

7 „PENELOPE'S CLOTH“: „THE BOGORAS PROJECT“ IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 1920s–1930s

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Introduction

The history of Soviet ethnography, the Leningrad ethnographic school and the Northern Studies inseparably connected with it in the period of 1920–1930s have attracted the researchers' attention¹ for quiet a long time. They are interested in the figures of the founding fathers of the Leningrad school L.Ia. Shternberg and V.G. Bogoras,² and the fates of those whom they taught.³

It is known that the Leningrad Northern Science of that time was not limited to the University and the Academy of Sciences, but rather incorporated other institutions designed to study the North, such as the Institute of the Peoples of the North (hereinafter INS) and Pedagogical Institute named after A.I. Herzen (further LGPI). A number of individual studies⁴ have been devoted to them, but most often these institutions and people working in them are described separately and in different contexts. In some cases the history of science, the academic life of Leningrad University and the Academy of Sciences of the USSR would fall into the focus of the researchers, and then the graduates of the ethnographic department of Leningrad State University, who studied with Bogoras and Shternberg, get into the center of attention, and other institutions go to the background, beginning to get confused and merge almost to the point of merging.⁵ In others, the attention is focused on the work of training of the national *intelligentsia*; in such cases the researchers are interested only in the history of INS, and everything else becomes the background (Smirnova 2012).

1 See Slezkine 1993; 1994; Solovei 1998; 2001; Kozmin 2009; Arziutov and Kan 2013; Alymov and Arziutov 2014.

2 For example: Mikhailova 2004; Kan 2005; Krupnik 2008; Krupnik and Mikhailova 2008; Kan 2009, and others.

3 For example, the work by A.M. Reshetov (see the bibliography of his works: <http://kunstkamera.ru/files/lib/978-5-02-025593-7/978-5-02-025593-7_02.pdf>), and also the collection *Repressed Ethnographers* (2002; 2003) and others.

4 For example, *Northern Studies* 2003; Smirnova 2012.

5 Even in such carefully performed work as Alymov and Arziutov 2014, the northern branch of LGPI and the northern faculty of the Institute of Living Oriental Languages named after Yenukidze are confused (ibid.:83).

In this article the focus of analysis is transferred from individuals or organizations to a system of relationships that existed between some of them. I consider it important that such institutions as the ethnographic department of the geographical faculty of Leningrad State University, INS (with all its predecessors) and the northern branch of LGPI existed at the same time in the same place not by mere chance but by the will of their creators; that certain general principles formed the basis of their activities; that they acted not independently of each other but in close collaboration. Each of these institutions had to solve its own tasks, but they were united in a single structure created by the will of V.G. Bogoras and his associates, who complemented each other, created a special research and educational environment, which allowed to solve problems that each of these institutions separately would not be able to.

Different areas of training were being formed in constant interaction with each other, matched each other and were complementary. Scientists taught at INS and simultaneously learned from their students; languages came first; future teachers participated in the development of grammars of the languages on which they were to teach; future Soviet workers from the indigenous peoples, while comprehending the basics of the Soviet government, simultaneously learned to translate and edit texts in their native languages and acted as consultants for a variety of specialists studying the North. This is how a special personal and scientific environment arose, which allowed to solve questions on complex study and development of the North.

The purpose of this article is to describe the institutions that the history of Soviet northern studies began from as a purposefully created system. I will call this system the “Bogoras project”⁶ My task also includes integration and some preliminary regularization of the data on the work of the organizations that were parts of this system: information about them is scattered over various, sometimes hard-to-access sources, which makes it difficult to see the overall picture.

One of the features of northern studies (and ethnography in general) in the 1920–1930s is an inseparable link between theoretical study of the North and solution of practical problems of transforming life in this region. This feature is well-known to modern researchers, it is regularly mentioned in their works, but the consequences of this order of things elude their attention and do not have a serious impact on the analysis of the situation. Apparently, it is due to the habit of modern rigid separation into academic science and cultural (or applied) work, which prevents them from accepting, problematizing and analyzing the consequences of the division relevant for a different epoch.

6 This is the conventional name I chose paying tribute to the memory of the person, whose will and great efforts made it possible to implement the project. At the same time, it must be remembered that he alone would have never been able to create this structure, and in his work he relied on his colleagues and students of the Leningrad ethnographic school created by them together with L.Ia. Shternberg. Since most of the events described in the article occurred after the death of L.Ia. Shternberg, the conventional name of the “project” contains only the name of V.G. Bogoras.

The sources for the article include archival materials (primarily relating to the organization of training and the work of institutions) stored in St. Petersburg Central Archives and other archives of St. Petersburg, texts published in the journals *Etnograf-issledovatel'*, *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, *Taiga i Tundra*, *Sovetskii sever* and other periodicals of 1920–1930s. Another important source of information is the collection (Enlightenment 1958), which contains generalizing articles devoted to the problems in the focus of our interest; many of the texts were written by direct participants in the events, Bogoras's students V.I. Tsintsius (1958), G.M. Vasilevich (1958), F.F. Krongauz (1958), etc.. Among them, of great interest is the article by M.G. Voskoboïnikov (1958) *On the preparation of pedagogical personnel for the schools of the peoples of the Far North*: its author recalls the smallest details concerning the organization of training in this or that institution. Another important source is the electronic catalog of the Russian National Library. It allows searching through the texts of bibliographic cards of pre-war books that helps to identify publications relevant to institutions of our interest.

The first part of the article is devoted to a brief survey of the history of these institutions as elements of a single structure. The second part analyzes the relationships between the individual components of this structure. The final section will deal with the fate and significance the “Bogoras project”.

The “Bogoras project”: elements

The 1920s

The first element of the “project” was the ethnographic department (at the beginning of the Higher Geographical Courses, then of the Faculty of Geography of Leningrad State University, then—ethno-department) that arose in 1916. I will not dwell on this in detail, referring the reader to N.B. Vakhtin (2016).⁷ Let me remind you only the basic principles of the organization of student training, important for this topic.

Firstly, the connection of students' studies with practical work was important: students went on long expeditions and ‘in the field’ performing a variety of tasks, some being far from just academic. Bogoras formulated this as the preference of the stationary method of investigation to the expeditionary one.⁸ Secondly, it was considered obligatory to study the language of those people with whom it would be necessary to work, and the language was interesting not as such, but rather as a tool that allowed to remove intermediaries between the ethnographer and the informant, as a means to penetrate into the world of images and representations of non-literate peoples. In addition, the task was set to organize the training of the inhabitants of the North in

7 See also Ratner-Shternberg, 1935; Solovei 1998.

8 For a discussion of this topic and many examples of this kind of work, see Alymov and Arziutov 2014.

their native languages, and in solving this problem the students of Shternberg and Bogoras also considered it necessary to participate.

The second element of the “project” was the predecessors of the INS—*Rabfak* (workers’ faculty) and *Sevfak* (faculty for representatives of northern peoples). INS history is rather well described: in 1925 a northern *Rabfak* was opened at Leningrad State University, which in 1926 became the northern *Rabfak*⁹ of the Institute of Living Oriental Languages (LIZHVYA), and in 1927 was reorganized into the Northern faculty of the same institute (Salatkin 1933; Voskoboinikov 1958:51), which existed until the end of December 1929 (Voskoboinikov 1958:50–53),¹⁰ and then was transformed into the Institute of the Peoples of the North (see below).

The main task of these organizations was to train future members of national *intelligentsia*. The training was attended by representatives of the northern outskirts, sometimes not only unable to read and write, but also not knowing the Russian language at all. Classes were very intensive: students had to go through the preparatory department courses, i.e. the curriculum of ordinary *Rabfaks*, at an accelerated pace.

Let me note that, contrary to the popular belief, not only the representatives of the peoples who were later included in the list of indigenous small peoples of the North, but also those who at that time were called “the peoples of the East”¹¹ were trained at the *Rabfak*, as well as later at the *Sevfak*. The article devoted to the third anniversary of INS said that when the Northern Faculty of LIZHVYA was established in 1927 it had two branches: the northern and the eastern ones (Salatkin 1933:7). This fact is worthy of special mentioning, since it allows us to stop considering the *Rabfak* for the northerners something unique and makes it possible to compare the educational practices for the “peoples of the North” with those for the “peoples of the East”, which existed at that time.

9 Part of the archive of the Northern Workers’ Union of Leningrad State University was preserved in the Central State Archive (CSA) of St. Petersburg (fund 6951, inventories 1–2), the materials of the *Sevfak* LIZHVYA were preserved in the fund 7222 of the same archive.

10 The places where these institutions were located were very colorful: first the northerners, who had just come from taiga and tundra and sometimes did not speak Russian at all, were accommodated right in the Catherine Palace (in *Tzarskoe*, at that time *Detskoe Selo*). Later the department found a more suitable place in the same *Detskoe Selo*. When the *Rabfak* was transformed into *Sevfak*, it moved to Leningrad, where for the entire subsequent history (both of *Sevfak* and INS) it was located in the building of the Theological Seminary of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra (Obvodny Canal Embankment, 17). The same building during the Civil War hosted a receiver-distributor for “morally defective” children, the most formidable institution for homeless children of that time in Petrograd. Apparently, the meetings of the northerners and street children did take place, at least, they are reflected in short novel by Bogoras “The Risen Tribe” (Bogoras-Tan 1935).

11 The list of the *Sevfak* students of 1929 includes Kirghiz, Kurd, Uzbek, Mongol, Buryat, Tadjik, Tibetan, Baluchi, Ossetian, Turkmen, etc. A significant group (24 from the list of 289 people) were Todinsk Tuvan (I’d like to remind that at that moment Tuva was not a part of the USSR) (CSA SPb. Fund 7222. Inv. 10. File. 7-a. Aid. 1–100b).

The purpose of these institutions was not to provide a small group of “natives” with a more or less decent education, but to train cadres for the North,¹² so that the graduates would return home and be able to work in local institutions. For this purpose, an important mechanism was designed and used: the students had to go home annually (and the inhabitants of Chukotka biannually) for externship. In fact, this was the embodiment of the same idea of the need for regular field expeditions and stationary field work, which was laid down by Bogoras in the system of ethnographers’ training (Voskoboinikov 1958:52,60; Vakhtin 2016). Vacation trips solved several tasks at once: they allowed students not to break away from their native places and keep in touch with them, as well as gave the chance, at least for a while, to provide local institutions with relatively competent personnel, the need for whom was extreme. In addition, native society saw the results of the training and heard stories about life in Leningrad, and, while working, students understood what they did not yet know and what they needed to learn.

From the very beginning, the ethno-department of Leningrad State University and the *Rabfak* (and then the Northern faculty of LIZHVYA) were not isolated from each other. On the contrary, the connection between Bogoras’s students from the north and other students of ethnography arose very quickly: the ethnographers studied live languages directly with the native speakers, conducting linguistic and other scientific research. With the help of the *Sevfak* students conducted was approbation of field expedition programs, folklore record, etc. (Seleznev 1928).

Bogoras’s organization in Leningrad of an institution for teaching illiterate northerners, some of whom had never been outside their homes, caused a very mixed reaction in the society. It is known the *Sevfak* worked under the patronage of the Committee of the North at the All-Russian Central Executive Committee,¹³ and in 1927 the People’s Commissar of Education A. V. Lunacharskii gave a positive review of the *Sevfak* (1927:20–21). However, not only in the government, but also among the colleagues and pupils of Bogoras there were those who thought that the system invented by him was too cruel: the children of taiga and tundra, torn from their environment, could barely endure the damp Leningrad climate and adapted poorly – which was confirmed by rather a high mortality among the students (Gagen-Torn 2002: 318–319). The archive of the *Sevfak* has preserved the materials¹⁴ that indicate

12 The list of students of 1929 allows us to figure out the social composition of the students. The total was 289, from who the majority was recorded as hunters—112 people, 40 people are designated as fishermen and 8—as fishermen-hunters, 49 peasants also appear on the lists. Especially noteworthy in this context is the number of reindeer herders—there are only 9 of them (4 “Lopar” and 5 “Samoyed”). In addition, there were 30 farm laborers (18 of them were representatives of the northern outskirts) (CSA SPb. Fund. 7222 Inv. 10, File 7-a. Aid. 1–100b).

13 For example, when the students of the Northern faculty began to publish their own magazine *Taiga i Tundra*, they received an official greeting from the Chairman of the Committee of the North, P.G. Smidovich (1928:1).

14 See an interesting document—a denunciation, written in mid-March 1928, two and a half

that its existence was not cloudless. There were people in LIZHVYA who did not only doubt the meaningfulness of this enterprise, but also wrote letters denouncing them to different instances, trying to prove that the northern branch was just “professorial fun”, a waste of state money: students did not study there, but only “got spoiled”, and the *Sevfak* must immediately be disbanded.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Bogoras and his associates managed to convince the country’s leadership of the prospects of this enterprise, and the northern branch not only survived, but rather turned into an independent educational institution — the Institute of the Peoples of the North,¹⁶ which began its existence in January 1930.

years after the first students arrived in Leningrad. Its author is the head of the political enlightenment work department of LIZHVYA, a certain Potopov (orthography and punctuation of the original showed a certain level of ignorance):

The Northern Faculty in connection with the tasks of cultural construction in the North.

[...] The Northern Faculty duplicates residential schools with some significant minuses. The question is: who and for what purpose needs a bad duplication with wasting 3–4 times more money than any school for the locals. The conclusion is clear: only the “Northern patriots” want to duplicate it, want it badly and protect it. What was the Northern Faculty doing for more than two years? It was eliminating illiteracy among Northerners and Easterners. And wasn’t it better to do it on the spot? Of course it was. But maybe we have a lot of scientific forces of the northern people who can reorganize this matter and subsequently prepare a frame of good workers on the spot. The trouble is, we do not have these scientific forces. There are two people, one professor Bogoras-Tan, who adversely affects students with a rude [so!] patronage-like approach to the tasks of nurturing the natives. And in general, Professor Bogoras-Tan is known among students as a hero of the liberation of the northern nationalities, and all the others, together with existing organizations, do nothing. His student Ia.P. Koshkin, the head of the Northern Club, the club that goes far beyond the limits of local history, maintains that “as a result of the October Revolution, the Jews and the northern peoples have a harder life than they had before the revolution” (See the protocol of the Bureau of the Party Cell from 1/ 3–28). The Northern Club boosts nationalism by discussing the issue of the relocation of non-native people from the native territories, restrictions on hunting and fishing areas, and so on for non-natives, and the fact that the national strife among the students has intensified is indisputable. As noted in the resolution of the Bureau of the Cell from 1 / 3–28 [...] all this is in favor of the fact that the two existing northerners, one young, the other old, can not bring the necessary benefits to the educational institution. It turns out that we have no specialists in northern studies of the kind that the Party and the Soviet power wants. [...] The conclusion can be only one: the existence of the Northern Faculty in Leningrad is not advisable. It must be disbanded, otherwise we will waste enormous sums of money with no benefit. [...] allowing the existence of the *Sevfak* for the elimination of illiteracy and experiments of prof. Bogoras-Tan is impossible. (Head of political education, Potopov). March 14, 1928. In: CSA St. Petersburg Fund. 7222. Inv. 9. File 44. Aid. 3–4).

15 Conflicts at the *Sevfak* are also mentioned in Slezkine (1994:189).

16 Order on LIZHVYA No. 36 on the conversion of the *Sevfak* into INS from December 30, 1929 (CSA SPb. Fund. 7222. Inv. 10. File 4. Aid. 38). It is interesting that the tenth anniversary of INS was celebrated in 1935, because the count was started from the date of the *Rabfak* creation, and further transformations were considered as a history of its continuous development (Vosko-boinikov 1958:58).

The 1930s

1930 was in many respects crucial for the whole “Bogoras project”. On the one hand, a serious blow was struck on the preparation of ethnographers: this year, as a result of another “restructuring and optimization”, ethno-department ended its independent existence.¹⁷ At the same time, the Leningrad Institute of Linguistics and History (LILI, also LIFLI—Institute of History, Philosophy and Linguistics)¹⁸ was separated from the Leningrad State University where teaching of some northern languages was preserved. It is known that “in 1932, at the request of the leading bodies of the Far East at LIFLI, the northern branch was launched with two linguistic courses: the Tungus-Manchurian and the Paleo-Asiatic” (Voskoboinikov 1958:65). LILI (LIFLI) was graduated by many northeastern scholars who began their studies at Leningrad State University, but this institution did not produce a large number of new scholars (not connected with studies at Leningrad State University),¹⁹ the training of ethnographers at the university was interrupted and, in fact, LSU actually fell out of the “Bogoras project”.²⁰

In 1930, as already mentioned, due to the efforts of Bogoras and his associates, the *Sevfak* was transformed into the Institute of the Peoples of the North, whose rector was K.Ia. Luks. The Institute had a special status of an “Institute at the Central Executive Committee of the USSR”, which meant that it was not subordinated to the People’s Commissariat for Education, but directly to the government of the country.

In the same year, a new element of the “project” appeared, which had no analogue in the 1920s,—the Research Institute, engaged in the study of the North and the training graduate students in humanities specializing on the northern topics. It was established at INS and was named the Scientific Research Association of the Institute of the Peoples of the North (NIA INS). Over time, this organization brings together

17 Order of Leningrad State University № 24 from January 10, 1930 on the creation of a commission on transferring ethno-department into the structure of the Historical and Linguistic Faculty (Balashov et al. 1999:67).

18 Unfortunately, the archives of this institute still can not be found in the Central State Archive of St. Petersburg.

19 Such as V.A. Avrorin, G.F. Verbov, S.B. Okun, and others.

20 LIFLI existed for 7 years (until 1937), then was re-reunited with LSU (Universities 1935:40; Voskoboinikov 1958:65). An attempt to return ethnography to Leningrad State University was made before the war: in 1938, the Dean of the Geographical Faculty asked for restoration of some departments at the Faculty, including that of Ethnography (Balashov et al. 1999: 67). The Ethno-Department was reborn again at Leningrad State University in 1939–1940, this time combined with philology. In 1939, the Nenets and Koryak languages were taught there, and in 1940, the Tungus language was also added. Bogoras’s students worked there, but they did not manage to achieve any results because of the war. After the war, the northern branch was restored at the Oriental Faculty of Leningrad State University, where ethnographic students who had entered Leningrad State University before the war completed their studies (Vinnikov 1939; Voskoboinikov 1958:66).

a large number of specialists in various northern fields (from archeology and history up to economics, linguistics and school organization).

Then another new element of the system appears—LGPI, named after Herzen, begins training teachers for northern schools. This institute proved to be important for the entire structure of the “project”, since it trained not only educators, but also researchers of the North, partially replenishing the loss of ethno-department of Leningrad State University. Let us consider each of these elements in more detail.

The Institute of the Peoples of the North (INS)

The INS²¹ had the following structure:²²

- 1 *Preparatory Department* (the successor of the *Rabfak*), which had 8–12 differentiated groups, depending on the students’ general level.
- 2 *The Main Department* (of the level of a technical school), which initially had six branches and later three (Soviet-Party, pedagogical, cooperative-collective farm [later: economic]).
- 3 *North-Asian Seminar*—a university level unit.

In 1934, 155 people studied at the Preparatory Department, with 221 students at the main one. The last branch was the smallest: in 1931 only 6 people managed to get enrolled there, by 1934 this number had grown to 16 (Dorovin 1932:51; Voskoboinikov 1958:58). Thus, in 1934 there were 392 students at INS.²³ It is noteworthy that of the 155 participants in the Preparatory Department only 40 were women: at that time among the northerners education was clearly a masculine affair.

In addition to the three above-named permanent training departments, various courses (from 6 to 12 months) for the peoples of the North were periodically organized at INS, where workers from Soviet organizations, cooperatives, hunting specialists, livestock experts and bookkeepers were trained (Voskoboinikov 1958:56). In the first years several workshops successfully operated at INS: carpenter’s, locksmith’s, sewing, wood and bone carving, a small currying factory (ibid: 54).

The life of this institution proceeded in a peculiar atmosphere, because the students lived and worked in one large building (Obvodny Canal Embankment, 17), where there were bedrooms, classes, workshops, laundry, a hairdresser, club rooms, and other services.

21 Materials of INS have been scattered across different archives and funds. Some of them are kept in the Central State Archive of St. Petersburg, mainly in the fund 9471, part of the scientific and organizational materials is stored in the SPF ARAN, fund 1025, some of the information can be found in the same archive in the Bogoras Foundation (fund 250). The most important part of the heritage of INS is stored in the Archive of the MAE (K-II fund, inventory 1 “Field materials, manuscripts of books, articles, dissertations of INS employees for 1929–1941”).

22 See Dorovin (1932:51); Voskoboinikov (1858:54).

23 Cf. eight years before, in 1926, 74 people were studying at the northern *Rabfak* (Voskoboinikov 1958:58).

It is important to bear in mind the following:

- although INS has the word “institute” in its title, not all students had to receive higher education: the main department gave education at the level of a technical school (college);
- the task of the INS was to train not only teachers, but also various workers for the northern outskirts from the indigenous peoples of the North, i.e. the national *intelligentsia*. This is a serious difference between INS of this period and its reformed successors;
- all students of INS were involved in the work on alphabets and writing, working closely with the students of LGPI and helping to train researchers in the colloquial language of their people.

*The Research Association of the Institute of the Peoples of the North*²⁴

This research institute was launched practically simultaneously with the INS. Although NIA INS and INS itself had similar names, they were located at the same address and were closely related to each other in terms of level and tasks, they were two completely different organizations. INS was an institution that trained the *intelligentsia* from among the peoples of the North (not always providing them with higher education), and NIA INS was a research institute that united people who studied the North and its population.

The academic staff of NIA INS (as it was written at that time) was divided into three main categories: researchers, post-graduate students and their lecturers. The Central State Archive of St. Petersburg stores the lists of NIA employees for several years. For example, in 1933 the staff included: 31 researchers (among them Bogoras himself, his students who had different specialties, as well as the leading specialists in the economy of the North, people engaged in the history of the North or teaching problems); 14 lecturers for post-graduate studies (some of them were at the same time employed as researchers, some were external, invited, visiting lecturers, for example,

24 The main published sources of information about the organization of NIA INS work are the already mentioned article by Voskoboinikov (1958) and the texts on the current life of NIA INS published in *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* in the section *Khronika*: in 1934 (short essay), 1935 (detailed description) and 1936 years. (A review of expeditions and business trips). The data presented by Voskoboinikov are systematic and complete, but they have one peculiarity: he analyzes the work of NIA INS primarily from the point of view of its importance for the organization of school instruction, and not from the position of contribution to the academic study of the North. Sources of academic life are to a large extent the materials of the *Khronika* in *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, and especially the archival materials stored in St. Petersburg CSA and Archive of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (fund K-II), and data from the electronic catalog of Russian National Library.

L.V. Shcherba was the professor of experimental phonetics); 42 (!) post-graduate students.²⁵

In addition to the people on the lists, “permanently and actively participating” in the work of the association were members of other research institutions and universities of Leningrad and Moscow (Khronika 1934:108; 1935:228).

Structure

The NIA INS was divided into large sections, within which separate directions were allocated. At first there were three sections, since 1933 their number increased to four (Khronika 1934:108; Voskoboinikov 1958:55).

1. *Linguistic Section*. The largest section by the number of participants: in 1934 there were 36 people in it (Khronika 1935:228). The tasks of the section included: study of the languages of the peoples of the North, scientific development of language construction matters in the North, creation of educational, popular political- and fiction literature in the northern languages. In 1934, the linguistic section was divided into four subgroups: Finno-Ugric-Nenets, Tungus-Manchurian, Paleo-Asiatic and the group for studying the folklore of the peoples of the North. The section was preparing to publish volumes dedicated to different language groups, as well as works on individual languages and linguistic problems. Almost all NIA linguists were simultaneously teachers of northern languages at INS and other institutions of the city, as well as authors or co-authors of the first ABC-books and textbooks.

2. *Historical and Ethnographic Section* (in 1934—12 people). The main task of the section was to study the history of the peoples of the North: their social structure in the tribal period and their history in the era of colonization of the territory.²⁶ In addi-

25 In 1934 there were 43 research associates and 37 graduate students in the NIA INS (Khronika 1935:228), in 1936–36 post-graduate students (Zelenin 1938:19). Already the very number of graduate students testifies the scale of this scientific institution.

26 Topics for research in 1934–1935. (Khronika 1935:229): “Ancestral order among the Evenk”, “The Social System of the Transbaikal Evenk”, “The Khasovo nights”, “Nenets names”, “Vogul and Ostiak principalities in the 17th century”, “Penetration of commercial Capital into Yakutia in the 17th century”, “Colonial policy of tsarism in Kamchatka and Chukotka in the 18th century”, “Enfeebling of the Nenets in the 18th century”, “Yasak and the liberation struggle of the Nenets in the 17th and 18th centuries”, “The Voivodeship administration in Yakutia”, “The Evenk liberation movement in the 18th century”. A special place in the work of the section was given to the study of archival materials of the Yakut and Tiumen funds. In addition, the historical-ethnographic section set two more tasks for itself: 1) preparing for printing of a number of works on the peoples of the North (respectively processed and commented) by various travelers of the 16th–18th centuries (Krashennnikov, Steller, Castrén, Miller, etc.) and research in the history of the studying certain nations of the North (Khronika 1935:230; CSA St. Petersburg. Fund. 9471. Inv. 2. File. 35. Aid. 8–10a); 2) preparation of a textbook on the history of the peoples of the North (in 1935 they wrote the chapters *Siberia under the Mongolian power*, *The*

tion, the section worked on preparation of textbooks, teaching aids and programs for schools in the Far North.

3. *Cultural and Educational Section* (later Pedagogical). The staff of this section (in 1934—9 people) studied the specifics of northern children, provided courses on teaching techniques and the history of teaching, and developed individual teaching methods. In 1935 the section performed its work in two directions:

- Research—the study of *natsmen*²⁷ children and the experience of northern schools,²⁸ including such topics as “An Evenk child’s system of views”, “Development of a methodological study of a northern child intellectual development”, “Family education in Gilyak²⁹ culture”, “Children of the peoples of the North in ethnographic literature”, “Localization of teaching in the northern national school”, “The work of a northern school: INS materials”, “The Russian language among the peoples of the North”, “Pedagogical experiment as a method of studying the teaching process in a northern school”, “Missionary schools among the peoples of the North”;
- Methodological and pedagogical assistance to teachers built around three main topics: “The Study and development of methods in separate subjects schools and ethnic schools”, “Theory of teaching and education in schools in the far north” and “Organization of school affairs in the North” (Khronika 1935:230).

4. *Economic and Geographical Section* (1934—12 people). It worked on the preparation of economic monographs on the northern ethnical districts and areas and studied certain branches of the northern economy.³⁰ Its tasks also included study of “socialist reconstruction of the economy of the peoples of the North”. Like all the other sections, it was engaged in development of textbooks and manuals for the schools of the North. Employees of the Ethnographic and Economical-Geographical Department conducted local history work among the students. Section staff participated in the preparation of the new circumpolar census, which was planned to be held in early 1930s (Sergeev 1933).³¹

Conquest of Siberia, Siberia in the 17th century).

27 *Natsmen* is a short for members of ethnic minorities.

28 This was before the crackdown of pedology. A list of articles published at that time on this topic is contained in Iasnitskii (2013).

29 Gilyak are now named Nivkh.

30 In 1935, economic monographs were prepared for Taimyr National District, the Northern (Okhotsk) districts of the Lower Amur Region, Vitimo-Olekminsk National District and the Turukhansk District (Khronika 1935:230).

31 In 1935, according to the curriculum, the following subjects were studied: “Next tasks for further study of the Koryak economy”, “Hunting of the Novaia Zemlia”, “Salmon fishery in the Far North and the participation of the peoples of the North in it”, “Hunting in the budget of the Far North population”, “Passive samplers in the hunting of the peoples of the North” (part 1 of

In addition to the sections in NIA INS, there were two other scientific offices and two commissions (Khronika 1935).³² The *Anthropological Chair* (three employees) conducted anthropometric and biochemical studies of INS students; *The Ethnic Physical Education Chair* organized methodological events and conducted researches (including: “Physiological and hygienic assessment of household postures of the peoples of the North”, “Functional tests of the cardiovascular system of INS Students”, “Collection of materials on ethnic types of sport games and dances”, etc.). The *Commission on History of Religion and Anti-Religious Work*, in addition to its own anti-religious work, studied the religiosity of INS students, collected exhibits on the religion of the peoples of the North, made a bibliographical file on the history of religion and anti-religious work in the North. In 1935, a publication on the history of Tungus religion was being prepared for publication. The *Commission on National Art* (in 1934—8 people) was dealing with two types of tasks: theoretical—the study of all types of national arts of the peoples of the North, and practical—research of its development problems. The commission was divided into sectors of painting and drawing, sculpture, national theater, national music.³³

NIA conducted a great expeditionary work: only in 1933 20 expeditions were organized to different parts of the North (Khronika 1934:108).³⁴

The *Khronika* of 1935 emphasizes that at that time the NIA INS had expanded considerably and strengthened the communication (mainly through the literature exchange) with a number of foreign scientific institutions (mainly in the USA, France,

the monograph *The Peoples of the North; Technology of Hunting for Animals*), *Soviet Trade in Ostiako-Vogulskii National District* (Khronika 1935:230)

- 32 The same publication reports on the ongoing work on shooting of a full-length film, the purpose of which is to show the peoples of the North and the giant socialist construction in the Far North under the conditional title “Bolsheviks of the North”. The picture is mainly based on the existing film material, but with the additional shooting of missing coherency moments both in INS itself and on site by one of the expeditions of the NIA. Over the past period, a lot of work has been done on viewing of more than 100 paintings, annotations have been compiled, the latter being made out in the form of a special work “Northern Films” (Khronika 1935:232); See also Arziutov (2016).
- 33 One of the tasks of this commission was to popularize the art of the peoples of the North, arranging exhibitions in the USSR and abroad, preparing albums, books, reproductions for printing, “promoting the reproduction of sculpture in materials: terracotta, plaster, majolica, bronze, wood, bone and stone” (Khronika 1935:231). In addition, the commission conducted experiments with new material for northerners, collaborated with Leningrad Porcelain Factory, for which INS students created product designs and sculptural models. It worked on the illustration and design of publications of national literature. For more details on the work of the artistic part of the commission, see Musiankova (2012). The same commission studied musical instruments and musical folklore of the peoples of the North and was engaged in creation and development of a Nanai theater group, on the basis of which they planned to create second (Evenk) theater group soon.
- 34 Expeditions were predominantly linguistic, but their participants also collected ethnographic materials (Khronika 1934:108).

Austria, Estonia, Latvia, etc). This connection was realized both directly and through VOKS³⁵ (Khronika 1935:229). Just at this time (1934–1937) a German Communist scientist, a specialist in Ugric languages, the future vice-president of GDR Academy of Sciences, W. Steinitz, worked at NIA INS (CSA St. Petersburg F. 9471. Inv. 2. Case 88 [160], Khronika 1936:157).

Publishing

Almost all the works devoted to INS mention that it published a periodic collection of *Taiga and Tundra* implemented by the northerners—the most famous (and unusual) publication by INS.³⁶ However, in scientific terms it was far from the most important: in the early 1930s, NIA INS conducted huge publishing work. The first was the series *Proceedings of NIA INS* published in 1932–1933 (5 issues). It was in this series that the book by P.E. Terletskii *Population of the Far North According to the Census Data* was published (1932), as well as a study by M.O. Kosvena devoted to Morgan (1933), and the work by E.A. Kreinovich about Gilyak numerals (1932). Then, instead of a single *Proceedings*, several series began to appear: *Works on Economics*, *Works on History*, *Works on Ethnography*, *Works on Linguistics* and *Works on Folklore*. In addition to them, in 1935–1936 10 more issues of the *Izvestiia of NIA INS* series were published. Besides all the series, about 20 books were published also devoted to various aspects of modern study of the North. In addition, from 1934 to 1936, the series *Materials on Ethnography* was published, which contained classical ethnographic works (two volumes of L.G. Morgan's works, two volumes of works by L.Ia. Shternberg and the first volume of Bogoras's *The Chukchee*.³⁷ INS was active in publication work: it is known that the works by Castrén, Steller, Krasheninnikov, Shirokogoroff were translated and prepared for publication, Miller's *Siberian History* was being prepared for revised publication, annotated indexes of literature on the peoples of the North were compiled and prepared for publication (CSA SPb. F. 9471. Inv. 2. Case. 35. Aid. 8)—but these planned publications did never appear.³⁸

The largest number of works published under the stamp of NIA INS was associated with the languages of the peoples of the North. They included works on grammar, dialectology, the language of folklore, experimental phonetics, dictionaries, and self-tutorials. In addition, there were numerous works devoted to creation of written language, textbooks, self-instruction manuals, methodological recommendations for

35 All-Union Organization for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

36 In fact, the collection *Taiga i Tundra* was born at the *Sev'fak*: the first issue was published in 1928, and the last one, No. 2 (5), in 1933.

37 The series ceased to exist in 1936, and the second volume of *The Chukchee* was published outside this series after the author's death (1939), but still under the stamp of NIA INS.

38 For additional information on the INS publications see appendices in the Russian edition of this article in *Antropologicheskii Forum* 2016 (29): 37–42.

teachers, analysis of possible educational difficulties in learning the language.³⁹ Literature in the northern languages was written, translated and prepared for publication.

Even a brief review of the structure of NIA INS, the number of its staff and graduate students, the directions of their researches, publications prepared there show that this was a large scientific institution that seriously influenced the state of affairs in the northern studies. At the same time, in modern works devoted to the history of Russian ethnography in the 1920s–1930s, the activities of NIA INS not just fail to be considered, but rather are hardly ever mentioned: it is believed that the Institute of the Peoples of the North was engaged solely in training the “native” students.

LGPI named after A.I. Herzen: Northern Branch and Northern Courses

The purpose of this institution was to train teachers for northern schools and workers for national northern technical training colleges. I would like to underline that not just elementary school teachers were trained there, but teachers of senior classes and “key specialists”, i.e. those who, having returned back, would themselves be able to train teachers for local schools.

Unlike INS, this institution accepted people regardless of their ethnic background, only secondary education was required. Forms of training at the Institute were very different, for example, they provided a short-term or one-year further vocational training courses for teachers who came from the North, or courses for the teacher training for junior or senior undergraduates of various faculties of LGPI and other pedagogical institutions wishing to work in northern schools. The essence of this training was that students *in addition to* their specialty were taught national languages and did northern studies, receiving the right to teach in national schools or pedagogical schools. Another important form of training, which existed at the teacher’s college, was a special Northern Department, which was administered separately. More than the half of the graduate students by the time they entered LGPI had already had experience of work in northern schools (Voskoboinikov 1958:62). The Northern Branch more or less constantly worked at the Philological Faculty; occasionally it recruited a group of “northerners” from the Historical and Geographical Faculties. In all cases, students studied special northern courses in addition to their main curriculum.

As a side note, in the early 1930s teachers were trained at LGPI for work not only in the North, but also in other regions, for example, the archive has retained curricula of 1934 for the department of the western section of the “*natsmen* division” for the Poles, Finns, Estonians and Latvians (CSA St. Petersburg, 4331. Inv. 11. F. 443.) Thus, the northern direction in the LGPI was again (as in LIZHI), although important, but not unique and exceptional.

39 There were 7 issues in the series “Teacher’s Aid for Ethnic Elementary Schools in the Far North”.

LGPI graduates worked directly at northern schools, taught at pedagogical colleges, became “leading workers in the field of education” in Siberia, the Far East and the regions of the Far North. Before the war more than 200 people had been trained (Voskoboinikov 1958:64).

As already mentioned, training of northern teachers began at Leningrad State Pedagogical Institute in 1930, i.e. just when the Ethnographic Department of Leningrad State University ceased to exist. In the archive of the CSA SPb (Fund 4331), some northern courses for different types of training, curricula and reports were preserved, based on which one can get an idea of who taught there, what subjects they taught and in what scope. Considerable attention was paid to training future teachers in the field of northern languages, which was a specific feature of the northern branch. It is known that from 1932 to 1934 the Chukchi language was taught by Bogoras, the Inuit by Forstein, the Tungus by Vasilevich, the Nenets by Prokofiev, Verbov, Almazova, the Ostiak by Karger, the Vogul by Chernetsov, and the introduction to the study of northern languages was taught by prof. Bubrich. In addition to language training, future teachers were given courses in the history of the peoples of the North⁴⁰ and in the economy of the North,⁴¹ in physical and economic geography of the North (lecturer A. V. Korolev). We know nothing about the existence of any courses in common ethnography and ethnography of the northern peoples, but programs by prof. Bogoras devoted to religion and anti-religious work in the North included topics traditional for ethnographers.⁴²

The northern branch of LGPI was closely associated with Bogoras and his students. Beginning in 1932, the same logic in teaching began to be applied at the Teacher’s College as at the Ethno-Department: after the second year students majoring in the North were sent to the North for a long practice, after which they could return and finish their studies.⁴³ (In 1934, the training in the northern section became five-year-long, in contrast to the four-year-curriculum for the rest of the institute). These students, together with Bogoras’s pupils of the past and graduates of LILI, participated in creating textbooks and writing for the peoples of the North, while the best students were engaged in teaching the languages at short-term teacher-training courses (Voskoboinikov 1958:63).⁴⁴

40 Unfortunately, in the available curriculum the author of the course is not listed.

41 The course “On the reconstruction of the Northern economy” was delivered by A. F. Bruchanov.

42 It is known that at the annual courses for teachers in 1937 ethnography was delivered as a separate subject.

43 The courses were called “Lectures on the history of beliefs” (14 hours) and “Religion and anti-religious work among small ethnic groups of the North for third-year students” (20 lectures).

44 Voskoboinikov writes about this (1958:61). Unfortunately, neither memories nor archival materials give us an opportunity to imagine how widely this practice was used and for how long it was preserved.

The Northern Branch of LGPI, although it was an independent organization with its own goals and objectives, was in fact an integral part of the unified structure created by Bogoras and his colleagues, centered in the first half of the 1930s around NIA INS. It was not just an overlap in the teaching staff—there was a close and deep structural connection between these institutions. As an illustration, I will cite a few quotes from the current plans and reports of the early 1930s preserved in LGPI funds:

- 1 From the minutes of the meeting devoted to the situation in the northern branch of Herzen Institute, 1932: “When undergoing pedagogical practice, establish contacts with INS in order to conduct, in addition to practical classes in model schools in Leningrad, classes with ethnic contingent of the students of the Institute” (CSA SPb F. 4331. Inv. 11. F. 217. Aid. 1).
- 2 From the working plan of the northern department for 1933–1934 academic year, 2nd spring semester: “P. 20 [...] the research work of the students of the department is to be done in INS” (CSA St. Petersburg F. 4331. Inv. 11. F. 388. Aid. 7).
- 3 From the report on the work of the northern branch in 1933–1934 academic year: “The research club did not work this year, but some students took part in compiling textbooks for northern languages (the Chukotka section, the entire Nenets section) and in the critical analysis of the published textbooks (the Eskimo section)” (CSA SPb F. 4331. Inv. 11. F. 388. Aid. 1). (The preparation of textbooks was conducted at INS.)
- 4 From the work plan of the Department of Northern Languages of the Institute named after A.I. Herzen for the second semester of 1933–1934 academic year: “Despite the considerable staff of the department, all employees except two are the full-time employees of the Institution of the People of the North. The department staff includes 3 professors, 2 assistant professors, 10 assistants, 2 laboratory assistants (part-time workers who work half-time)” (CSA SPb F. 4331. Inv. 11. F. 388. Aid. 12);
 “There is a cabinet of Northern languages at the Chair, and there are two laboratory assistants in the office on the part-time contract. The overall management of the cabinet is led by the Head of the Department, Vasilevich, who works on the volunteer basis. The Cabinet is an educational and auxiliary institution. In the current year, the Cabinet will work on methodological assistance to the mass school, while the plan of this work in the second half of the year will be correlated with the work of the method section of NIA INS” (CSA SPb F. 4331. Inv. 11. F. 388. Aid. 12rev.). “There are no post-graduate courses at the department. Students who graduated from the department remain as graduate students at NIA INS” (CSA SPb F. 4331. Inv. 11. F. 388. Aid. 13).

It is not surprising that having such close ties with NIA INS, LGPI, which was supposed to train primarily teachers, also trained specialists in northern studies, who in fact belonged to the same Leningrad ethnographic school as the graduates of Leningrad State University. Among LGPI graduates there were I.S. Vdovin, N.M. Tershchenko, E.S. Rubtsova, G.A. Menovshchikov. Apparently, many courses studied by majors in northern studies in Leningrad State Pedagogical University and students of the Ethno-Department of Leningrad State University were close to each other, and all these students considered themselves as belonging to the Leningrad ethnographic school.⁴⁵

The second half of 1930s

In the mid-1930s the “project” launched by Bogoras and his colleagues worked very productively: graduates of the Ethno-Department, who formed the backbone of teachers in both universities and most of the staff of NIA INS, participated in the research, taught new students (including those who did not belong to the peoples of the North), published their works, went on expeditions. But the general situation in the country and, as a consequence, the situation in academic life could not but affect their work.

On May 10, 1936 suddenly, in the train to Rostov-on-Don, dies professor Bogoras. After his death, his “project” goes through a series of reorganizations and eventually ceases to exist.

In 1936 INS was transferred to the *Glavsevmorput*⁴⁶ system—an organization not much interested in INS. At this time it was focused on the water, that is on the waterway of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), and loses interest in the land adjacent to the NSR and its peoples’ (Evladov 2008:257).

In 1937, started the so-called case of INS (Roon and Sirina 2003:61–62): first, arrested was a graduate of NIA INS, a writer, an employee of *Detgiz* publishing house N.I. Spiridonov, followed closely by INS director Ia.P. Alkor (Koshkin), then by employees and graduate students of INS A.F. Bruchanov, N.F. Prytkova, V.I. Tsintsius, A.S. Forstein, E.A. Kreinovich, editor of *Detgiz* K.B. Shavrov, V.T. Peresvet-Saltan, and many others. “Most part of the cohort of young scientists, born at the Ethnographic Department of Leningrad University under the direction of L.Ia. Shternberg and V.G. Bogoras in the 1920s and at the Institute of the Peoples of the North in the

45 I have a feeling that Hertenzen students were more inclined to study languages than ethnography in the broadest sense. Perhaps this is due to the fact that in the 1930s because of the need for urgent development of written language and textbooks it was the languages that were the focus of attention.

46 A state organization established in 1932 for the national economic development of the Arctic and ensuring navigation along the Northern Sea Route or GUSMP, the Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route.

1930s, was annihilated or permanently expelled from academic work during Stalin's repressions [...] The works of these scholars were not reprinted, the remaining manuscripts were not printed, and their names were forgotten," writes I.I. Krupnik. And then he continues: "Almost all the staff of researchers and teachers of the Institute of the Peoples of the North were arrested and repressed in 1937, and the institution was disbanded" (Krupnik 2008:19,20).

Indeed, on October 1, 1939, INS was reassigned to the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR (*Narkompros*). This reorganization was not a formal reassignment to a different structure, but a radical change in the entire organization of INS: from that moment INS was turning into the Pedagogical Institute of the Peoples of the North, whose task was just to provide higher education. INS had now two subdivisions: the Pedagogical Institute (with a five-year course) and the Teachers' Institute (3-year course).

All citizens of the USSR could enter the new INS regardless of their ethnic belonging, although some privileges for the natives of the North were not lost when taking the Russian language exam. In 1940, a new allotment for districts and ethnic groups was made (Voskoboikov 1958:60).

	Terms of education	Faculties	Specialization
Preparatory Department	No enrolment any longer		
Teacher's Institute	3 years	3 faculties: Historical; Science and Geography; of Northern Languages and the Russian language and Literature	Teachers of incomplete secondary schools
Pedagogical Institute	5 years	1 faculty: of Northern Languages and the Russian Language and Literature	Teachers of complete secondary schools and national teacher's colleges

Table 1. The structure of INS in the late 1930s (Voskoboikov 1958:59).

Since this moment, INS was training only teachers, and not the "national *intelligentsia*" in various specialties. In addition, as a result of the transformation in Leningrad, there were now two educational institutions that trained the staff for northern schools: LGPI and the reorganized INS. *Narkompros* could not tolerate such duplication and sought to remedy the situation: the first attempt was to transfer students from

LGPI to INS (CSA SPb. F. 4331. Inv. 34. F. 124. Aid. 39), and after some time INS was eliminated and its students were transferred to LGPI.⁴⁷

As a result of the repressions and reorganization of the late 1930s, active publishing work of INS and NIA INS was curtailed, most of the publication plans remained incomplete, almost all the series, with the exception of linguistic ones, were interrupted, and only works on the languages of the peoples of the North continued to be published for some time.

The “Bogoras project”: correlations

How, why, and for what purpose was all this network of institutions described above united into a single whole, referred to here as the “Bogoras project”? Let us start with a rather unusual document—almost a denunciation (March 1928), written by Bogoras’s LIZHVYA colleague, prof. (sic!) Kamenshchikov.⁴⁸

Comments on some pedagogical contradictions observed in the work of *Sevfak*, dated by March 15, 28 [addressed to the assistant to the *Sevfak* rector A.E. Smyk – E.L.].

- 1 A student for comparatively a long time (for 4–5 years) tears (sic!) himself away from his native situation, from the environment, is weaned from local conditions of life, becomes declassified. All this, of course, can not be considered useful from the state point of view.
- 2 Complete absence of textbooks. There are not even ABCs and books for teaching arithmetic. Available textbooks in Russian are intended for adult working class or peasant audience, for our students they are completely inappropriate. Compiling any textbooks for our students here in Leningrad or Moscow, being far from the local conditions of life, is impossible. [...]
- 3 [...] From the pedagogical point of view it is more useful (sic!) to organize native schools for each ethnic group separately. In these schools, teachers should be those who know the local way of life and language of a given group. [...]
- 4 [...] The *Sevfak* should be a school of a higher type (underlined by Kamenshchikov). It can exist in Leningrad only as a school for training of highly skilled workers

47 The order of the *Narkompros* No. 699 from September 29, 1941 on closing of Leningrad Pedagogical Institute of the Peoples of the North, see: CSA SPb. Fund. 4331. Inv. 31. File. 603. Aid. 28. By this time many students and teachers of INS had already gone to the battles of the WWII.

48 The text is kept in the same folder as the above-quoted denunciation—see footnote 13 (CSA SPb. Fund. 7222. Inv. 9. File. 44. Aid. 1–2). (Orthography and punctuation of the original showed a certain level of ignorance).

for the North. Workers of average qualification must be prepared by indigenous schools on the spot. Then, graduates of these local schools should work on the spot for 2–3 years and the best of them are sent to Leningrad or Moscow to receive higher qualification from such specialists who are not there on the ground.

Prof. Kamenshchikov

Let's look at this letter not only as a denunciation. It precisely articulates the problems that the "Bogoras project" was to solve. Prof. Kamenshchikov is certainly right: from the pedagogical point of view, it is much better to teach children "on the spot", using textbooks, and it is better if teachers know their pupils' native language, and it is better to train in Leningrad only highly qualified personnel. Most likely, Bogoras would agree with this, but the problem was that there were no textbooks or teachers in 1928, while the question of where they would come from and how much time it would take did not bother prof. Kamenshchikov. Meanwhile, it was these issues that were central for prof. Bogoras when he began to build his own construction.

Of course, if you have enough time and money, you first need to train specialists, then wait until they conduct the necessary studies and then write grammars for the languages, create textbooks and prepare teachers capable of teaching with these textbooks; then carry out approbation of these programs in local schools, train educated natives in these schools; after that start teaching them at a university in Leningrad; and only then can we expect that these people will take part in the modernization processes. This path is logically impeccable, but it can stretch out for several decades. The task was to complete it as soon as possible—from the point of view of Bogoras (and the Committee of the North), it was impossible to wait.

The whole design, created by Bogoras, was aimed at combining scientific research with practical activities and, at the expense of this, to solve the tasks as quickly as possible. Already in the early 1920s, together with Shternberg, he started preparing students who were closely acquainted with the life of the studied peoples and were part-time "missionaries of a new culture" (Bogoras-Tan 1925:48) and who immediately began working on the spot, creating schools and programs, participating in alphabetization and teaching northern languages. In this case the newly-created *Rab-fak* (and its successors) not only trained the national *intelligentsia*, settling "illiterate natives" in a large European city and forcing them to learn a lot in a very short time, but immediately turned into a "living ethnographic laboratory" (Seleznev 1928:13) for ethnographic students who studied here a living language and who received, directly in Leningrad, the information about the culture, economy and life of the northern regions. A few years later, when both specialists in the North and experience in organizing work with the northerners were in place, the development of the project reached a new level: a special institution was created that dealt only with the North.

The new institution was still based on the same principle of complementarity: INS as an educational institution acted as the base for INS as a research institute. The fact

that such an organization would make it possible to solve issues of alphabetization and training personnel for the northern regions faster and at higher level, was predicted by K. Ya. Luks, the director of INS, already in the first year of its existence: “It is possible to organize a solid study of the language problem only in a centralized manner and with the direct participation of the natives themselves. All northern indigenous schools need their own central laboratory to test local experience. INS can and should become, under certain conditions, such laboratory” (Luks 1930:135). Engaging future teachers of northern schools into alphabetization and study of the North also became a logical continuation of the project.

Prof. Kamenshchikov in the quoted letter against Bogoras “experiments” argued that “it is impossible to write any textbooks for our students here in Leningrad or Moscow, far from the local conditions of life.” As the results of the Bogoras’s project showed, with proper organization of work, it is possible. At the same time, the northerners who came to the capital, albeit poorly literate, played a significant role in the success: a great contribution to their work was made by the presence in Leningrad of the people with whom they could learn the basics of linguistics, check the texts, edit publications in their native languages, who could be involved in preparing of textbooks and grammars and in the common cause of alphabetization and writing literary work. So it was for a good reason that, at one of the sessions on the “localization” of schools, the creators of textbooks complained that they had difficulties with verifying texts in the Nenets language, because students who studied Nenets in INS mainly spoke Komi (AMAE RAS. F. K-II. Inv. 1. F. 273. Aid. 101). Actually, INS as a laboratory is precisely the “Professor Bogoras’s experiments”, which irritated Mr. Potopov so fiercely (see footnote 14).

At the same time, NIA INS staff and LGPI students were researchers who used knowledge of the northerners and their teachers: they not only wrote textbooks, but also directly formed the national *intelligentsia*. This interaction is a striking feature of the project: a bunch of “researchers and the future *intelligentsia* of the North” was formed from the very beginning of the creation of the northern *Rabfak*.⁴⁹

Needless to say, a significant part of NIA INS employees were students of Bogoras and Shternberg. According to Mr. Potopov, in 1928 there were only two northern scholars in Leningrad, “the old and the young”, Bogoras and Koshkin. In 1933 (only five years later!) in the INS graduate school, as already mentioned, there were 42 people (35 of them belonged directly to the school of Bogoras and Shternberg: 29 people

49 The role of this community of students and researchers was clearly recognized and highly appreciated by contemporaries. Thus, the propaganda book “Miraculous Chum” by M. Rokhman, devoted to INS, said: “It’s them, the *employees* of the Institute of NIA under the leadership of the party and the director Ia.P. Alkor (Koshkin) [...] who, *together with students*, provided for the literacy of the peoples of the Far North in 15 languages, created the first ABCs and first books for primary schools in these languages, *continuing simultaneously teaching each other and learning from each other*” (Rokhman 1935: 23; — italics: E.L.). This is another reason for discussing the relations of informants and researchers in the early Soviet period; cf. Alymov and Arziutov (2014:83).

graduated from the ethnographic departments of LSU or LILI (LIFLI), the other six were graduates of LGPI).⁵⁰

We have already spoken about the place of LGPI in this whole structure: the team of the NIA INS staff taught northern languages and northern disciplines at the Pedagogical Institute (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:148); the students of the Institute (like the students of Ethno-Department of the Faculty of Geography before) learnt their native language from the students of INS, and were involved in the research work and scientific life of NIA INS. It can be seen that in LGPI students used the same logic and tactics in organization of the training as in the Ethno-Department.

The core of this system was, apparently, scientific work, which required scientific personnel. The system trained such personnel, set tasks for them and acted as an employer for them, providing opportunities for field research, comprehensive humanitarian study of Siberia and the North, creating scripts, textbooks, etc. At the same time, the tasks of training teachers and the national *intelligentsia* were being solved.

Thus, all of the above-mentioned formally different institutions supplemented each other in functions, and were closely related logically, structurally and in composition, which allowed them to solve problems facing academy and society better and faster. It is obvious that these institutions and the connections between them were not formed spontaneously, but were the result of creative thought, tireless energy and the enviable perseverance of the creators and project managers. All this structure becomes obvious if we consider these institutions not in isolation, but in their interrelation with each other.⁵¹

Is Ethnography in a knockdown?

If we trace the history of the “Bogoras project” step by step, it becomes obvious that, although the ideas behind the project were both well-balanced and logical, the structure itself was organizationally shaky and fragile. Sometimes it is not clear at all how Bogoras and his comrades managed to achieve at least any results. What the Leningrad ethnographic school achieved in the study of the North in the 1920s–1930s, it achieved in many respects *contrary* to the actions of the authorities and the events

50 In fact, Potopov was wrong about 1928. By that time quite a lot of students had already been prepared, a considerable part of whom were engaged in research of the North. Several of them were in the field after graduation from the university (for example, G.N. and E.D. Prokof'evs), while others were on expeditions, having not yet completed the course (as N.K. Karger, V.I. Chernetsov, N.A. Kotovshchikova, and others). A few years later they began to return and, thanks to the establishment of Bogoras's NIA INS, they had the possibility to process the collected materials and apply their knowledge.

51 In fact, there were more institutions associated with the name of Bogoras and with the exploration of the North: students of Bogoras worked in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, and in the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism, and in other places, but in the center the structure was as described above.

that the era brought down on people. Analyzing the archival materials, one can realize how much the existence of the whole complex and its functioning were not due to “the support of the Soviet power” but to the will and energy of Bogoras (before 1927—Bogoras and Shternberg), his disciples and associates.

At first, the authorities were re-subordinating the ethnographic department non-stop, then they liquidated it completely. It would seem that everything was lost, but under the slogan of the need for quality education of school teachers,⁵² Bogoras and his colleagues managed to transfer the more or less full-fledged training of specialists in the northeastern studies to Herzen Institute. At the same time, they tried to save at least some of the devastated ethnographic schools in LILI, where the students of the closed Ethno-Department came to: after a couple of years they even managed to start teaching certain northern languages (Voskoboïnikov 1958:65). Thus, Bogoras’s structure was maintained and began to bear fruit. But the state machine was inexorable: the transfer of INS together with the NIA under the leadership of the *Glavsevmorput*, repressions against INS staff, sudden transferring in 1937 of the writing of the northern languages from Latin alphabet to Cyrillic, abolition of the subject and ethnic specifics of INS and its transformation into a pedagogical institute for everybody—all this at last led to the destruction of such a painstakingly and diligently developed structure, finally completed in the years of the Second World war. One can’t but recall the words said once by Bogoras about the plans for another reorganization of Ethno-Department: “It looks like a fatal circle, something like Penelope’s cloth—no matter how much you weave it, an idle person comes and unweaves everything’ (SPF ARAN. F. 250. Inv. 3. F. 167. Aid. 516 rev).⁵³

I will also note the ambiguous position of the Leningrad northern studies. On the one hand, it was assessed as “professorial experiments” and existed despite administrative arbitrariness and extra-academic pressure, and sometimes direct violence by the authorities. At the same time the results of the work subsequently were attributed by the state to itself as “the merits of Soviet power”. On the other hand, this situation once again demonstrates how difficult it is to understand who defined the state policy and represented the interests of the state. In a certain sense, Bogoras and his disciples were “Soviet power”,⁵⁴ acting in the same hypostasis that was inspired by the pathos of modernization and worked to transform the country.

52 The requirement to introduce teaching of ethnography into the curriculum of pedagogical universities was recorded in the resolution based on the reports at the same meeting of ethnographers in 1929. (Meeting in 1929).

53 The letter of Bogoras to D.B. Riazantsev at the Marx and Engels Institute with a request to help in the fight against the People’s Commissariat for Education, *Narkompros*.

54 Let us recall that INS was subordinated not to the People’s Commissariat for Education, but directly to the government of the USSR. According to T.D. Solovei (1998:211), this did not so much boost the state control (it could be implemented with the help of the ministry), but rather increased the status of the institution and freed it from unnecessary coordination and delay. INS, therefore, was directly integrated into the Soviet state apparatus.

The historiographical fate of Bogoras's project is paradoxical. In the academic world there is a certain consensus that the 1930s were the hardest time for the national ethnography, as evidenced by the titles of the works and their sections devoted to this period: *Life After Death* (Solovei 2001:117), *Soviet Ethnography in a Knockdown* (Slezkine 1993). In such studies, NIA INS is at best only mentioned; more often, it just goes unnoticed. At the same time, the available sources convincingly demonstrate that NIA INS in the first half of the 1930s was a big academic institute with a large number of post-graduate students, with broad range of scientific topics, performing a huge expeditionary, editing and publishing work. NIA INS was in the center of a well-thought-out and (with all the reserves) effective system of training people for working in the North—in various fields of science, production, education and administration. The question arises: how fair is our idea of a “knockdown”, which happened in Soviet ethnography (at least—with the northern studies) after 1929? What we know about NIA INS, conflicts with the assessment of this time in the scientific literature.

Why does the modern history of ethnography see neither the integrity of the project, nor the significance of the INS? The reasons for this “invisibility” lie both in the objective circumstances, and in our ideas about what ethnography is and what is included in its history. We imagine the meaning and purpose of our studies in a different way now than did Leningrad ethnographers of the 1920s–1930s.

Not seeing the scale of NIA INS work was due to quite serious external reasons. First, after the case of INS, the termination of the work of NIA INS, the Great Patriotic War and a new wave of repression of the late 1940s, the participants in the events were reluctant to recall their prewar work and did not themselves publish any studies with scientific analysis of the work done (compare, for example: Voskoboinikov 1958; Gagen-Torn 1971; Antropova 1972).⁵⁵ Secondly, some of the materials of NIA INS were lost, some were divided between different archives, and the researchers had nothing to rely on when studying the history of this institution. Thirdly, the publications made under the NIA INS stamp are mostly known to researchers, but they have never been collected in one place. Only recently, after significant improvement of the work of the Russian National Library electronic catalog, it became possible to identify most of NIA's publications by keyword and collect them in one list, which allows us to evaluate the publishing activity and understand the scale of the work done in the 1930s.

However, in my opinion, not only the lack of materials prevents researchers from “seeing” the structure created by Bogoras. There are other reasons connected both with the entrenched historiographic tradition and with the tradition of interdisciplinary barriers in the humanities. First of all, historiography, cultivated in rigid institutional and disciplinary boundaries, “does not see” some elements of the “Bogoras

55 It is known that V.V. Antropova studied materials relating to the expeditions of the 1920s in the archives, and N.I. Gagen-Torn began to write a book dedicated to the ethnographers of the 1920s–1930s, but did not have time to complete it (Gagen-Torn 2002:335–336).

project”: NIA INS is not a classical university, not an academic institution, it does not belong entirely to any of the known institutions and therefore falls out of the habitual world structure, thus seemingly getting into another dimension for the researchers studying primarily academic life. At the same time, as it was already said, in modern historiography, NIA INS and INS are hardly distinguishable: they are perceived as one institution, in the definition and description of which the main feature is teaching semi-literate northerners in the capital city (the assessment of this fact depends on the author’s position: it is either “fine” if the article is devoted to the history of education in the North, or a “professorial fun”, or “the whim of Soviet power”). The scientific work of NIA INS is in the shadows; at best, it is mentioned that writing for the northern languages was being developed there.

Another mechanism of “non-seeing”, in my opinion, is created by the discrepancy between today’s and yesterday’s ideas about what ethnography should be engaged in, first of all, in the area of the relationship between theory and practice. When modern ethnographers or anthropologists write their history, they easily delegate to other specialties what the north-easterners of those days were doing: alphabetization and grammar turns out to be the history of linguistics,⁵⁶ the study of the past of Siberia and the position of its population under the tsarist (‘colonial’) administration is history, excavations in the north of Yamal belong to archeology, the study of the specifics of art and the artistic language of the northerners is art criticism, the study of the diversity of the world perception, of child’s formation of concepts is referred to as pedology (today, apparently, it is cognitive science).

Let me give a quote from Yuri Slezkine’s article (mentioned above) *Soviet Ethnography in a Knockdown*: “Ethnographers were disorientated, and the pre-industrial peoples of the USSR became an easy prey for pedologists [...] Pedologists discovered the causes of various manifestations of backwardness were in the environment, and gave recommendations on their fastest eradication” (Slezkine 1993:118). Further, the author says that after the defeat of pedology, this work passed to “practicing teachers”. It is impossible not to notice that today’s contrasting ethnographers, pedologists and teachers contradict the principles of that time, in particular, the principles of the “Bogoras project” which was based on synthesis. Bogoras’s approach combined ethnographic, anthropological, linguistic, art and pedological studies based on the northern material: these directions coexisted and interacted within the same institution, often the same people were engaged in it.⁵⁷ We are discussing this era from the point of view

56 And this is despite the obvious fact that most of the ‘linguists’ of NIA INS considered themselves ethnographers, and that Shternberg’s motto “ethnographer must be a linguist and a linguist must be an ethnographer” (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:152) was one of the cornerstones of the Leningrad ethnographic school.

57 Such an approach inevitably puts contemporary historians of science in a difficult situation: the material resists such violence, sometimes there are not enough grounds to unambiguously refer a person or his/her research to a particular branch. How, for example, should one attribute V.N. Cherentsov, who was one of the creators of the Mansi writing, the author of ethno-

of today's disciplinary boundaries (which in many respects arose as a consequence of the catastrophes of the Soviet era). This approach assumes that there were ethnographers studying peoples and groups, linguists who compiled grammars, pedologists who studied children and their living conditions, art historians and archaeologists, historians who were sitting in their department, as in modern institutes, attributed to different branches.⁵⁸

From the point of view of dividing ethnographic research into theory and applied work, the situation is even more revealing. After the notorious meetings of 1929 and 1932, there took place an official narrowing of the ethnographic subject field: its academic status was lowered to an auxiliary historical discipline. However, at the meeting of ethnographers in 1929, both in reports and in resolutions, the importance of the ethnographers' practical work in the matter of socialist construction was stressed repeatedly and persistently. Actually, this was one of the central themes in the speeches made by the representatives of the Leningrad ethnographic school, in particular. Ethnographers saw the opportunity to serve the public interest not only in classification of peoples and definition of the boundaries of their residence (see, for example, Anderson 1998:77–97), but also in direct active participation in the transformations of the North and in socialist construction. It should be understood that these words were not just a forced rhetorical gimmick (Yurchak 2014): most representatives of the Leningrad school really worked part of their lives in taiga and tundra in practical positions, saw the need for transformations and felt it necessary to participate in them. As Bogoras (Bogoras-Tan 1925:50) had envisaged, they were “missionaries of the new culture”. The young generation of the ethnographers of that time were simultaneously *Narodniks*⁵⁹ pupils and *Narodniks*' children, and in many ways acted as continuators of their work.⁶⁰

As far as I know, the need for the practical participation of ethnographers in socialist construction was never questioned (disputed were only the forms of this

graphic research on the peoples of Western Siberia and an archaeologist; or G.N. Prokof'ev, the author of the Selkup grammar, an ethnographer, whose methodology of school teaching to indigenous children attracted the attention of N.K. Krupskaja; or N.K. Karger, the academic secretary of NIA INS, who conducted research on the peoples of the Amur region, who studied the interaction of the Podkamennaia Tunguska population with credit organizations, who taught the Khanty language, who created the Ket alphabet? Should the research by A.M. Schubert about the Evenki children, published under the stamp of NIA INS, be attributed to ethnography or to pedology?

58 It is significant that in her detailed work on the transformation of Soviet ethnography, T.D. Solovei while highlighting the activities of NIA INS, mentions only the activities of the historical-ethnographic section.

59 The *Narodniks* was a movement and ideology that was active in the Russian Empire in 1860–1910. It was based on the idea of the *intelligentsia* being indebted to the common people.

60 They were very sensitive to the “sight of people's miseries”: descriptions of the situation on the ground and suggestions for change took a lot of place in the letters written by young ethnographers to Bogoras from expeditions (SPF ARAN, fund 250).

participation). Perhaps that is why when in the early 1930s any open theoretical discussions and work in universities and the Academy of Sciences proved to be hindered, NIA INS created outside the old academic framework and arranged so that each of its sections had obvious practical, “applied” significance, managed to become a research center where the living academic life continued. Practical work in the North required opening of schools and alphabetization—NIA INS had a section that studied grammar, phonetics, folklore, etc. To open schools we need methods of teaching, knowledge of how the concepts and perception of the world are formed in children of the northerners, we need to study the experience of predecessors and new schools—a section of pedagogy was opened at NIA INS, which dealt with manifold studies of children and education. We need textbooks in which the history of the North and its peoples would be reflected—a section of history appeared. It is necessary to understand how the economy and crafts are organized—the economy and its changes, technologies, crafts are being studied, survey programs are being created, etc. We need to study the health of the northerners, explore, develop and promote their art, fight against religion—and this becomes the object of attention of NIA INS staff.

As a result, within this structure it was possible to conduct scientific work on the broadest topics—from physical anthropology to cognitive research, from studying hunting economy to research on experimental phonetics, from the peculiarities of perception of space and color by Evenki children to the history of colonization of Yakutia. At the same time, each section created an applied product; therefore, in the list of NIA INS works a significant part was made up by textbooks, methodological materials, manuals and programs. On the one hand, these applied results were really necessary for the ongoing transformations, on the other hand, they and their practical significance turned out to be the screen that could cover up or even disguise researchers’ theoretical, scientific interests. In itself, this mimicry is not surprising—it’s amazing how convincing it was even for descendants who still see only the applied side and do not notice NIA INS’s scientific work.

The research interests of the north-easterners of that time included not only the past of Siberia and its peoples, but also their present day. This continued, if one is guided by what is known about NIA INS, until about 1936, after which the study of modernity came to naught (which later became a problem for Russian ethnography (see Vakhtin and Sirina 2003:144). The reasons for this, naturally, lay outside science: the research of modernity in that era turned out to be inappropriate in principle. This is true not only for ethnography; about the same time other sciences that studied modernity were faced with serious problems: pedology was destroyed, so were demography, sociology and psychology. As it was precisely noted by E.M. Balashov in his work on the history of pedology, “in a society of illusions being built in the Soviet Russia, there was no place for any real investigation of this society, as well as for studying the personality of a real person” (Balashov 2012:184). It was from this moment that

researches of modernity in the USSR were indeed in a deep knockdown, and it took them very long to recover.⁶¹

Returning to the question of why the “Bogoras project” and the work of NIA INS have so far remained “invisible” for historiography, I want to emphasize once again that the reasons for this are that modern researchers are transferring their ideas about the object and subject of ethnography onto the past without noticing the studies that “simulated” being practical. Using this approach, the conclusion about the catastrophe in northern studies, which occurred at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, is inevitable. It seems that the sources managed to deceive the researchers.

We are thinking about knockdown of Soviet ethnography because we believe the USSR ethnography to be embodied in the boring scholasticism of journal *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* of those years, generated by ideological interference in scientific work. The Leningrad northern studies in the late 1920’s—the first half of the 1930’s invented a form of existence that could suit the Soviet power, a form of practically oriented scientific and educational programs and institutions. This helped the science survive until ideology finally forced out all manifestations of living science—and while Bogoras was alive.

Unfortunately, time is ruthless both to people and to science: Penelope’s cloth was eventually unweaved. Nevertheless, even in the hardest times for science we find evidence of the success of the “Bogoras project”. Here is a quote from a speech delivered in 1936 by A.I. Mineev—a polar explorer, who worked for a long time in *Glavsevmorput*, the Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route, and at that time had just become

61 The situation in the USSR in these branches of science, which are completely different at first glance, is described by researchers in a singularly uniform way: flourishing in the 1920s and early 1930s, a turning point in the mid-1930s, which led to devastation, stagnation, degradation of scientific discussions, empty scholasticism. Here are some examples. Psychology: “Instead of an empirically oriented, relatively independent science, aimed at studying the universal laws that would apply to the social life of people, psychology turned into a relatively anti-empirical, applied science forced to subordinate theory to the demands of practice” (Bauer 1952:4–5; quoted by Iasnitskii and Zakreshneva 2009:14). Demography: “A quarter of a century—from the beginning of the 1930s to the mid-1950s—was wasted for Soviet demography, leaving behind no significant studies or new names. Moreover, it was precisely during these years that a new direction emerged in the Soviet science, which denied not only the very existence of demography, but also any specific problems of population that are not reducible to the problems of the economy. The place of researches was occupied by scholastic theoretical exercises, for example on the theme of ‘socialist population law’” (Vishnevskii 2005:461). Pedagogy: “Ideology-driven pedagogy, contrary to the decision of the Central Committee, proclaiming the creation of the ‘Marxist science of children’, turned into a set of dogmatic provisions based on lacking of a real content commandments on communist morality and socialist discipline” (Balashov 2012:184). It is interesting that if researchers associate the problems of ethnography with its inability, due to rapid development in 1920s, to stand on the “Marxist rails” (Slezkine 1993; Solovei 2001), then psychology, by contrast, as early as the 1920s considered itself Marxist (Iasnitskii and Zapshneva 2009). However, in the 1930s their destinies were surprisingly similar, regardless of their commitment to the teachings of Marx.

the director of INS, which was reassigned to it. Having familiarized with his new enterprise, he speaks at a meeting on the scientific study of the North in *Glavsevmorput* and in his speech compares the work of INS and other research organizations:

We at the Institute of the Peoples of the North have those who have an academic title: 1 full member, 5 senior scientific researchers, 4 candidates of science, 10 in total. But there are only 25 people in the scientific organization of INS, so their specific weight is solid. [...] We do not have a research institution, so to speak, where scientists would be trained. *INS has only post-graduate course, but it prepares people who work exclusively on the spot among people. It trains linguists, economists, historians and ethnographers. And who teaches geologists? And who teaches land-surveyors? Nobody!* So far, the Hydrological Department of the Arctic Institute has had two graduate students! These two graduate students study on the side, they will defend their thesis and there will be two new scientists. This is not enough! (AMAE RAS. F. K-II. Inv. 1. F. 221. Aid. 333; —italics: E.L.).

This passage allows not only to assess the path covered by the “Bogoras project”, but also to take a fresh look at the amount of the work done. Just eight years before (according to the science’s terms, the time is very short) Potopov argued that there were no “cadres” to work with the northerners (see footnote 13), but now INS set an example for geologists and land-surveyors.

Would Bogoras himself have wished his efforts to bring such fruits? It is not clear, but under the conditions in which he had to exist and act, it was an unquestionable victory.

List of Abbreviations

AMAE RAS — Archive of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of Russian Academy of Science

GUSMP — the Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route

INS — the Institute of the Peoples of the North

NIA INS — Academic Research Association of the Institute of the Peoples of the North

LGPI — Leningrad State Pedagogical Institute named after A.I. Herzen

LIZHVYA — Leningrad Institute of Living Oriental Languages

LILI (LIFLI) — Leningrad Institute of Linguistics and History, later — Institute of History, Philosophy and Linguistics

SPF ARAS — St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of Russian Academy of Science

CSA SPb — Central State Archive of St. Petersburg

Archive materials

- SPF ARAS. Fund. K-II. Inv 1. File 221. Stenographical materials of the meeting on “Sovershchaniia po snabzheniiu” of the Far North held at *Glavsevmorput* in 1936.
- SPF ARAS. Fund. K-II. Inv.1. File 273. Preparatory materials to the stenograph on “localization policy” to the All-Union meeting of the teachers from schools of the Far North, 1940–1941.
- SPF ARAS. Fund. 250. Inv 3. File 167. Materials on teaching activities at Geographical Institute, 1923–1925.
- CSA SPb. Fund. 4331. Inv 11. File 217. Minutes of the meeting on the situation in the Northern Dept. of Pedagogical Institute named after A.I. Herzen, 1932.
- CSA SPb. Fund. 4331. Inv 11. File 388. Minutes, production plans and reports of the Northern department for 1933/34 ac. year.
- CSA SPb. Fund. 4331. Inv 11. File 443. Programs of *natsmen* department for 1933/34 ac. year.
- CSA SPb. Fund. 4331. Inv. 31. File 603. Inner institute instructions and correspondence with different people, 1941.
- CSA SPb. Fund. 4331. Inv 34. File 124. Correspondence between the RSFSR People’s Commissariat for Education, Byelorussian People’s Commissariat for Education and the Head Department for Higher Educational Institutions of the RSFSR People’s Commissariat for Education, 1939.
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