998: 279]; I suspect this is an instance of "intelligentsia folklore." However, *chastushki* about Lenin and Trotskii published in the same collection undoubtedly came from popular oral culture, both urban and rural.<sup>(4)</sup> It is clear also that peasant folk culture gave birth to "the legends about the False Lenin" which, according to Azadovskii, "often bore an openly anti-Semitic character" [Azadovskii 1935: 114]. The motif of the "tsar pretender" was very popular in Russian "political folklore," especially in relation to Peter the Great [Chistov 1967: 91–112]. It seems that the revival of this motif in legends about Lenin could be, in addition, related to the hero's long sojourn abroad. In the stories about the False Peter, it was foreigners (either Germans from the Nemetskaia sloboda in Moscow or Swedes in Stockholm) who took on the role of pretender. Azadovskii's remark leads one to assume that in the legends about Lenin this role was given to the Jews. Perhaps, Trotskii featured there as Lenin's antagonist.

"The author of this essay," writes Azadovskii, "heard this legend in the summer of 1918. He was in Siberia, traveling by steamer from Barnaul to Biisk. An elderly peasant recounted the life of Lenin, ending with his murder. The person who then arrived in Moscow and presented himself as Lenin was not really him. Circumstances did not allow me make a recording this tale. However, I heard from other field researchers that it circulated among the peasants" [Azadovskii 1935: 114–15].

An interesting example of authentic "pro-Soviet" folklore about Lenin is presented by the "Voronezh tale about Lenin," recorded by N. P. Grinkova [Grinkova 1936: 319–25]. In fact, from a formal point of view,

this is not a tale but a rhyming verse text, very similar to Russian historical folksongs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, the beginning (*zachin*) of the “Voronezh tale” seems to be directly related textologically to the soldiers’ song about the Crimean war recorded by V. N. Dobrovol’skii in Orel province [Domanovskii et al. 1973: 210]. The “Voronezh tale” was recorded by Grinkova in Mastiugino village (Uryvskii region in Voronezh oblast’) from an elderly tailor D. I. Trukhachev whose “tales” (*skazki*, the term used by the performer himself) about “topical events” in the life of the village and contemporary history were always popular with his fellow villagers. It is hard to decide whether Trukhachev composed his “tale about Lenin” himself, or learnt it from somebody else. However, there is no doubt that the text is related to the events of the Civil war and composed according to the model of traditional soldiers’ folksongs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Whites are here confused with both the “Germans” and Caucasian fighters, and the image of Lenin is far from possessing historical exactitude and ideological accuracy. For illustrative purposes, I quote the final part of the “tale” [Grinkova 1936: 322]:

|                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Krasnyi vidia - belykh gusta,      | The Red sees a lot of Whites,       |
| On i kroshit kak kapustu           | He chops them like cabbage          |
| Vostrym mechom.                    | With his sharp sword.               |
| Grom griamit', ziamlia triasetsia, | Thunder resounds, the earth shakes, |
| Vot i Lenin nash niasetsia,        | Here comes our Lenin running,       |
| S antilerii palit'                 | He fires from the artillery         |
| U vysokii temnai les.              | By a lofty dark forest.             |
| On i zhostka pad'ezhhal            | He drove up hard,                   |
| I gromka krichal:                  | Shouted loudly:                     |
| “Polna, polna vam, iarmantsy,      | “Better stop you ‘ermans,           |
| Kavkazskie abarvantsy              | Caucasian ragamuffins               |
| S krasnym vaiavat'.                | Waging war agin the Reds.           |
| My vam mesta atvedem               | We shall find you a place to go     |
| Za Uralam, za riakoi”              | Beyond the Ural river.              |

Last but not least, I cannot avoid mentioning the so-called “*pokoinishnyi voi po Leninu*” (funeral lament for Lenin) recorded by a student, N. Khandzinskii, in November 1924 in Irkutsk [Khandzinskii 1925: 53–64]. It is obvious that this text was at the very least a point of departure for numerous subsequent “laments” for Lenin, Kirov, Gor’kii, Krupskaiia, and others, recorded by Soviet folklorists in the Russian North in the late 1930s [Ivanova 2002: 438–510]. The history of this “first Soviet lament” is a curious one. Khandzinskii recorded his “funeral lament” from a sixteen-year-old peasant girl, Katia Peretolchina, who was a maid in Irkutsk. However, the lament had been composed earlier: in Katia’s native village Kimil’tei in January 1924 at winter gatherings (*pasidenki*) in the village. According to the informant, the lament was created at the suggestion of local

Komsomol members who had learned about the death of Lenin and told their fellow villagers who the dead “leader of the proletariat” was. Katia told Khandzinskii:

We created it at the *pasidenki*; there are *pasidenki* after the harvest, between *Pokrov* and New Years Day... Komsomol members attend the *pasidenki*. They said to us: “Look, girls, Lenin is dead...” And everyone began saying: “Lenin, Lenin!” “Let’s compose a lament.,” they said. “We walked around and wailed over him, and someone (evidently, a local Komsomol leader, – A. P.) recorded the words. Then the Komsomol members met and we went to Zima by cart. There they made a kind of funeral, a small coffin was put together, and we wailed over him and put on black clothes [Khandzinskii 1925: 57].

“This ‘lament’, writes Khandzinskii, was created by young people, and its audience consisted of the regular participants of *pasidenki*. When I asked Katia whether there were any older people there, she replied: “Well, if there were, they wouldn’t have let us go. When they found out about it, they said: “What devilish stuff are you dreaming up there!” [Khandzinskii 1925: 57]. It is easy to guess (and in this case Ivanova’s hypothesis is well-founded [Ivanova 2002: 416–17]) that the direct prototype of wailing over Lenin in the Siberian villages of Kimil’tei and Zima was the Yuletide “dead-man game” (*igra v pokoinika*) which profanes the Orthodox burial service. This detail seems especially interesting, when we take into account the historical and cultural features of the peasant Komsomol movement in the 1920s. Albeit few in number, peasant *komsomol’tsy* appeared to be the only rural social group consistently oriented towards the Communist authorities after the end of the Civil War. Isabel Tirado’s social analysis of the Komsomol movement in the 1920s reveals that this rural youth movement consisted mainly of marginalized men and operated as a sort of mediator between the peasants and the new authorities. One of the main functions of the rural Komsomol was to interpret and popularize Communist discourse [Tirado 2001].

Roughly speaking, the Russian peasant Komsomol can be compared to popular religious movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially those oriented towards various interpretations of Holy Writ. Certainly, the object of “Komsomol hermeneutics” was not the Pentateuch or the New Testament, but the writings of Lenin and Trotskii, Soviet decrees, articles in Communist newspapers and so on. However, their strategies for everyday behavior (in particular, the open rejection of Orthodox rituals and traditional religious festivals) were very similar to the “cultural demonstrations” by Russian sectarians like the *dukhobortsy*, *molokane* and *subbotniki*. Even the description of Komsomol members given by Katia Peretolchina in her interview with Khandzinskii resembles the characterizations of local sectarians by nineteenth-century Russian peasants.

They live in friendship, they live joyfully. They walk around the village calmly; they don’t drink *samogon* (moonshine). Others are not so decent. When you come along, they shove you and you fall down. They get dead drunk, and the Komsomols heap shame upon them (Khandzinskii 1925: 58).

Thus, peasant Komsomol members behaved like members of a religious sect opposed to Church rituals and, more broadly, to large areas of traditional rural culture such as festive drunkenness, and were viewed by their fellow villagers in this light. However, the very existence of a sacred Communist discourse did not solve the problem of how to look for and choose forms of everyday behavior that would support Komsomol identity

and demonstrate that identity to the other peasants. Obviously, these forms had to be borrowed from the traditional ritual and etiquette scenarios characteristic of rural culture. It would appear that, besides open sacrilege (iconoclasm above all), various facets of peasant youth subculture were used in the construction of this new “Komsomol behavior.” In this context, it is possible to explain the Siberian “funeral lament for Lenin” which thus combined the Yuletide “dead-man game” with elements of a nascent Soviet cult.

We are therefore able to discuss the image of Lenin in rural folklore, but this “folk Leniniana” appears rather banal. It is not based on ancient mythological archetypes whatever they might be, but proceeds from ordinary narrative and artistic forms characteristic of Russian peasant culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The situation is slightly different, however with the falsified “tales about Lenin.”

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The texts that are discussed below appear to be the earliest examples of “Soviet folklore.” They were all published (and probably fabricated) between 1924 and 1930. We can say that they represent the first “Lenin” period in the history of Soviet folklore. In this period the themes for “creative work by the liberated folk” were restricted to the figure of Lenin and the history of the Red victory over the Whites. The dominant genre form was prose narrative, and the texts were called “folktales” or “legends.” It is significant that, even then, what was being published included not only falsifications of Russian folklore but some texts allegedly borrowed from other cultural traditions. For example, the collection, Lenin in Russian Folktale and Oriental Legend, compiled by the historian N. Piaskovskii [Piaskovskii 1930], includes a part entitled “Oriental Legends about Lenin,” in which readers will discover three “Uzbek” texts, as well as a “Chinese,” a “Kirghiz,” an “African” and a “Chukchi” text. Evidently, in talking about “Soviet folklore,” we must take into account not only the texts labeled Russian folklore, but also numerous songs, folktales and so on ascribed to other peoples of the USSR and the world, since they were being fabricated and published within that same discourse.

However, I shall limit my discussion of Soviet folklore to an analysis of four “folktales,” published by Piaskovskii in the section entitled “Russian Folktales about Il’ich.”(5) Two of them had been published earlier, and two others appeared for the first time. The first, entitled “Muzhitskii skaz o Lenine” (A rustic tale about Lenin), had been published by the writer Lidiia Seifullina in the first issue of Krasnaia Nov’ for 1924 in the obituary section dedicated to the death of Lenin [Seifullina 1924: 162–69].(6) Seifullina claimed to have heard this tale in the winter of 1918 in a hamlet in Orenburg province. The second text was also fabricated by a writer of the “rural” school, Rodion Akul’shin, a member of the “Pereval” literary group.(7) Akul’shin published his folktale “Khitryi Lenin” (Sly Lenin) in 1925 in Novyi mir along with two other allegedly authentic folktales about the Civil War [Akul’shin 1925: 120–28]. Finally, “a Siberian folktale,” “Lenin na kamennom stolbe” (Lenin on the stone pillar) and “a folktale from Ivanovo-Voznesensk province,” “Lenin ne umer – on zhiv” (Lenin did not die; he is alive) were first published by Piaskovskii, who alleged that both had been recorded in 1925 and 1926 in Novonikolaevsk and Ivanovo-Voznesensk provinces [Piaskovskii 1930: 33–35, 37–39].

It is not possible here to offer a detailed textual analysis of these “folktales.” It is probable that both “Muzhitskii skaz” by Seifullina and “Khitryi Lenin” by Akul’shin contain specific folklore motifs (see below), although in general both texts are obviously forgeries. The other two “folktales,” were, in my opinion,

completely falsified by those who wanted to present them as authentic folklore specimens. The best example here is the tale, “Lenin ne umer – on zhiv,” published by Piaskovskii. It opens with a prose narrative full of varied features of “quasi-folk” style: attributes in post-positive position, verbal endings in “-ti,” and so on. Then, however, the text gradually becomes rhythmic in an obvious attempt to imitate folk poetry. The final part of the “folktale” is written in a well-known “quasi-folk” meter often used in nineteenth-century Russian poetry. This is the so-called “Kol’tsov pentasyllabic” (also known as “double amphibrach”), although with certain metric deviations: (8)

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Luchevaia volna promakhnulasia.       | The ray wave missed                         |
| Golovy ego ne zatronula.              | It did not harm his head                    |
| Tol'ko s nozhenek prignela k zemle    | It bent him down to the ground              |
| Da i dykhanie prizamedlila.           | And slowed his breath.                      |
| Lenin zhiv lezhit na Moskve-reke,     | Lenin lies alive near the Moscow river      |
| Pod kremlevskoi stenoi belokamennoi.  | Under the Kremlin white-stone wall.         |
| I kogda na zavode vintik sportitsia   | And when an engine part at a factory breaks |
| Ali, skazhem, u nas zemlia sushitsia, | Or, let’s say, a drought sets in,           |
| Podnimaet on svoiu golovu             | Lenin lifts up his head                     |
| I idet na zavod, vintik klepaet,      | Goes to the factory, repairs the engine     |
| A k poliam sukhim gonit oblako.       | And drives clouds to the thirsty fields.    |

Nevertheless, my objective is not so much the disclosure of these forgeries as an analysis of the meanings ascribed by their authors to the virtual “popular cult of Lenin.” The official ideological basis for these texts was, it is clear, an article by E. Khlebtsevich entitled “The collection of folk poetry about Lenin, created by workers, peasants, and Red Army men,” and published in *Kommunisticheskoe prosvetshenie* (Communist Enlightenment), the official journal of the Central Committee for Political Enlightenment. This article contains an appeal for the recording of “stories, legends, rumors, folktales, songs, and *chastushki*” about the deceased Soviet leader as well as detailed methodological instructions for folklore research of this kind. It includes the statement: “If every epoch is reflected in works by certain writers and in oral folk poetry, the October Revolution, which, for the masses, was personified by Lenin, must be reflected in folklore all the more vividly

It is necessary to begin collecting folk poetry about Lenin immediately, and especially now, when the death of the leader has been taken so hard by the masses of workers and peasants” [Khlebtsevich 1924: 117]. The response of “collectors” to this appeal was both active and appropriate. Thus, in his publication of “folktales about Lenin and the Civil War,” Akul’shin remarks: “The folk always have their favorite heroes, whose life and deeds amaze them. There used to be folktales about Peter the Great, Sten’ka Razin and Pugachev; and the folktales were inspired largely by fear and amazement at the tsar’s cruelty or the brigands’ courage. In our time, folk poetry (of which we have numerous examples) has chosen that most beloved of persons, Lenin, with his mind ‘lucid like the sun,’ and made him the hero of tales” [Akul’shin 1925: 124]. This idea was repeated by



Piaskovskii: “As we know, historical folksongs, folktales and legends praised either ‘dark’ personages, such as Ivan the Terrible, Tamerlane or Alexander the Great, or bright, pure characters such as Sten’ka Razin and Pugachev. Undoubtedly, Lenin was a person of the second kind: he was bright and serene; he has rapidly come to be venerated by millions of oppressed and indigent people... It is not for nothing that the oriental legends and songs all deify Lenin, and even a Siberian folktale stresses his ‘especial grace’” [Piaskovskii 1930: 13].

What particularly did “the masses of workers and peasants” have to say about the life and death of their “most beloved person”? The analysis of the four texts under consideration allows for some general conclusions.

First of all, each of the texts represents a specific social, political or economic idea or program. Thus, “A rustic tale” by Seifullina more or less consistently expounds one of the first decrees of the Soviet government, Lenin’s “Report on the Land” (or, more precisely, its third part entitled “The Peasant Mandate on the Land”) which had been delivered at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the twenty sixth of October (8 November) 1917 [Lenin 1962: 23]. It is clear why this document, which incidentally was drawn up not by the Bolsheviks but by the Socialist Revolutionaries, would be chosen by Seifullina as a basis for the “rustic tale.” From the moment it saw light of day, “The Peasant Mandate on the Land” was without doubt put forward as an expression of the *vox populi*, or, as Lenin put it, “as expressing the absolute will of the vast majority of class-conscious peasants in all of Russia” [Lenin 1962: 26]. It was, therefore, natural for Seifullina to use the “peasant mandate” as an ideological basis for the “rustic tale.” It may even be assumed that the writer had genuinely heard peasant rumors about the Soviet decree on the land in the winter of 1918. It may perhaps also be significant that Seifullina herself was a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party from 1917–19.

It is interesting, however, that in order to make her text “folkloric,” Seifullina chose not a heroic or a magic (*volshhebnyi*) plot but a novelistic one. In fact, the story about the division of the kingdom between “the tsar Mikolashka” and Lenin is a specific variant of AT tale type 1030, “The crop division” (SUS 1030 “Vershki i koreshki” (The tops and the roots [of the crops])), where a peasant tricks a bear by palming him off with the “useless” part of the harvest. Thus, in Seifullina’s tale Lenin acquires the features of a cheat or a trickster: he defeats the “exploiting classes” not in an open fight or even by means of a “secret word” known to him alone, but through a trick. Of course, it is impossible to compare this image with that of the trickster in archaic myths. However, this “picaresque” constituent of the image of Lenin seems important, since both fiction and memoirs about Lenin often use the topos of his “slyness” as the main indicator of his “folk character.”<sup>(9)</sup> Thus, from Seifullina’s point of view, rural folklore, in emphasizing Lenin’s “peasant slyness,” would certainly be considering him “one of its own.”<sup>(10)</sup> The same topos is used in Akul’shin’s tale, but here the motif of “Lenin’s slyness” coexists with another theme dominant in the “Siberian” and “Ivanovo-Voznesensk” tales from Piaskovskii’s collection, and related more to the leader’s posthumous image than the one he had when alive. In this instance Lenin is depicted as “a being not entirely dead.” He rises from the grave and miraculously helps the Soviet people in various crisis situations. Obviously, this change of accent in the pseudo-folkloric reception of Lenin (the hero turns from living trickster into helpful “dear departed”) is directly related to Soviet propaganda and ideological discussions about the mummification of Lenin’s body and the plans for a mausoleum

(discussions were concluded in 1930, the same year that Piaskovskii's collection came out). It is symptomatic that the Akul'shin tale "Sly Lenin" was republished by Piaskovskii under another title, "Skoro prosnetsia Il'ich" (Soon Il'ich will awaken).

It is possible that the plot of "Sly Lenin" was to a certain degree based upon rumors actually circulating among the peasants immediately after Lenin's death. For example, I. Iu. Komov, a *sel'kor* ("rural correspondent"), reported from Morozovskaia, a *stanitsa* (Cossack settlement) in the Northern Caucasus:

It is hard to put into words the feelings and sentiments of peasants and working people in general. ... Adults were crying like babies. There was blank despair. People were afraid that after the leader's death all the gains of the October Revolution would be lost. Many people did not believe that the sad news was true. Even now, there exists a legend among the peasants, and they hold strongly to it, that Lenin is alive and walking the earth incognito, observing the work of the Soviet authorities so as to check for defects, take note of all the problems and create the conditions for the prompt and total emancipation of the workers [Pis'ma krest'ian 1968: 123].

If we are to believe the *sel'kor* Komov, we can state that in the mid 1920s in the Northern Caucasus, there existed a version of "the legend of the deliverer" (motif D<sub>2</sub>, according to K. V. Chistov [Chistov 1967]), with Lenin as the principal hero. However, in his "Sly Lenin" tale, Akul'shin used just one motif out of the "deliverer legend," and gave the "folktale" a very different poetic and ideological tinge. At the same time, it is also possible that Komov's report was influenced by Akul'shin's text, since "Sly Lenin" was published in November 1925 and Komov's letter to Krest'ianskaia gazeta is dated January 1, 1926.

Akul'shin's tale can also be labeled novelistic (*novelisticheskaia* or *bytovaia*). It lacks "magic" (*vol'shebnye*) motifs, and the secret of Lenin's incomplete death is explained here in a "quasi-scientific" way. It occurs because of the activities of the "chief Soviet physician," who can make a person die "not completely, but just for appearances." The reasons for this last trick performed by the leader are altogether pragmatic: Lenin wants to prove to the Soviet people that the principal role in every society is played by not a charismatic leader (in this case himself), but the combined will of the ruling class. And this is true: in spite of the absence of the leader, the Communist party, the workers and the peasants achieve remarkable success in both internal and foreign policy. However, the awakening of Lenin is still something to be hoped for; obviously, the Soviet people has a need for him not only as a dead man who leaves his glass coffin in the night and controls the execution of his great plan, but as a living ruler. I do not think that in this case Akul'shin proceeded from motifs of the resurrection and second coming of Christ in the Gospels or from peasant religious folklore. It is more likely that "Sly Lenin" was influenced by tale type AT 410 ("Sleeping Beauty"), hugely popular in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian culture thanks to Pushkin's verse rendering, the translation of Perrault's fairy tales, Tchaikovsky's ballet and so on. Documents from the 1920s, emanating from the political police, furnish evidence that contemporaries did indeed associate the leader's grave with this particular tale. "Referring to the construction of the mausoleum on the Lenin's grave, the clerk Antipov joked that Lenin would lie in his coffin like a 'sleeping beauty'" [Velikanova 1994: 180]. It is evident that what we have here is the literary reception and transformation of a folktale. In fact, Akul'shin's tale can be interpreted as a parodic inversion of "Sleeping

Beauty,” where the persecuted princess is replaced by the actual ruler who voluntarily lies in his crystal coffin, the role of the evil stepmother is played by “the chief Soviet physician,” and the role of the dwarfs/epic heroes/robbers living in the “men’s house” in the woods should theoretically be taken by members of the Politburo, who decided not to commit the body of the “beloved leader” to the earth. Certainly, this version of tale type 410 does not require a hero who rescues the victim from enchanted sleep.

Two other “Russian folktales” in Piaskovskii’s collection differ from Seifullina’s and Akul’shin’s texts. Neither includes comic or novelistic motifs and both are generally oriented towards magical and heroic themes. The “Siberian folktale,” “Lenin on the stone pillar,” is a kind of religious and mythological thematization of the leader’s “eternal life.” Lenin “finds the truth” on a stone pillar in Moscow and is granted immortality. The topos of “eternal life” is represented here by means of a “lunar code:” the hero grows older and younger as the moon waxes and wanes.(11) In the “Ivanovo-Voznesensk folktale” the mythological motifs are connected with political and technological imagery and notions: British “capitalists” try to do away with Lenin by means of a “ray wave,” but the killer misses and the hero, now only partly dead, is still able to help his people: when needed, he repairs factory engines and “drives clouds to the drought-affected fields” (see above).

In an article published in 1996, A. M. Panchenko and I suggested that the mummification of Lenin’s body and creation of the mausoleum were principally related to archetypes in Russian religious culture, in particular to ideas about the uncorrupted bodies of saints and those who died an unnatural death (known as “*zalozhnye pokoiniki*”) [Panchenko 1996]. Although I do not reject this hypothesis as a whole, I am no longer sure that the cultural and ideological context of mummification of Lenin’s body was so homogeneous. It is likely that the Soviet ruling clique’s decision to preserve the body of the “beloved leader” was equally influenced by traditional religious belief in uncorrupted relics, utopian expectations of the “scientific” resurrection of the dead, the custom of temporarily embalming deceased emperors in nineteenth-century Russia, and the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb in 1922 [see Tumarkin 1983; Panchenko 1996]. On the other hand, it is also likely that the Party leaders themselves did not know exactly what their reasons were for mummifying Lenin’s body and then displaying the corpse for all to see. According to N. Valentinov-Vol’skii, the Politburo members had already begun discussing the mummification of Lenin in the autumn of 1923, and the leitmotif of the discussion was expressed in Kalinin’s comment: “If we are to bury Il’ich, then the funeral should be more magnificent than the world has ever seen before” [Valentinov 1991: 147]. They were thinking, then, not about reproducing ritual patterns but rather, the creation of a new funeral ritual that had never been seen before. All the official explanations that followed the mummification of Lenin, both the statements by Party leaders and “letters from working people” published in the newspapers, emphasized the same idea; “the body of the man who made world revolution a reality” was to be preserved for future generations. “Let him remain for us an inexhaustible source of the idea of Leninism for the good of the workers of the whole world” [Panchenko 1996: 181]; “we believed and believe still that it is extremely important to preserve this remarkable leader as he really looked, for those who are growing up, for future generations and for those hundreds of thousands or probably millions of people who will be profoundly happy to see him as he was in life” [Otchet 1925: 47].(12)

Beyond rhetoric, beyond any possible mystical meanings and the emotional nuances, sincere or insincere, of these declarations, an interesting picture emerges. In fact, the mummified corpse of Lenin was to be preserved as a visual aid, if not for the study of Marxism-Leninism, then for the history of the world revolutionary movement. In this sense, the leader's body is similar to the monsters in Peter the Great's cabinet of curiosities, or exhibits in a waxworks museum. Other passages from Enukidze's speech also give the impression that he is speaking about a rare stuffed animal with special educational significance.

It is not easy to say whether the authors of such texts realized what logical conclusions might be drawn from their declarations. I think, however, that many members of the new Soviet elite, including Seifullina, Akul'shin and Piaskovskii, were more embarrassed than happy with the unusual burial arrangements for Lenin and official explanations of the ritual. It is possible that the rhetoric of the cult of Lenin, which had already taken shape by the mid 1920s and presented the leader as an immortal and omnipresent being, an "inexhaustible generator of power and energy" [Tumarkin 1983], did not seem, to many people, consonant with the material presence of the "eternally alive" leader's mummified corpse on display in a glass coffin beneath the Kremlin wall. I might even go so far as to suggest that it was this logical or psychological difficulty that was the actual reason for the appearance of the "Russian folktales" depicting Lenin as not completely dead or as an immortal being who rises from his grave and helps the Soviet people in the hard work of creating the new socialist society. Drawing conclusions about the propagators and addressees of this mythological image ascribed to "Soviet folk poetry" is more complicated. On the one hand, it is possible that the authors of the tales were expressing their own utopian hopes for the physical resurrection of "the leader of the working class," or were trying to explain to themselves why Stalin, Krasin, Enukidze and others had decided to mummify Lenin. On the other, it is also possible that both Akul'shin and Piaskovskii were anxious about the possible reaction of the common folk to Lenin's unusual funeral,<sup>(13)</sup> and, in the final analysis, wrote their "folktales" not for the intelligentsia but for the "folk," that is, peasants and workers. At any rate, these texts provide that political and mythological explanation of the mummification of Lenin, which, according to Akul'shin and his associates, the representatives of "the Russian folk" would have thought up or ought to think up for themselves.

There is an important chronological factor that should be mentioned at this point. In fact, the "Lenin" and "Stalin periods" in the history of "Soviet folklore" differ greatly. I have already noted that, in the late 1920s–early 1930s, "Soviet folklore" was full of prose narratives called "folktales", "tales" (*skazy*) or "legends." The issues analyzed above revealed that these narratives did include certain folktale plot elements. If, however, we were to follow the conception of relations between myths and folktales in terms of stages (in Russian folklore studies a view advanced by E. M. Meletinskii in particular [Meletinskii 1976: 262–76; 1982: 441–44; 1998: 11–32, 284–96], we would then assume that the "folktales about Lenin" have more in common with archaic myth than the European folktale. I want to stress that I am not intending to look for parallels between "Soviet folklore" and archaic mythology. Moreover, in my opinion, the very idea of a linear evolution from myth to folktale does not seem to hold water. For convenience, however, it may be convenient to label the "Lenin period" in the history of "Soviet folklore" "mythological."

The situation changes radically in the mid-1930s in “Soviet folklore,” when prose narratives give way to epic or lyric verse.<sup>(14)</sup> Now the dominant form is the long epic, constructed on the basis of the traditional oral version, the *bylina*. Labeled “Soviet *byliny*,” “*noviny*” (i.e. “new *byliny*”), “*bylina*-folktales” or “poem-tales” (*poemy-skazy*), these works glorified Stalin, Lenin, Kirov, Chapaev, the development of collective farms, the heroes of polar expeditions, the Eighteenth Party Congress and so on. Beyond this, a considerable proportion of the “Soviet folklore” of the late 1930s consists of funeral laments for Soviet officials and celebrities. Although, as I have said before, the first “Soviet lament” was the “*pokoinishnyi voi po Leninu*” published by Khandzinskii, laments only became fashionable among creators and consumers of “Soviet folklore” considerably later; the next “Soviet laments” (including the famous text “*Kamenna Moskva vsya proplakala*” (Stone Moscow is all lamenting) by Marfa Kriukova) were only “recorded” and published in 1937. Undoubtedly, this “folklore for Stalin” was redolent with heroic motifs and plots, while adventure motifs and novelistic elements were completely excluded from what was called “Soviet folk poetry.” The techniques involved in creating “Soviet folklore” also changed. Co-authorship between professional singers (*skaziteli*) and their “supervisors,” folklorists or writers, replaced forgeries by specific authors using disparate elements of peasant narrative tradition in an eclectic manner.

What factors determined such a notable change in the dominant ideas about the form and the content of the “oral folk poetry of the Soviet epoch”? It is evident that the development of “Soviet folklore” was a part of the much broader process of creating Stalinist imperial culture [Papernyi 1996]. It may be worthwhile here to continue with the analogy with Meletinskii’s model of evolutionary stages, according to which myths are contrasted to classic forms of the epic, the latter being the result of the “desacralization” of myth texts during a “distinct period of the political consolidation of nationalities.” “The mythic struggle for cosmos against chaos is transformed into the defense of a related group of tribes, a state, one’s own ‘belief’ against ‘invaders,’ ‘aggressors,’ or ‘heathens,’ who sometimes possess mythic and magical features. The aura of the shaman vanishes completely from the epic hero, to be replaced exclusively by martial ethics and esthetics” [Meletinskii 1976: 276]. In this sense, the “fairytale” image of Lenin, who tricks “tsar Mikolashka,” knows the “secret word,,” grows older and younger as the moon waxes and wanes might be directly set against the “epic” Stalin shouting at Denikin “*sovetskim golosom bogatyrskim*” (with the voice of a Soviet *bogatyri*), felling the Whites with “a sharp saber,” or instructing and rewarding the “Russian Soviet *bogatyri*” [Ivanova 2002: 645, 639, 749]. Nevertheless, this analogy too seems rather relative. Of course, both Stalinist and post-Stalinist imperial ideology was based upon heroic and epic themes that were used for the construction and maintenance of national and political identity. At the same time, we should assume that the transition from the “mythological” to the “heroic” period in the history of Soviet folklore was determined by specific social and historical reasons. It is important to remember that these changes took place just after collectivization – a new enslavement of the Russian peasantry, which furnished the urban elite (writers and folklorists included) with an effective means for the economic and ideological exploitation of the rural population. I think that “co-authorship” between folklorists and folk singers, mentioned above, became possible thanks to the administrative mechanisms directly affecting the peasants that the elite rediscovered in the early 1930s. It is not incidental that Soviet folklorists

themselves took part in the collectivization; for example, B. M. Sokolov was sent to Kaluga district to help to organize collective farms in 1930 [Ivanova 1993: 81].

On the other hand, the “folktales about Lenin” could not appear out of nowhere. It seems that in the period when the Russian peasant enjoyed maximum social and economic freedom, that is, from Stolypin’s agrarian reform up to collectivization, the folktale was the most popular folklore genre among professional scholars and indeed the educated classes in general. The reasons for this are probably related not only to the qualities of the folktale as material for the formal study of the folktale (whether work by the “geographic school” in folklore study or Proppian morphological analysis), but also to the special attention paid to folktale by Russian writers and philosophers of the early twentieth century. It would appear that in the 1910s–20s the Russian intelligentsia considered the folktale, along with various forms of religious folklore, to be the expression of both the mystical “national spirit” and the social ideals of the peasants. In this sense, it is worth mentioning a short book by E. N. Trubetskoi, *‘Inoe tsarstvo’ i ego iskateli v russkoi narodnoi skazke* (The ‘other realm’ and its seekers in the Russian folktale, 1922). Trubetskoi tried to find in the folktale a “reflection of the Russian soul” and a “national interpretation of the universal revelation of the ‘other realm’” [Trubetskoi 2000: 268]. The conclusion drawn by Trubetskoi was typical of early twentieth-century Russian religious philosophy; Russian folktales were declared the reflection of a mystical “feminine world view.” “In the Russian folktale we observe a vivid example of the mystic passive feelings of the human soul” [Trubetskoi 2000: 268]. At the same time, we should not forget another ideological use of Russian folktales characteristic of the mid 1910s: the various stylizations and falsifications of “military” or “soldiers” “folktales” and “legends,” often published in Russian periodicals in World War I [e.g. Kozyrev 1915; Krivoshechekov 1915: 198–215; Fedorchenko 1920: 36–48; Zhelanskii 1928: 94–95]. It is not easy to say whether there existed any relationship between such texts and the “folktales about Lenin.” However, both phenomena seem very similar.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the general discussion, with which I opened this article. When Richard M. Dorson published his essay “Folklore and Fake Lore” in 1950, he only wished to draw a clear distinction between commercial pseudo-folklore and that “authentic” cultural reality allegedly observed by professional field researchers in folklore [Dorson 1950: 335–43].<sup>(15)</sup> However, fifty years on, the distinction no longer seems so self-evident or clear. Contemporary studies in the “poetics and politics of culture” show that both “folklore” and “fakelore” often play very similar ideological roles, and the very notion of authenticity is not in fact relevant to the study of folklore [Bendix 1997: 7–11; Bogdanov 2001: 19–20]. The analysis of “Soviet folklore” provides similar conclusions. As I remarked earlier, the development of the phenomenon could be compared with the theory of developmental stages, from myth to folktale to oral epic. Of course this similarity might be interpreted in a different way: under certain conditions, ideologically inspired fakelore obeys the universal laws of “the evolution of folklore.” However, it is possible to suggest another hypothesis: both the history of “Soviet folklore” and the evolutionistic tendencies in Russian ethnology and folklore research were related to the same discourse, which was determined not by the “authentic reality” of archaic, non-literate agrarian societies, but by the cultural and ideological specificity of the urban elite of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In fact, the problem of authenticity allows us to talk not about “folklore 1” and “folklore 2,”

but instead about more complex gradations in the virtual “reality of folklore.” From a genetic point of view, a text in the ownership of a given folk group can be labeled a part of its authentic cultural heritage, while another is seen as a stylization by a certain author or a borrowing or as *Gesunkenes Kulturgut*. From a functional point of view, both texts are equally authentic. Finally, in the ideological sense, both can be designated as not belonging to “folklore 2” and, consequently, non-authentic. I do not think that these contradictions in the concept of what is folklore indicate a general failure on the part of folklore study. However, it is clear that specialists studying “folk culture” should long ago have begun to think about the social and ideological factors that determine their irrational thirst for authenticity, this “obscure object of desire” for traditional folkloristics.

## APPENDIX

### SUMMARIES OF THE “FOLKTALES” ABOUT LENIN PUBLISHED IN THE 1920s

#### 1 “Muzhitskii skaz o Lenine” (A rustic tale about Lenin) [Seifullina 1924: 162–69]

Tsar Mikolashka (Mikolai) hears about Lenin. Lenin knows a secret word; he wants to take away all the tsar’s soldiers and kill his generals, officers, officials and the tsar himself. The tsar writes a letter to Lenin offering him half his kingdom. Lenin agrees and suggests to the tsar that the latter keeps all the “blue bloods” and the treasure. Lenin takes the peasants, soldiers, factory workers, pedigree cattle, pastures, and arable land. The tsar likes the division of spoils, thinking he will be able to take on other workers. The peasants, by contrast, do not like the division. They ask Lenin why he let the tsar take all the treasure and riches. Lenin replies that the treasure would not be enough to go around, and that it is sufficient for the economy to possess land and cattle. He knows a secret word that means the “blue bloods” will not find any new workers or soldiers.<sup>(16)</sup> The common people all obey Lenin. The tsar and the “blue bloods” spend all the treasure, and cannot find any new workers. They want the common people back and declare war on Lenin. Thus begins the Civil War, but the “blue bloods” will soon be defeated, because they are not used to the slog of fighting.

#### 2 “Khitryi Lenin” (Sly Lenin) [Akul’shin 1925: 120–28]

Lenin reads the newspapers and discovers that everyone in the USSR relies on him and, therefore, is not afraid of the Entente and America. Lenin decides to check how things would continue without him. He asks “the chief Soviet physician” to render him dead “not completely, but just for appearances.” This is a secret; only the physician and Nadezhda Konstantinovna (Krupskaia) know about it. It is announced that Lenin is dead. The people are in torment, cry, fear a British and French intervention. Kalinin asks the people to calm down and get on with work. Lenin is placed in the *marzolei* (a distortion of *mavzolei*, mausoleum). After a month, Lenin is bored of lying under glass. For three nights in a row he leaves the *marzolei* and visits the Kremlin, a factory and a peasant’s hut. He knows that the number of communists in Russia has doubled, that the policy of the Entente

towards the USSR is now peaceful, that manufacturing is growing and villages are full of *izby-chtal'ni* (rural reading rooms) and “Lenin corners,” and that the *smychka goroda i derevni* (“the city-village alliance”) is in progress. Lenin returns to the *marzolei* calmly. He lies down and falls asleep. Perhaps he will wake up soon.

3 “Lenin na kamennom stolbe” (Lenin on the stone pillar) [Piaskovskii 1930: 33–35]

There is a stone pillar in Moscow. From the top you can see not only the whole of Russia but also the entire world. Many learned people and intellectuals tried to climb the pillar, but they were not clever enough. Then Lenin and his comrades come to the pillar. He decides to climb it to find the truth. From the pillar Lenin looks around and takes charge of the life of Russia and the whole world. Thus, Lenin receives the grace of God. During the Civil War, there was a thunderclap over Moscow, the heavens opened, and a voice was heard prophesying success for Lenin in his cause and promising him immortality. Since that time, Lenin “grows young and old” every month. When the moon is new, Lenin is a young man. As the moon becomes full, Lenin ages and turns into an old granddad.

4 “Lenin ne umer – on zhiv” (Lenin did not die; he is alive) [Piaskovskii 1930: 37–39]

In 1921, “the English sovereign” calls together his “lackeys, ministers and factory owners.” He tells them about “a sly and seductive enemy” who lives overseas and hinders the sovereign from ruling by sending his “couriers” to the English people “in order to start dissension.” The lackeys, the ministers and the factory owners suggest waging war on the enemy. The sovereign replies that this is impossible. The enemy, “called Lenin the infidel,” he rules the land of the Soviets. English warships can not reach this country; they just sink. If you fire at it with your cannon, the cannon just disintegrates. If soldiers are dispatched there, they rebel. Nor can you send an assassin, because the people’s guard protects Lenin. “The oldest lackey” asks for money to be released from the treasury: he has invented an invisible weapon, which is called a “ray wave”. The wave can be turned on Lenin, and then he will die.

The ray wave is turned on Lenin; he falls sick and dies. It appears, however, that his death is not total. The ray wave misses and does not harm Lenin’s head. Lenin lives, and he helps his people in crisis situations. Nobody can see him, because he is hidden from the people by the ray wave.

#### NOTES

1 For a more detailed discussion of the “colonial aspects” of folkloristics see Panchenko 2002: 44–51.

2 For an overview of the discussion and a bibliography, see Vykhodtsev 1960: 266–92, Miller 1990: 97–100. See also: Mel’t’s 1961: 154–57.

3 See, for example, Chistov 1967.



4 Cf. similar texts recorded in the 1920s in Tver' province [Bol'shakov 1927: 381]:

|                            |                                       |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sidit Lenin na bereze,     | Lenin is sitting on a birch-tree,     |
| Derzhit serp i molotok,    | Hammer and sickle in his hands.       |
| A ego tovarisch, Trotsky,  | And his dear comrade Trotskii         |
| Gonit rotu bez portok      | Is leading soldiers who have no pants |
| Khodit Lenin po derevne    | Lenin is walking along the village    |
| S krasnoi sumkoi na boku.  | With a red bag on his back:           |
| "Vy podaite, radi boga,    | "Oh, for the Lord's sake, give alms   |
| Proletarskomu polku".      | For our proletarian regiment".        |
| Lenin Trotskomu skazal:    | Lenin said to Trotsky:                |
| Poidem, Trotsky, na bazar, | "Let's go to the market.              |
| Kupim kobylu kareiu -      | We'll buy a chestnut mare,            |
| Nakormim proletariiu       | And feed the proletariat".            |

5 See the summaries of these texts in the appendix. The texts were republished by Ivanova [Ivanova 2002: 817–25].

6 On the biography and writings of Seifullina (1889–1954), the author of the first “Soviet bestsellers” about rural life in the 1920s, see: Nikitina 1926: 392–93; Chalmaev 1998: 323–24.

7 On Akul'shin, who emigrated to the USA after World War II and died in 1988, see: Nikitina 1926: 253–54; El'zon 1998: 33–34.

8 Piaskovskii 1930: 39. Of course, the original text was published without division into lines.

9 Later, in urban jokes from the 1970s–80s, the theme of “Lenin's slyness” was carried to absurdity: “I tell my mistress that I go to my wife; I tell my wife that I go to my mistress; and actually I go to the loft, and there I just work and work and work.” “This is a conspiracy, old fellow, just a conspiracy: you're pissing in a litter-bin and I'm pissing in your pocket,” and so on.

10 After I had completed this article, the opportunity arose to read L. Abrahamian's article, “Lenin as a trickster” [Abrahamian 1999]. The author argues that “Lenin, in general, is surprisingly similar to the mythological trickster.” However, I find it difficult to agree with the Armenian scholar. First of all, he, like Tumarkin and Vaiskopf, is interested in the construction of universal mythological features allegedly characteristic of the Soviet cult of Lenin, rather than its genesis and actual historical evolution. Secondly, the material used by Abrahamian was mainly drawn from Russian periodicals of the 1990s and, hence, is not adequate for discussing the history of the “sly Lenin” image. It also seems that he was unaware of Seifullina's and Akul'shin's tales.

11 It would appear that the author of this text possessed at least a superficial knowledge of pre-Revolutionary research and publications on East Slavic folklore. Thus, the motif of the stone pillar climbed by Lenin in his search for the truth was evidently borrowed from Russian versions of tale type AT 530 (“The princess on the glass mountain”/SUS

530 (“Sivko-Burko”), while the “lunar” imagery of Lenin’s immortality was, most likely, inspired by A. N. Afanas’ev’s Poeticheskie vozzreniya slavyan na prirodu (The Slavs’ Poetic Conceptions of Nature) [Afanas’ev 1865: 189].

12 From a speech by A. S. Enukidze, July 26, 1924.

13 The evidence that there were expectations that Lenin’s funeral would provoke a somewhat peculiar religious reaction among the peasants is provided by Walter Duranty of the New York Times, who wrote in 1924: “Many foreigners here... believe it will be only a question of a short time before there will be ‘miracles,’ or at least temporary cures of hysterical disorder so common in Russia, at Lenin’s ‘shrine.’ They have begun to speculate on the possible effects this may have on the peasant masses whose formal religion has suffered heavy blows from Bolshevik hostility and the sequestration of church property and by the subsequent schism in the Orthodox Church, but whose superstitious instincts are stronger than ever” [Tumarkin 1983: 197].

14 I do not touch upon the issue of “Soviet *chastushki*” and “Soviet proverbs,” which had begun appearing in newspapers and magazines in the late 1920s and became very popular in the mid 1930s. Although these texts were also widely discussed, their role seems secondary by comparison with the folktale, heroic epic, etc.

15 On the discussion surrounding Dorson’s essay see: Bendix 1997: 189–194; Bronner 1998: 363–82.

16 It was widely believed that *kolduny* (sorcerers) possessed a “secret word” which could be used for magical purposes. The “secret word” in Seifullina’s text is evidently Marxism.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

AT – Aarne A, 1961. The Types of Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography: Antti Aarne’s Verzeichnis der Märchentypen. Trans. and Enlarged by S. Thompson. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

SUS – L. G. Barag et al. 1977. Sravnitel’nyi ukazatel’ siuzhetov. Vostochnoslaviiskaia skazka. Leningrad: Nauka.

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