

articles supported Marr, notably that of Meshchaninov, Marr's closest student and the dominant man in Soviet linguistics during the Marxist regime, the balance was already strongly anti-Marr when on June 20 J. V. Stalin entered the controversy with an article entitled "Regarding Marxism in Linguistics". The intervention of political leaders in academic debates of this sort is a familiar feature of Soviet life. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and, in particular, the late Andrei Zhdanov, played a decisive part in the biology and philosophy discussions, but Stalin himself had not for many years published a contribution to a controversy of this sort.

His article begins on a modest note:

A group of youthful comrades has suggested to me that I express my opinion in the press on linguistic problems, particularly where Marxism in linguistics is concerned. I am not a linguist and, of course, I cannot fully satisfy the comrades. As for Marxism in linguistics as well as other social sciences, I am directly concerned with this. I have therefore consented to reply to a number of questions asked by the comrades.

He then proceeds to demolish the Marr school of thought in linguistics. To the first question, "Is it true that language is a superstructure over a base?" he answers "No, it is not true", and elaborates on this by defining the "base" of society in Marxist terms as "the economic system of society at a given stage of its development" and the superstructure as the "political, religious, artistic and philosophical views of society and their corresponding political, legal and other institutions". If the base of society is changed, corresponding changes result in the superstructure. In this respect, language clearly differs from superstructure since, for example, in the U.S.S.R. the same Russian language which served Russian capitalist and bourgeois culture today serves the socialist system. He gives an equally categorical negative to the second question, "Is it true that language has always been and remains of a class nature; that a single, non-class language common to a whole society and a whole people does not exist?". A characteristic touch in the answer to this question is a reference, in the third person, to himself as an authority: "When Stalin said. . .". In answering a third question, "What are the characteristic features of a language?" he gives an outline of the basic propositions from which a correct Marxist science of language is to be created.

His response to the final question, "Was *Pravda* right in opening a free discussion of linguistic problems?" is of particular interest since it reveals vividly the unhappy consequences of an authoritarian regime in a field of scientific study. He says:

The discussion has made it clear, first of all that both in the center and in the republics a regime has dominated in linguistic bodies not typical of science and men of science. The slightest criticism of the state of affairs in Soviet linguistics, even the most timid attempts to criticize the so-called 'new teaching' in linguistics were persecuted and stifled by the directors of linguistic circles. Valuable scholars and research workers in linguistics were removed from their positions and reduced in status for criticism of the heritage of N. Ya. Marr and for the slightest disapproval of his teaching. Linguists were moved up into responsible positions not according to their qualifications in the field but as they gave unconditional recognition to N. Ya. Marr's teaching.

His next words seem to give some hope of a return to academic freedom and have been widely quoted by Soviet writers in every field of arts and sciences:

It is universally recognized that no science can develop and prosper without a struggle of opinions, without free criticism. But this universally recognized rule has been ignored and trampled upon most unceremoniously. A self-contained group of infallible leaders has developed which has begun to ride roughshod and behave in the most arbitrary manner after guaranteeing itself against any possible criticism.