

Sukhomlynsky News

Василь Олександрович Сухомлинський

How should we spell Sukhomlynsky's name?

It depends which language we are transliterating from, but if we wish to acknowledge his Ukrainian identity, 'Sukhomlynsky' is preferable to 'Sukhomlinsky'.

For all of Sukhomlynsky's adult life, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, or USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). He wrote and published in both Ukrainian, his native language, and in Russian, which was the language used throughout the Soviet Union to facilitate communication between people of different nationalities, and to assert Russia's authority. This reflected the fact that the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) was the dominant republic in the USSR, and that Moscow was the governing capital of what was a defacto Russian empire. When Sukhomlynsky published in Russian (which gave him access to a greater audience) his name was spelt like this:

Василий Александрович Сухомлинский

This can be transliterated as "Vasilii Aleksandrovich Sukhomlinskii" or alternatively as "Vasily Aleksandrovich Sukhomlinsky", which was the transliteration use by Progress Publishers in Moscow for the first translations of his works into English, and the transliteration that I adopted when I began my research. I have continued to use that spelling for nearly all of the past 35 years.

However, in Ukrainian his name looks like this:

Василь Олександрович Сухомлинський

This can be transliterated as "Vasyl' Oleksandrovych Sukhomlyns'kyi" or more simply as "Vasyl Oleksandrovych Sukhomlynsky". Note that his given name (Vasyl) and patronymic (formed from his father's name, Oleksandr) are clearly different from the equivalent Russian forms. The use of "y" instead of "i" reflects the fact that the Cyrillic letter "и" is pronounced differently in the two languages. The letter "и" in Ukrainian corresponds to the letter "ы" in Russian, and both these letters are transliterated as "y" in English.

Since Russia has invaded Ukraine, Ukrainians have become very sensitive to any attempt to subsume their national identity under Russia's or to suppress their language. Sukhomlynsky himself was a teacher of Ukrainian language and staunch defender of it.

In light of the above, and in solidarity with the Ukrainian people, I have decided to revise my spelling of Sukhomlynsky's name to reflect his Ukrainian identity. I have changed the name of this newsletter to *Sukhomlynsky News*, and will adopt the spelling "Sukhomlynsky" in all future publications. Over time I will also revise some earlier publications to incorporate this spelling.



Sukhomlynsky's name

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

You will notice that I have changed the way I spell Sukhomlynsky's name, to reflect the fact that he was Ukrainian, and not Russian. I hope you will not find this confusing.

I have been conscious for many years that I should probably change the way I transliterated Sukhomlynsky's name, but was discouraged from doing so because I had used the spelling 'Sukhomlinsky' in so many publications.

However, in light of the war that has been raging in Ukraine for the past 18 months, and the increased sensitivity of Ukrainians to any suggestion that their identity may be subsumed under Russia's identity, I have felt compelled to change my spelling to reflect the fact that Sukhomlynsky was Ukrainian.

I have explained this in more detail in the article on page 1 of this newsletter. The remainder of the newsletter contains more stories from Sukhomlynsky's Ethics Anthology.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

The baker and the tailor

A baker and a tailor began to argue about whose work was more important and essential to people. The baker said to the tailor, 'What would happen if I did not bake the bread? Without bread to eat the miners would not be able to work the mines, the tractor drivers would not drive their tractors, and you, tailor, would not work with your scissors.'

'And what would happen if there were no tailors? Who would make the clothes? Without clothes to wear the miners would not be able to work the mines, the tractor drivers would not drive their tractors, and you, baker, would not work in your bakery.'

And so, they could not come to a common view about whose work was more important and essential to people.

'I will manage without you, tailor,' said the baker.

'And I can live without you, baker,' said the tailor.

Each of them went to work. The baker worked for a day, and then another day, and felt that he could manage fine without the tailor. On the third day the baker hung his jacket by the oven and the sleeve caught on fire. It burnt so badly that all that was left of the sleeve was ashes. The baker scratched his head. What was he to do? What use was a jacket with only one sleeve? He would have to go and see the tailor...

Meanwhile the tailor had worked for a day without any bread, eating just porridge and soup. He worked for a second day without eating any bread... On the third day he was so famished that the scissors dropped out of his hand. He would have to go to the baker for some bread.

The baker and the tailor both left home at the same time. The baker was going to see the tailor and the tailor was going to see the baker. They met each other. The baker was holding his jacket without a sleeve and the tailor had an empty basket.

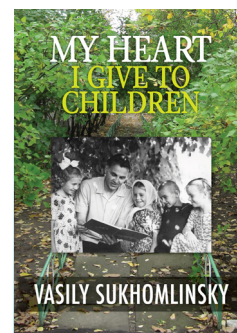
The old table

On the outskirts of a city, in a small house, lived a big family: a mother and father, Nikolai in grade five, his older brother in grade seven, and their little sister. The two brothers took it in turns to take their little sister to kindergarten.

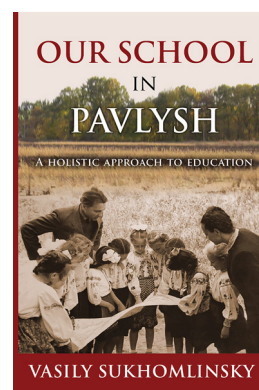
In their house there was a room set aside for the children, with an old table made of pine boards. They did their homework on the old pine table, and also made things. They could spread their tools out on the table, cut, glue, saw, and hammer nails. On this table the boys built an aeroplane, a real one with a little engine. Every day, Nikolai and his older brother were visited by their friends. It was fun to do their homework together and to build machines.

And then a lucky day came for their family. Those were the words their mother used: 'This is our lucky day.' They were given a large apartment in a tall building that had just been built. The apartment was in the middle of the city and on the third floor. Now they did not just walk home, they went up in a lift.

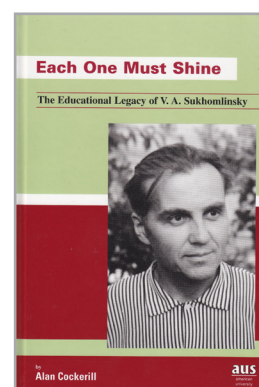
The father bought new furniture for the new apartment: polished tables, sofas, wardrobes, chairs, all shimmering and sparkling. When they placed the new furniture in the four rooms of the new apartment, it turned out that there was no room for the old furniture: a wardrobe, some chairs, and the old pine table. They made a pile of them in the yard and burnt them. The old pine boards crackled merrily, but the mother cried.



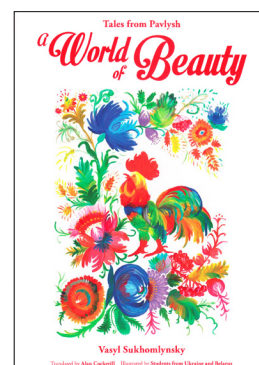
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In the new apartment the children were given a large, spacious room. In the middle of the room, they set up a polished table and a bookshelf. Their mother put away their tools—a hammer, a plane, a saw, and a fretsaw—and said, 'You can't do woodwork on this table. You can only do your homework. And before you spread out your exercise books and textbooks, you must cover the table with paper.'

'Is it OK for the boys to come over,' asked Nikolai.

'Yes, but it would be better if you went to their place.'

Nikolai sat by the big, polished table, and felt sadness and regret when he remembered the old pine table.

How Fedya began to sense the person within himself

Fedya went with his mother to dig up potatoes on the collective farm.

'You are eight years old now,' said his mother. 'You need to work properly.'

Fedya's mother took four rows, and Fedya took one. His mother would dig up a potato plant, and Fedya would pull the potatoes from the ground and throw them in a bucket.

Fedya did not feel like working. He would pull out the potatoes on the surface but did not bother to dig down for the ones that were covered with soil. His mother noticed how he was working, pulled out some potatoes that Fedya had left behind, and said, 'Aren't you ashamed? Do you realise there is a person watching and seeing everything you do?'

Fedya looked around in surprise. 'What person? What can he see?'

'The person inside you, Fedya. He sees everything and notices everything, but you do not always listen to what he tells you. If you listen, you will hear the voice of the person inside you, and he will tell you how you are working.'

'Where is the person inside me?' asked Fedya, even more surprised.

'He is in your head and in your chest, in your heart,' his mother explained.

Fedya moved on to the next potato plant and pulled out the potatoes lying on the surface. He wanted to leave that plant and move on to the next one... when suddenly he really did seem to hear a voice reproaching him: 'What are you doing Fedya? There is another potato there under the soil.' Fedya was surprised and looked around. There was no-one there, but it seemed as if someone was watching his work and making him feel ashamed.

'I suppose there is a person who can see my work,' thought Fedya, and he sighed, dug up the soil, and found several more large potatoes. Fedya felt better then and gave a sigh of relief. He even started

singing.

The boy worked for an hour, and then for another, and felt more and more amazed. He thought to himself, 'Why dig so deep in the soil? There probably isn't any potato there...' But as soon as he had that thought, it was as if someone was reading his mind, and he felt ashamed. But he felt glad at the same time. He could not have explained why he felt glad, but he understood why he felt ashamed. He did not want to be a bad person.

'He's a good friend, this person inside,' thought Fedya.

Bread is sweet because sweat is bitter

When Yasha's father came home from work, the whole family sat down to eat: the father and mother, seven-year-old Yasha, and his little sister Maya. Yasha's father worked on the collective farm driving tractors and combine harvesters. Now that it was summer, he left for work very early, at three o'clock in the morning. A combine harvester only rests at night, and the night is short in summer. Yasha's father came home from work covered in dust, with only his eyes and teeth sparkling. He washed, changed, and sat at the table. Then they all sat down to eat—Yasha, his mother, and Maya.

Today Yasha's mother put some little *pampushki* on the table—sweet little bread rolls.

'The *pampushki* are delicious!' said Yasha. 'They're so sweet!'

'They're sweet because sweat is bitter,' said his father, smiling.

'Is sweat bitter?' asked Yasha in surprise.

'If you want, you can come with me tomorrow to work in the field. Then you'll find out what sweat tastes like.'

'Great!' said a delighted Yasha.

The sky was still grey when Yasha's father came to his bed to wake him. The boy quickly got up, had breakfast, and hurried after his father. They travelled to the combine harvester by motorbike.

When they reached the combine harvester, Yasha's father started up the engine and stood at the controls. Yasha stood next to him. The machine roared and shook and moved forwards. Wheat poured into the bunker and a cloud of chaff rose into the air.

The combine harvester travelled around the field once, twice, and then a third time. The sun kept climbing higher and it grew hot. The wind blew clouds of chaff and dust into Yasha's eyes and mouth and made his teeth gritty. The sun was baking now, like a hot oven, and sweat poured down Yasha's face and into his eyes...

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Some drops of sweat seeped into his mouth, and for the first time in his life Yasha realised that sweat was bitter and salty.

And the sun was still climbing. What would it be like when it was right overhead?

'Dad, is this where you work all day?' asked Yasha.

'No, not all day. We break for lunch for an hour.'

'And how much longer to the lunch break?' asked Yasha, wiping the sweat from his face with his sleeve.

A wasted day

Petya's mother had to leave for work before sunrise. She woke up Petya, who was nine years old, and said, 'Today is the first day of your holidays. Here is your work for the day: plant a tree next to our house and read this book about the Blue Mountains.'

Petya's mother showed him where to dig a hole for the tree and how to plant it, left the book about the Blue Mountains on the table, and went to work.

Petya thought, 'I'll sleep for a little longer... It feels so nice sleeping in when Mum goes to work.' And he lay down and fell asleep at once. He dreamt that a tree he had planted had grown next to the house and that the Blue Mountains were not far away at all and were towering right next to the village pond.

Petya woke up, and oh no! The sun was already high in the sky! He wanted to get started on his work right away, but then he thought, 'I have plenty of time.' And he sat down under a pear tree. He thought 'I'll just sit here for a little while and then I'll get on my work.'

Then Petya went to the orchard, ate some berries, chased a butterfly for half an hour and, finally, sat down under the pear tree again.

His mother came home in the evening and said, 'Show me what you have done today, Petya.'

But Petya had not done anything. He was too ashamed to look his mother in the eyes. She said, 'That means there will be one less tree in the world, and one less person who knows about the Blue Mountains. You have lost a wonderful opportunity to gain knowledge. Now, however hard you work, you will never learn as much as if you had not wasted this day. Come with me and I will show you what others have done during this day that you wasted.'

And she took Petya by the hand and led him to a ploughed field. 'Yesterday there was just stubble here, and today there is a ploughed field, ready to plant. A tractor driver worked here today, while you were doing nothing.'

Petya's mother then took him to a yard on the collective farm and showed him dozens of crates of apples. 'This morning all these apples were still on trees and now they are in crates. During the night, they will be taken to the city. I was one of the people who worked here, while you were doing nothing.'

Then she showed him an enormous pile of grain. 'This grain was all growing in the field this morning. The grain was harvested with combine harvesters and then brought here in trucks, while you were doing nothing.'

Petya's mother took him to a wall built of bricks. 'This morning there was just a granite foundation here, and now there is a wall. The bricklayers worked hard all day, while you were doing nothing.'

She took him to a big white building, and they went inside. Petya saw loaf upon loaf of freshly baked bread on shelves. Everything smelled of bread—the air, the walls, even the grass in front of the building. 'This is the bakery. In the morning, this bread was just flour and now the bread makes your mouth water... You feel like sinking your teeth into a tasty crust. The bakers worked all day today, while you were doing nothing. Soon a van will come and take the bread to the shop.'

Finally, Petya and his mother entered a building with the word 'Library' written on the door. The librarian showed them a long shelf full of books. 'These are books that people read today. They have just been returned. And just as many books have been borrowed,' the librarian explained.

'While I was doing nothing,' thought Petya. He was ashamed to even think of it, and he hung his head. Now he understood what a wasted day was.

The journeyman and the chisel

A master craftsman was carving wood with a chisel. He carved a rose. The chisel was small and shiny, made of steel. In the hands of a master, it was obedient and skilful.

The master craftsman went somewhere without finishing his work and left the chisel on his bench. A journeyman entered his workshop. He saw the shiny chisel lying on the workbench, and the unfinished rose next to it. The journeyman picked up the chisel and tried to carve some rose petals, but he had no success. The chisel hacked at the rose and spoilt the master's work.

The rose was surprised, and asked, 'Chisel, why have you suddenly started working so badly?'

The chisel answered, 'I am just a piece of steel. I become a chisel when a master craftsman picks me up. But when I am picked up by a mere journeyman, I am no longer a chisel, but just a sharp blade.'