

10

THE NEW PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS AND THE DEBATE OVER SOVEREIGNTY

New battle lines are drawn

The dust from the election battle was not given a chance to settle for the continuing struggle between the CPU and the democratic forces immediately manifested itself over new issues. On 20 March Rukh's Secretariat applied for permission to hold a rally in Kyiv in support of Lithuania's declaration of independence. The authorities refused and the Popular Movement decided not only to defy the ban but to hold pro-Lithuanian meetings throughout the republic on the last day of the month.

On 21 March, about 30,000 people in Lviv held a demonstration to express solidarity with Lithuania. By now in this city, and in Western Ukraine generally, the newly elected national democratic deputies to the local councils had begun to make their mark. The town council of Stryi led the way by voting to replace the Soviet Ukrainian flag on the municipal building with a blue and yellow one, an action that was promptly condemned by the regional procurator.¹

On 24-5 March, the Grand Council of Rukh held a special meeting in the Transcarpathian town of Khust to mark the anniversary of the proclamation of the short-lived independent Carpatho-Ukrainian state in 1939. Attended by some 800 delegates, it saw an intensive discussion about the organization's future. Rukh's leaders had decided not to transform the Popular Movement into a party after all because of the continuing need for an umbrella organization to consolidate the diverse groups and currents within the democratic opposition. Pavlychko nevertheless renewed the call for the formation of a political party having Ukrainian independence as its goal.

¹ Radio Kyiv, 31 March 1990.

He announced that he, Drach and other colleagues had decided to leave the Communist Party and intended to form what he provisionally called 'the Democratic Party of Ukraine'.² Yavorivsky had already left the Party earlier in the month.

On 24 March the CPU's Secretariat published a statement declaring that Party members who had signed the recent calls in *Literaturna Ukraina* for the formation of new political parties had thereby 'left the ranks of the CPSU'. Five days later, the press announced that three such errant members, Holovaty, Donchyk and Oleksandr Burakovsky (the leading Jewish representative in Rukh), had been expelled from the Party.

Problems with other dissenters within the CPU were also growing. On 24-5 March, supporters of the Democratic Platform held a conference in Kharkiv and established a coordinating council for reformist Party clubs in the republic. The 109 delegates from twenty-one regions differed, however, on the degree of independence which the CPU should have from the CPSU.³ Thus, the CPU was now faced not only with the external challenge from Rukh and its allies but also with an internal one from the supporters of the Democratic Platform.

While the issue of Lithuania's declaration of independence was driving the two rival political camps further apart, the situation was further compounded on 25 March when the Estonian Communist Party followed the example that had been set by the Lithuanian Communists and voted to break with the CPSU. Still seeking to prevent the pro-Lithuania demonstrations called by Rukh, the CPU Central Committee issued a strongly worded statement on 28 March branding Rukh's behaviour as 'irresponsible, adventurist and provocative'. It was backed up by instructions from the republic's Council of Ministers to local authorities not to allow the meetings to be held. Two days later, *Pravda* added its voice, warning of the 'activation of nationalist forces in Ukraine', particularly in the western regions.

The religious problem in Western Ukraine was, in the meantime, becoming even more acute. Although hundreds of Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox communities were seeking official registration, by the spring of 1990 the

² *Visnyk RUKHU* (Kyiv), no. 4.

³ Radio Kyiv, 26 March 1990, and Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 92.

authorities had recognized only a fraction of them. Tensions, especially between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Catholics were rising, and the attitudes of both the authorities responsible for religious affairs and the Moscow Patriarchate were only aggravating matters. In mid-March, Archbishop Sterniyuk walked out of talks being conducted in Kyiv by a recently established quadripartite commission, which included representatives of the Vatican (in which the Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy from outside of Ukraine was represented), the Moscow Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In the statement subsequently issued by the Ukrainian Catholic bishops in Ukraine, it was explained that the Russian Orthodox side refused to recognize the uncanonical nature of its incorporation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in 1946 and to recognize the latter as 'a Church, an institution and a juridical body, and not just as a group of Greek Catholics'.⁴ Relations between the two sides were further strained when, on 6 April, the Lviv city council voted to return St George's Cathedral to the Ukrainian Catholics.

With Rukh determined not to give in to intimidation and numerous newly elected deputies from the Democratic Bloc also coming out in support of Lithuanian independence, the dispute developed into the first major test of strength after the elections between the CPU and the democratic opposition. On 31 March, Rukh went ahead and held rallies in support of Lithuania in various parts of the republic. In Kyiv an estimated 30,000 people took part and approved a resolution criticizing Gorbachev for 'interfering in the internal affairs of the independent Lithuanian Republic'. There were even bigger meetings in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil; only in Chernivsti did the authorities intervene and make arrests. Initially, the authorities sought to prosecute about fifty newly elected deputies, including Drach, Mykhailo Horyn and Oles Shevchenko, for their involvement in the protests, but eventually gave up.⁵

Confronted with this defiance from Rukh and the growing challenges from within the Party, the CPU Central Committee held another plenum on 31 March devoted to the forthcoming Congresses of both the CPU and CPSU. Numerous additional Party officials based in Kyiv and in the regions were also invited to attend. In the

⁴ Bociurkiw, 'The Ukrainian Catholic Church', pp. 15-17.

⁵ Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 93.

opening speech, Ivashko sought to restore order and morale by indicating that, regardless of what was happening elsewhere in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the CPU did not intend to retreat any further. It would not give in, he declared, to pressure to 'relinquish its Communist ideals' and 'to deprive it of its "vanguard role", transform it into a parliamentary [party], or some sort of discussion club, and, ultimately, remove it completely from the political arena'. Denouncing 'extremists' and 'separatists', he also condemned supporters of the Democratic Platform, accusing them of wanting 'to destroy the Party' by splitting it from within. He stressed that 'in multi-party conditions' the CPU had to remain united and tightly disciplined and that there could be no room for factions or split loyalties. The CPU would have to undergo a process of 'renewal' through the cleansing of its ranks and the tightening of internal discipline. Expressing concern about developments in Western Ukraine, where the democratically controlled local and regional councils had begun challenging the authority of local Party structures and the Soviet order generally, and religious conflicts between the Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox believers, as he put it, were assuming a 'nationalist, anti-Russian, extremist character', the Party leader called on the local Party forces to regroup and hold the line.

Salii responded on behalf of the supporters of the Democratic Platform and did not mince his words. He told the plenum that the 'shadow of Brezhnev' was hanging over the meeting. The calls for a purge of dissenters within the CPU would only drive out the Party's 'intellectual elite', as had happened with such dire consequences in the 1930s. 'The biggest evil today, the biggest extremism', he argued, were 'conservatism and reactionary dogmatism'. It was they, 'not the students or democrats' who were 'ruining the Party from within'. From the official press account, his call for greater openness, discussion and tolerance within the Party was, however, very much the minority viewpoint at the plenum and came under fierce attack from conservatives.⁶

What was even more striking about the plenum than the attention devoted to the issue of the Democratic Platform and internal dissent was the prominence given to the question of Ukraine's sovereignty. Ivashko himself stressed that 'the bitter experience' of

⁶ For the speeches at the plenum, see *Radyanska Ukraina*, 3-6 April 1990.

Baltic and East European Communist parties had revealed the dangers of lagging behind political events and failing to influence their development. It appears that by in effect adopting much of what had been in Rukh's programme and presenting the CPU as the champion of Ukraine's political and economic sovereignty, the CPU leadership was trying to outflank its democratic opponents and gain the political initiative. Certainly, by now the idea not only of sovereignty, but of full-fledged independence, had caught on in the republic. The new political self-assertiveness was being manifested more and more openly in such ways as opposition among students and youth groups to the draft and to serving beyond Ukraine's borders, calls for the creation of national military formations, and demands for a separate Ukrainian Olympics Committee and a separate Ukrainian national sports team. Evidently, the CPU was hoping to redirect this feeling into what it considered were safer and acceptable forms.

The plenum adopted a special resolution, 'On the Political and Economic Sovereignty of Ukraine', which stated that the achievement of these two goals 'within a renewed Soviet federation', and on the basis of a new Union treaty, was considered to be 'one of the most important tasks' facing the CPU. In fact, the actual description in the resolution of what sovereignty should entail was reminiscent of the Estonian Declaration of Sovereignty which the CPU leadership had opposed so vehemently almost a year and a half before. Among other things, the resolution affirmed that the people of Ukraine, expressing their will through deputies elected to the republican Supreme Soviet and local councils (what had just occurred in Western Ukraine evidently did not seem to count), should be in control of affairs on Ukrainian territory, that the territorial integrity of the republic should be safeguarded, that Ukraine should have the right to decide which powers to delegate to the federal organs, the priority of republican law over all-Union legislation, and that Ukraine's status in foreign affairs and external representation should be enhanced.⁷

This latter aspect was discussed at the plenum by the head of the CPU Central Committee's Department for Foreign Ties, Anatolii Merkulov, who gave a refreshingly forthright account of the international aspects of Ukraine's sovereignty, thereby revealing how

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 April 1990.

relatively radical some of the advocates of genuine Ukrainian sovereignty within the CPU were becoming. He argued that the 'artificial isolation' of Ukraine from the outside world since the 1920s was one of the reasons for the 'negative phenomena' which had afflicted Ukraine's society and that it was essential to end this isolation and for Ukraine to become a direct participant in international affairs. New laws outlining the rights of Union republics in the external sphere could not be left to Moscow to decide — what was currently being envisaged by the centre, he warned, was more restrictive than the rights which the republics nominally enjoyed in the Stalin era — and Ukraine would have to propose its own concept of its right to conduct its own political and economic external relations. In his view, Merkulov said, Ukraine should be a direct participant in the Helsinki process and European forums dealing with security issues and economic, environmental and humanitarian cooperation. It was important to begin reorganizing and enlarging Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that it could start handling the establishment of direct bilateral relations with foreign states, start examining the possibilities for opening embassies and consulates abroad, and, in the meantime, to ensure that there were official representatives of Ukraine in the USSR's existing missions, embassies and consulates.⁸

In preparation for the CPU's Congress, which was due to open on 19 June, the plenum also adopted the draft of the new programme, or 'programmatic principles' as it preferred to call the document, which was supposed to promote the image of the Party as a progressive organization that was keeping in step with the times and serving the needs of Ukraine and its people. The programme stated that the CPU was committed to building a Socialist society in a sovereign Ukrainian state, based on humane, democratic ideals, social justice, the rule of law and the acceptance of mixed forms of ownership. It did, however, contain two new elements which indicated further concessions to the national movement. One was the emphasis now placed on 'the assertion of national statehood' as a guiding principle for the CPU; the other, the belated recognition of the need to institute republican citizenship. A further noteworthy change was the declaration made in the document that 'We are for the independence of the Communist Party of Ukraine within the

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 April 1990.

CPSU.' It was explained that although this did not mean that the CPU supported the idea of turning the CPSU into a federation, it nevertheless wanted to be fully 'autonomous'.⁴

Reflecting the CPU's increasing emphasis on sovereignty, in the weeks following the plenum more and more material began to appear in the press about economic sovereignty. On 5 April, for instance, *Literaturna Ukraina* published a lengthy interview on this subject with Vitold Fokin, the chairman of the State Planning Committee of the Ukrainian SSR. Even this cautious official, after discussing the complexities which this economic transformation entailed and warning that a transitional period of some five to six years would be needed to carry out the shift from a centrally controlled to a 'sovereign' regulated market economy, maintained that the achievement of 'economic independence' was an 'urgent necessity' and the 'last chance to avoid economic catastrophe'.

The case for economic sovereignty was presented quite thoroughly three weeks later in a round-table discussion published in *Radyanska Ukraina* in which some of the republic's leading economic specialists participated. Several of them stressed that the precondition for economic sovereignty was political sovereignty. Serhii Dorohunstov, the head of the Academy of Science's Council for the Study of Ukraine's Productive Forces, for instance, stated quite bluntly that political realities had to be faced: the 'disintegration of the Soviet Union', as the example of Lithuania showed, had begun and hard decisions had to be made about Ukraine's future. Any discussion of economic sovereignty had to take into account whether Ukraine intended to become independent and break away from the USSR, or remain part of the Soviet federation, as he preferred. Another participant, Rukh's young economic adviser, Oleksandr Savchenko, argued that without the introduction of its own national currency, Ukraine's economic sovereignty would not amount to much.⁵ What was missing in these materials, however, was information on the degree of the interconnectedness of the Soviet economy and what the rupturing of ties would mean (though, of course, at this stage, the achievement of sovereignty was seen as a gradual and negotiated process, and 'separatism' was still officially

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 April 1990.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 April 1990.

treated as an extremist position), and the extent of Ukraine's dependence on Russia for its oil and gas.

After the Central Committee plenum, developments in Western Ukraine caused even more alarm in official Kyiv as local councils began in effect to dismantle Soviet rule in their regions. With city and town councils raising blue and yellow flags, declaring Easter to be a holiday, voting to return churches to the Ukrainian Catholics that had been taken over by the Russian Orthodox Church, depriving the local Party organs of the power they had held, and beginning to move in the direction of establishing elements of a mixed economy, the Party and state apparatus moved to defend its threatened position. One of their first steps was to strip the local councils of control over the militia and the appointment of newspaper and television editors.

After the embarrassment of seeing Chomovil elected on 12 April as head of the Lviv regional council, the Kyiv authorities stepped up the pressure. The regional Party leader Pohrebnyak was replaced by a known hard-liner, Svyatoslav Sekretaryuk. Ironically, though, the abrupt and furtive manner in which Pohrebnyak was removed brought thousands of demonstrators out on to the streets of Lviv — the very same people that had failed to elect him in the last two elections.¹¹ Just as Gorbachev was imposing an economic blockade on Lithuania, a propaganda campaign was launched against the democratic stronghold in Western Ukraine. On 18 April, the official press published a joint statement by the Ukrainian Party, parliamentary and government leadership expressing concern about the 'dangerous' situation in the west of the republic. In it they claimed that 'destructive' and 'extremist' forces had 'guaranteed' majorities for themselves in the local councils and were now pursuing 'separatist' ambitions by 'illegal' and 'anti-constitutional' means. Attempting to drive a wedge between Western and Eastern Ukrainians, the statement declared that the idea of 'so-called Galician autonomy' was being imposed on Western Ukraine's population. Local Communists, it continued, were being subjected to 'psychological pressure'. It concluded with the warning that the Ukrainian Party and government leadership would use 'resolute means' to ensure that Soviet laws were observed in the troublesome regions. It is worth noting that in the statement, even though the

ⁿ AFP, 14 April 1990.

constitutional recognition of the Party's leading role had been abolished, the Central Committee of the CPU still put itself before the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada and the Council of Mini-

12

sters.

While attention was being focused on Western Ukraine, events in Kyiv demonstrated that the atmosphere in the Ukrainian capital had also become more radical. On 29 March, the outgoing Ukrainian Supreme Soviet had designated the anniversary of the Chornobyl disaster as a day of mourning. Rukh, the Green World association and other democratic organizations decided to organize their own 'Chornobyl Week' commemorations. These turned into another round of huge political demonstrations. On 22 April—the International Day of the Earth—some 60,000 people, according to Radio Kyiv, attended a public ecological meeting, and later in the day, an estimated 100,000 joined a march through the city. The participants shouted 'Independence!' and 'Down with Communism!', and when part of the column passed Lenin's statue—this was also the anniversary of Lenin's birth—members of the radical Union of Independent Ukrainian Youth (SNUM) laid a wreath made of barbed wire before it and proceeded to burn Lenin's works.¹³ On the actual fourth anniversary of the Chornobyl accident, commemorative meetings were held throughout Ukraine at which political and ecological issues were interwoven. In Kyiv, tens of thousands again turned out for a public rally and a commemorative service conducted by priests of the UAOC.

During 'Chornobyl Week', however, Ukrainian national democrats, and especially the leaders of the Ukrainian Language Society, suffered a setback when, on 24 April, the USSR Supreme Soviet passed a law on languages which threatened once again to undermine the status of the Ukrainian language. Although it gave Union and autonomous republics the right to determine the legal status of languages on their territory, it made Russian the official language of the USSR. With this move and the continuing pressure on Lithuania, Gorbachev effectively destroyed whatever lingering support he may have had among Ukrainian national democrats.

There were more demonstrations on May Day. In Lviv, accord-

¹² See *Radyanska Ukraina*, 18 April 1990.

¹³ Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 96. *Radyanska Ukraina* of 25 April published photographs of the protest by SNUM members.

ing to Reuter, 'former political prisoners led tens of thousands of people . . . in a May Day parade which turned into a boisterous demonstration for Ukrainian independence . . . Not a single red flag was in evidence.'¹⁴ In the Ukrainian capital, where the official parade was much smaller than in previous years, for the first time, as Radio Kyiv noted, blue and yellow flags were very much in evidence. Meanwhile, in Moscow too, there was a sensation: during the May Day parade Gorbachev was jeered by pro-democracy demonstrators.

In an interview published in *Pravda* on 3 May, Ivashko sought to keep the focus on Western Ukraine and reiterated the CPU's determination not to lose control of the situation. Accusing Western Ukrainian deputies of 'political extremism', he added that some local Party officials like Pohrebnyak had displayed 'political infantilism' in dealing with the problem. Without elaborating, the Ukrainian Party leader declared that 'all the things which are being done illegally in the western regions will be repealed' and that it would be necessary to apply 'measures of a political and economic character' against the recalcitrant *oblasts*. It appeared that Western Ukraine was being threatened with the same tough treatment as Lithuania.

Meanwhile, the formation of new political parties and groups was continuing. The largest and potentially most influential of them emerged out of the UHU. At the end of 1989, Chornovil had unsuccessfully urged his colleagues in the UHU to transform their organization into a political party. It was only at the end of April that a congress of the UHU, which at this time had 2,300 members, decided to do so and formed the right of centre Ukrainian Republican Party (URP). Lukyanenko was elected to head the new party, and Khmara and Hryhorii Hrebenyuk from the Donbas were chosen as his deputies. Chornovil could not play a role in it because his new office precluded his belonging to any political party. The URP not only sought independence for Ukraine but also the banning of political organizations whose 'controlling centres' were outside the republic, that is, the CPU, as well as the nationalization of the CPSU's assets in Ukraine.¹⁵

In Western Ukraine, another small radical nationalist organization was formed in April. Calling itself 'State Independence for Ukraine,' it was led by Lukyanenko's former partner and also

¹⁴ Reuter, 1 May 1990.

¹⁵ Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, pp. 96-100.

long-term prisoner Ivan Kandyba, and, like the UNP, it was opposed to working within the Soviet system.¹⁶ And in Kyiv, at the Chornobyl- Day rally, Shcherbak announced the formation of the Green Party of Ukraine. Later, towards the end of May, *Literaturna Ukraina* was to publish the manifesto of the Democratic Party of Ukraine, which Pavlychko, Drach, Yavorivsky, Badzo and others were forming.¹⁷ A Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine also appeared.

Various youth and student organizations, such as SNUM, had also come into existence during the last year. SNUM had been launched as the UHU's organization for youth but had become a magnet for radical nationalist elements which eventually were to split the organization. Its leader Ihor Derkach was a moderate, and was elected in Lviv as deputy to the new parliament.¹⁸ In December 1989 a Ukrainian Students' Union had been formed in Kyiv, while in Lviv, the Student Brotherhood had already been in existence for a year.

Outside of Ukraine, political developments were continuing to move at a faster pace. Estonia and Latvia reasserted their independence on 30 March and 4 May respectively. In Russia, the political ferment was intensifying: Russian Communists were beginning to organize a Russian Communist Party, something which Gorbachev had long opposed, and an ultra-nationalist Republican National Party of Russia was being founded. As in Ukraine, the convening of the newly elected Russian legislature with its sizable democratic opposition was eagerly awaited by the democratic forces.

Parliament becomes the primary battleground

On 15 May, the new Ukrainian parliament convened. A huge crowd was waiting in front of the Verkhovna Rada building to greet the deputies from the Democratic Bloc and many of the placards called for Ukrainian independence. Inside the chamber, a sophisticated new electronic system had been installed to register attendance and show voting results on a huge screen. On that

A.O Bilous, *PoUtychni obyednannya Ukrainy* [Political Associations of Ukraine], Kyiv, 1993, pp. 46-7.

Literaturna Ukraina, 31 May 1990.

For further information on SNUM, see the attack on it by Taras Vasylyshyn in *Radyanska Ukraina*, 25 May 1990.

very first day, the deputies from the Democratic Bloc won a crucial early victory: on their insistence, the Supreme Council agreed that the proceedings would be broadcast live on radio and full recordings shown on television in the evening. Thus, the democratic opposition was able to ensure that representatives of the Party and state apparatus would be forced to account for and defend their positions in public while at the same time the democratic candidates and their views would receive mass public exposure.

Despite this success, the initial outlook did not seem very promising for the democrats. In the elections to the temporary Presidium of the parliament, no representatives from the Democratic Bloc managed to get elected. Even Salii had 239 votes cast against him. Ivan Plyushch, a leading Party official in the Kyiv region, ended up temporarily chairing the sessions. Initially, it appeared therefore that the large Communist bloc would simply outvote and block the opposition. But representatives of the Democratic Bloc soon showed that what they lacked in numbers they were able to make up for by their greater dynamism and purposefulness, better tactics and their eloquence. Plyushch was also to emerge as a rather colourful figure and a moderate, and was to win increasing respect for managing to steer the proceedings through numerous stormy or chaotic moments.

The first days were spent wrangling over organizational matters and the agenda. During this period, deputies also formed numerous factions corresponding to the interests or regions which they represented. The largest of these was the Agrarian bloc, a conservative grouping uniting directors of collective farms and farming industry officials; others included a group of thirty-eight Communist deputies supporting the Democratic Platform, and the 'Independence' faction numbering twenty-one deputies. Although, as was to be expected, some of the initial sharp exchanges dealt with the issues of national symbols (a representative of Rukh demanded that a giant bust of Lenin be removed from the chamber and the Communists countered by proposing that the Soviet Ukrainian flag be displayed), the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and the Party's control over the media, the Democratic Bloc's representatives displayed considerable shrewdness by placing their emphasis on economic, social and ecological issues. At the top of their list of priorities, which Holovaty presented on the Democratic Bloc's behalf, were the

effects of the Chernobyl disaster, the dismal state of rural life and the general economic and political situation in the republic. These were followed by the abolition of Article 6 of the Ukrainian Constitution and the adoption of a declaration on the state sovereignty of Ukraine. Finally, on 23 May, the agenda was agreed and it included more or less what the Democratic Bloc had proposed.

Two other encouraging events occurred early on as well. Plyushch agreed to a request from the 'Independence' faction to allow a guest from Lithuania to address the Verkhovna Rada. The Lithuanian deputy conveyed a message of greeting from the 'independent' Baltic state to the people and parliament of Ukraine, which was signed by the head of the Lithuanian parliament and leader of Sajudis, Vytautas Landsbergis. On 22 May, the day on which, since the 1960s, Ukrainian patriots had commemorated the return of Taras Shevchenko's remains to Ukraine for burial, Drach called on the deputies to go to the poet's monument that evening to honour his memory. Many deputies, especially from the Democratic Bloc, did so. Plyushch and Drach laid a wreath from the Verkhovna Rada; Kravchuk was also present. A large crowd assembled at the monument, many with blue and yellow flags, and a spontaneous public meeting was held at which a number of distinguished Ukrainian visitors from the West also spoke. The mood was upbeat, the main theme was independence, and the overall impression created was that of national unity.¹⁹

A more sober atmosphere was restored two days later when the chairman of the Council of Ministers, Masol, delivered the Ukrainian government's report on the political, social, economic and ecological situation in the republic. Presenting a gloomy picture of the deepening economic and social crises in Ukraine and the USSR as a whole, he had little to offer in the way of encouraging news. Restructuring had not managed to bring any noticeable improvements to the lot of the working people and 'negative phenomena

¹⁹ Vitalii Karpenko, 'Zaimit svoi mistya' . . . [Take Your Places . . .], *Vitchyzna*, no. 4, April 1991, p. 155; Solomea Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, Edmonton, 1992, pp. 15-17. Both of these works provide illuminating eyewitness accounts of the period: the first by the journalist and deputy Karpenko describes the first session of the new parliament; the second, by Pavlychko's daughter — a young literary scholar and translator with good connections among Ukraine's creative intelligentsia and democratic movement — captures the atmosphere prevailing during this time.

in the economy' were making themselves felt more and more. Blaming the centre for the general mess, he argued that it was essential for the parliament to make a priority the adoption of laws asserting Ukraine's state sovereignty and economic independence.

Although by now, of course, the need for achieving republican sovereignty was no longer questioned, Masol's speech contained the most outspoken condemnation of Moscow's economic policies towards Ukraine yet heard from a Ukrainian Communist leader. Stopping just short of using the word exploitation, he said that for decades the centre had dictated Ukraine's economic 'specialization' within the Union, transforming the Donbas into the 'all-Union stoke-hold', and the republic into 'the granary [sic] of ore, cast iron and steel'. 'We can now say openly', he elaborated, that heavy industry had been massively developed in the republic, often without the prior agreement of the republican government, and with scant regard for local needs or ecological consequences. Until two years before, the republican government had control over only 6 to 7% of industrial output in the republic, though this had now risen to almost 40%. In short, Moscow's policies had 'deformed' the structure of the Ukrainian economy and this made it extremely difficult to shift the emphasis to the consumer and agricultural sectors. The prerequisite for change, Masol argued, was for Ukraine to assert control over its economy and to regulate its relations with the other republics of the USSR on the basis of a new Union treaty, concluded not with the centre, but with other equal sovereign states. 'We need sovereignty, not for sovereignty's sake,' he declared, 'but for the improvement of the life of our people, of their economic, social and spiritual development'.

The opposition was not overly impressed, though, by the fact that the head of the Ukrainian government was now repeating the arguments about the need for sovereignty which Rukh had been making a year ago. Moreover, as far as his approach to economic policy was concerned, Masol came across as a conservative with no fresh ideas of his own. Signalling the Ukrainian government's misgivings about the economic reform plan being proposed that very same day to the USSR Supreme Soviet by Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, which envisaged a transition to a 'regulated market economy' and the raising of food prices, Masol warned in his speech against 'market euphoria'. He urged that the changes be carried out cautiously and gradually so as to avoid the 'the possible

negative social consequences'. Apart from securing sovereignty, the only way out, he insisted, was to raise productivity by renewing the notion of 'conscientious labour', and by strengthening discipline, organization and order in the workplace.²⁰

In the discussion following Masol's report, Ivashko was even more critical of the Soviet government's economic reform plan and indicated that it was threatening to cause a rift between Kyiv and Moscow. He explained that the Central Committee of the CPU recognized that the transition to a 'regulated market economy' was essential, but that it had to be done gradually and carefully, otherwise there was a risk of social explosions. Before raising prices, he insisted, the Soviet government should confer with all the republics and hold a referendum. Chornovil and other democrats also opposed the price

21

rises.

In an early assertion of the republic's rights, the parliament voted to make the acceptance of the raising of prices by Moscow conditional on their having been agreed with the republics and on the creation of a 'compensatory mechanism for the social protection of the population'.²² Another such example was when, on 11 June, deputies were to decide that clocks in Ukraine should no longer be set to Moscow time, but be moved back one hour."

The next major issue on the agenda was the election of a chairman of the Supreme Council and his deputy. Anticipating that the Communists would nominate Ivashko as their candidate, the Democratic Bloc insisted on the principle that the chairman of the parliament could not at the same time be the leader of a political party. It also decided to propose numerous candidates in order to make full use of the opportunity to present the views of the leaders of the democratic opposition to the public. On 28 May, when the nominations were made, thirteen candidates were proposed, including Ivashko. Hurenko and Karpenko withdrew, and Fokin could not be included because he was not a deputy. The following day, the ten remaining candidates were each allowed half an hour to present their programmes. Seven of them were representative of the national democratic forces (Pavlychko, Drach, Chornovil,

²⁰ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 27 May 1990.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29 May 1990.

²² *Ibid.*, 30 May 1990.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1990.

Yukhnovsky, Yavorivsky, Lukyanenko and Mykhailo Horyn), two were supporters of the Democratic Platform (Salii and Volodymyr Hrynov, a lecturer in applied mathematics from Kharkiv), and only Ivashko represented the mainstream CPU. Thus, the Ukrainian population had a chance to hear and see for itself what some of the leading figures in Rukh, the former UHU and the Democratic Platform represented. 'Everyone listened in, all of Ukraine sitting by its television set.'²⁴

Pavlychko was the first candidate to speak, and gave a good idea of what could be expected, from his colleagues. In a powerful and absolutely forthright speech he denounced the Soviet totalitarian and imperial system, blamed the Communist Party for the economic, ecological and spiritual crisis in which Ukraine found itself, and argued that independence, achieved in a peaceful evolutionary manner, was the only way forward. There should be no illusions, he warned: in a revamped Soviet federation, 'steel chains' would be replaced by 'velvet fetters'. Lukyanenko, Horyn and Chornovil spoke in a similar vein and in their speeches provided details about their biographies as dissidents and political prisoners and about the indomitable movement for human and national rights in Ukraine in which they had been active. Chornovil strongly attacked Ivashko and Kravchuk for their hostile attitude towards the victorious democratic forces in Western Ukraine and maintained that the removal of the Communist Party from power should have been the first priority of the new parliament. He also called for the election of a Ukrainian president by direct popular vote in a year's, or a year and a half's, time and announced that he intended to be a candidate if such an election were to be held.

Drach, Yukhnovsky, Yavorivsky and Salii were more moderate in their tone and adopted a more centrist position. Drach welcomed Yeltsin's commitment to securing 'full sovereignty' for the RSFSR and stressed that only through cooperation between Russian and Ukrainian democrats would a 'free Russia' and a 'free Ukraine', existing side by side as good neighbours, be possible. Hrynov, whose mother was Ukrainian but who described himself as a Russian and also delivered his speech in Russian, supported sovereignty, but was in favour of Ukraine signing a new Union treaty with, as he put it, a Russia led by Yeltsin, and the transformation of the USSR into a

halfway house between a federation and a confederation. He considered that in the long-term there was a danger that extreme nationalist forces might form an alliance with conservatives from the Party state apparatus and create an authoritarian Ukrainian state. While defending the republic's territorial integrity, Hrynov pointed to the regional differences and called for the reorganization of Ukraine into a federation. Chornovil also supported giving the regions maximum control over local affairs, leading eventually, but not immediately, to some form of a federal arrangement. For his part, Ivashko repeated the main planks in the CPU's Platform and stressed that the Party wanted a 'united, democratic, strong and stable Ukraine' enjoying genuine sovereignty, but, of course, within a revamped Soviet federation.

While these exciting developments were taking place in Kyiv, on 29 May in Moscow an even more dramatic event occurred: Yeltsin, the nominee of the 'Democratic Russia' bloc was elected chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. His victory not only advanced the cause of democratic reform but was also a boon for the defenders of the rights of the republics. In his election campaign Yeltsin had forcefully attacked the imperial centre and accused it of depriving Russia of its 'spiritual, national and economic' independence. Denouncing the imperial structures, he championed the idea of real sovereignty for Russia and its right to establish its own separate treaties with foreign states and other republics of the USSR. One of Yeltsin's first actions as head of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet was to meet with Landsbergis and propose treaties of cooperation between the RSFSR and the Baltic republics.

In Kyiv, four candidates for the post of the chairman of the Verkhovna Rada were left in the running: Ivashko, Yukhnovsky, Hrynov and Salii. Anticipating Ivashko's victory, most of the Democratic Bloc decided to boycott the voting in protest against the fact that the favourite refused to agree to relinquish his post as first secretary of the CPU if he were elected. Of the 339 deputies who participated in the voting on 4 June, 278 supported Ivashko, 28 Hrynov, 24 Yukhnovsky and 4 Salii. Seeking a working compromise, the Democratic Bloc proposed that Ivashko nominate Yukhnovsky for election as the first deputy head of the Supreme Council. Ivashko, however, ignored this suggestion. This led 113 members of the Democratic Bloc to organize themselves formally into a parliamentary opposition known as the Narodna Rada, or

People's Council, which was also joined by twelve supporters of the Democratic Platform. Yukhnovsky was elected its leader, Pavlychko, Lukyanenko, Yemets and Volodymyr Filenko (a Democratic Platform supporter from Kharkiv) as his deputies, and Tanyuk the bloc's secretary. In its first declaration, dated 6 June, the People's Council warned that if the Communist majority continued to try to maintain 'a mono-party dictatorship in the Verkhovna Rada', the opposition would appeal to the public to call for the dissolution of the legislature and 'for new democratic elections on the basis of political pluralism'.²⁵ Khmara and several others, however, adopted a more radical position and accused Yukhnovsky and his supporters of 'collaborating' with the Communist regime.

The elections of deputy heads of the Verkhovna Rada proceeded without the participation of most of the People's Council. Plyushch was elected first deputy head and Hrynov became the second deputy head virtually by default (as Yukhnovsky and Yemets from the People's Council withdrew). Although the CPU had secured for itself the commanding positions, the gulf between the Communist majority and the People's Council was widening and threatening to paralyze the Supreme Council. Ivashko and his team therefore evidently decided that some compromises would have to be made to prevent a mass walkout by the opposition. 'Secret negotiations' were held with the leaders of the People's Council as a result of which the opposition managed to secure the chairmanship of almost a third of the twenty-three permanent commissions which the Supreme Council voted to establish, and a reasonable level of representation in them.²⁶ Among the democrats elected to head commissions were Yukhnovsky (the commission on education and science), Tanyuk (culture and spiritual revival), Yavorivsky (the consequences of the Chornobyl disaster), Yemets (human rights) and Pavlychko (foreign relations). After this arrangement had been sealed, political tempers began to cool and it seemed that a more constructive phase could begin.

In the meantime, though, on 9 June British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher came to Kyiv as part of her official visit to the Soviet Union. The leaders of the People's Council hoped that her address to the Ukrainian Supreme Council would become the

²⁵ *Literaturna Ukrain*, 14 June 1990.

²⁶ Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 22-3.

occasion for the acknowledgement by a leading Western leader of Ukraine's resurgence and that the British guest would express support for the efforts of the republics to achieve genuine sovereignty and to enter into direct relations with foreign states. Her speech, however, turned into an embarrassing setback for the national democrats. Tactfully avoiding giving offence to Gorbachev, she refused to comment on, as she put it, the USSR's 'internal affairs', but at the same time made it quite clear that she was not keen to see the disintegration of the USSR.

Furthermore, when Pavlychko asked her in his best broken English whether Britain planned to open an embassy in Kyiv, she replied that her country did not have embassies in California, Quebec, or in the various Australian states, thereby suggesting that, for all its aspirations to real sovereignty, Ukraine was still viewed in the outside world as a mere region or a province. Later, however, Thatcher was to acknowledge in her memoirs that her visit to Kyiv had quite an impact on her. 'Everywhere I went I found blue and yellow bunting and flags . . . and signs demanding independence', she noted. She 'went away . . . understanding how fundamental the whole question of nationality was becoming and doubtful whether the Soviet Union could — or should — ultimately be kept together'.²⁷

Once again, though, the pace of political change in Moscow took many by surprise, including presumably Western leaders and policy makers. Ironically, in his comments to Mrs. Thatcher in the Ukrainian Supreme Council, Pavlychko also expressed disappointment that Britain had not recognized Lithuania's independence and asked the British guest, seemingly rhetorically, what London would do if, say, Russia decided to declare its independence.²⁸ In fact, on 12 June, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR came close to doing precisely that when it approved a Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the RSFSR which asserted the primacy of the republic's laws over Soviet ones, the republic's control over its natural resources and the republic's right to secede from the USSR. A 'sovereign' and assertive Russia led by Yeltsin had now suddenly stood the nationalities problem on its head: Russia's defiance of central control became Gorbachev's main headache as he desperately strove to keep the

²⁷ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, London, 1993, pp. 806-7.

²⁸ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 12 June 1990.

Union intact, and it gave impetus to the trend towards the decentralization and dissolution of the empire.

This became apparent on that very same day, for while the Russian Supreme Soviet was adopting its declaration of sovereignty, Gorbachev convened a meeting of the Council of the Federation in order to push ahead with the preparation of a new Union treaty. Ivashko represented Ukraine and subsequently reported to the Ukrainian parliament that the meeting had not gone smoothly. Gorbachev had pressed for the reconstitution of the USSR into 'a union of sovereign Socialist republics' but representatives of the republics, and especially Yeltsin, had insisted that the revamped Union should have two tiers: on one level, the republics, as sovereign states, would themselves decide which powers to delegate to the centre, and on another level they would establish ties directly among themselves on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements. Ivashko himself appears not to have known how to react. He told the Ukrainian parliament that when Gorbachev had called on him to speak, he had replied 'I have no mandate to conduct negotiations' on the future of the Union. The Ukrainian Party leader had got himself off the hook by telling the meeting that Ukraine's parliamentarians had received three draft versions of a declaration of state sovereignty and were still studying them.

With the Council of the Federation having decided to set up a working group to draw up a new Union treaty as a matter of urgency, it was clear from Ivashko's report that the Verkhovna Rada ought not to delay dealing with the issue of defining the scope of the republic's sovereignty. He himself stressed this, adding, unexpectedly, a tantalizing piece of information: in Moscow, he had agreed with Yeltsin that they should meet in the near future to discuss drawing up a treaty between Russia and Ukraine; the Kazakhstani president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, had also proposed that Ukraine and his republic exchange representatives in order to promote closer bilateral relations.²⁹

Ironically, the CPU leadership was itself now being confronted with the challenge of dealing with a centrifugal force within Ukraine. In Crimea, where the substantial Ukrainian minority still lacked any basic cultural facilities, pro-Russian forces were expressing their opposition more and more forcefully both to the prospect

Ibid., 15 June 1994.

of any Ukrainization, however distant, and to the mass return of the Crimean Tatars. A group of deputies to the region's Supreme Soviet had taken the lead in calling for the restoration of the peninsula's autonomous status and were urging the local population to support the idea of Crimea once again becoming part of the Russian Federation.³⁰

A more immediate problem, however, was that of the renewed activism of the disaffected Donbas miners. On 11-15 June, Donetsk was the venue for an ail-Union congress of miners, which, hardly surprisingly, produced numerous radical demands. Despite the fact that about a third of the miners' representatives were members of the Communist Party they voiced their lack of confidence both in the current Soviet Government and in the CPSU as a defender of the rights of the workers, threatened new strikes and voted to create a new independent trade union to represent their interests. Among other things, they also called for the establishment of a genuine multi-party system and the nationalization of the CPSU's property.³¹

On 16 June, the revamped Russian parliament formally abolished the Communist Party's leading role on the territory of the Russian Federation and inaugurated a multi-party system. But one of the main "political forces seeking to secure a prominent place for itself in the new political environment with which it was reluctantly having to come to terms with was Russia's disgruntled conservative Communists and their hard-line leaders. It was with considerable foreboding, therefore, that reformist and democratic forces awaited the conference which the Russian Communists had called for 19 June.

The forces regroup

Ivashko's immediate priority, though, was the completion of preparations for the Twenty-eighth Congress of the CPU. Although overshadowed by developments in Moscow, the congress was nevertheless an important occasion for the CPU to take its bearings in the fast-changing political environment, register the prevailing attitudes within the organization, and carry out personnel changes

³⁰ TASS, 17 June 1990.

³¹ TASS, 11 June, AFP, 12 June and AP 15 June, 1990; and Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 114.

in its leadership. As it was, numerous regional Party leaders had been swept away by the earlier tide of social and political protest. On the eve of the CPU congress, two of the stalwarts from the Shcherbytsky era, Yelchenko, and apparently Kachura also, indicated that they did not want to remain in the CPU leadership.³² Furthermore, Ivashko and Hurenko, who according to Kravchuk were now beginning to run things without consulting their colleagues,³³ appear to have decided that Ivashko would relinquish his post as Party leader and, for the time being at least, concentrate on chairing the Verkhovna Rada, while Hurenko would take over from him as Ukraine's Party boss.

On 19 June, the CPU's Congress got off to a stormy start. Delegates were unhappy about the relatively low-level representation from the CPSU leadership — a deputy head of a Central Committee department — and, implying that at this critical juncture the CPU, with its still impressive membership of 3,241,000, was not being afforded the respect and attention which it deserved, demanded Gorbachev's presence. During the next days, the Soviet leader was to be strongly criticized by conservative delegates who blamed him for the CPSU's difficulties. Furthermore, because of the general uncertainty about what would happen at the conference of Russia's Communists (at which, in fact, Gorbachev was present at that time), and at the forthcoming Twenty-eighth Congress of the CPSU, Ukraine's Communists voted that their own congress should be divided into two phases, the second to be held after the CPSU Congress.

Ivashko himself had quite a rough passage: although his report did not contain anything particularly new, it did not go down very well with conservatives who were unhappy with the general state of affairs and the direction in which things were moving; there was commotion in the hall during the address, and criticism of it during the debates that followed.³⁴ Even the Party organ, *Radyanska Ukraina*, commented that there was a considerable degree of polarization among the delegates and that at times the reactionary 'spirit of Nina Andreeva' could be felt.³⁵ Some of the delegates opposed the

*** Yelchenko submitted his resignation a few days before the congress. Author's interview with Yelchenko.

³² Valentyn Chemerys, *Prezydent*, Kyiv, 1994, pp. 174-5.

Radyanska Ukraina, 22 June 1990.

adoption of a new Party statute which asserted the CPU's autonomy within the CPSU, and there were those, especially from the eastern regions, who were unhappy about the fact that the CPU had embraced the 'separatist' idea of affirming Ukraine's state sovereignty.

From among the CPU leaders, Kravchuk came across both as the most forceful advocate of autonomy for the CPU and state sovereignty for Ukraine, and as a pragmatist. Forced to defend his record as ideological secretary, he opined that the sharpening of the political situation in the republic had begun in May 1988, 'when the polarization of political forces had in fact started'. The Gorbachev leadership's inconsistencies in its political and ideological policies had complicated matters, and social and political discontent continued to be fuelled by the shortages of food, soap and other essentials in the shops. The recent elections in the republic had seen the culmination of the process of political polarization and the CPU now needed to change some of its slogans and review some of its policies and tactics. Although there could be no 'consolidation' of forces with enemies of Socialism and of the Communist Party, there could be 'compromises when it was a matter of the fate of the people, when* it concerned the fate of Ukraine'. The idea of state sovereignty, the ideological secretary argued, was 'currently the basis on which the people of Ukraine was coalescing', and on which, by 'maintaining its initiative' in this sphere, the Party could 'win authority for itself from the masses'.

The radicals also made themselves heard. The Democratic Platform was represented by the sociologist Valerii Khmelko, who presented a virtual ultimatum from the reformist wing. He informed the delegates that if the CPSU did not accept a number of cardinal changes promoting democratization both within the Party and in political life generally, the organization faced a split and up to 40% of its membership which supported the ideas of the Democratic Platform would probably leave. He appealed to the moderates in the CPU to ally themselves with the democratically minded reformists and to distance themselves from the 'authoritarian' forces.

The divisions within the CPU were highlighted during the election of the Party leader. No less than nine candidates were nominated, including Hurenko, Ivashko, Kravchuk (by a delegate

from the Lviv region), Salii (who was vilified by some of the delegates), and the hard-liners, General Boris Groniov, who had distinguished himself during the war in Afghanistan and was now the commander of the Kyiv military district, and Oleksandr Ruzh-ytsky, the Party boss in the Cherkassy region. All but Hurenko and Salii declined.

In his election address, Hurenko advocated a cautious and unenthusiastic approach to restructuring: sounding an unusually heterodox note for a supposedly disciplined Communist, and implicitly attacking Gorbachev's reformist team, he declared that he was against any further social 'experiments' prescribed by 'a group of theoreticians and politicians' who had 'assumed the right to announce recipes for social development'. For his part, Salii called on the CPU not to squander its last chance to renew itself through internal democratization and the recognition of the incipient new multi-party and parliamentary political system. Hardly surprisingly, when it came to the vote by secret ballot, Hurenko was elected the new first secretary.

Immediately after the conclusion of the first phase of the congress, a plenum of the new Central Committee of the CPU was held at which Kravchuk was elected second secretary. Among others elected to the new Politburo of the CPU were Ivashko, Masol, Ivan Hrintsov (a secretary of the Central Committee of the CPU specializing in agricultural matters), Valentyn Ostrozhynsky (Party boss of the Ternopil region) and Gromov.

Despite the problems with both the conservative and reformist wings, the former CPU leadership managed to secure from the congress endorsement of the general policy and organizational principles which it had proposed. But clearly, the internal and external problems facing the CPU were considerable and its future increasingly uncertain. Apart from the splits within its ranks, the Party appeared remote from the workers and peasants which it claimed to represent (their relatively low representation among the delegates was a source of some concern at the congress), and to have totally alienated younger cadres in the Komsomol. Regional divisions had also opened up and at the congress Ivashko had to placate Crimea's Communists by holding out the prospect of the restoration of the peninsula's autonomous statehood within Ukraine. Sekretaryuk, speaking on behalf of the Communists in Western Ukraine, where the Party had recently been trounced so

thoroughly in the elections, called for a more sensitive and sensible policy towards this region: he condemned both the strong-arm tactics that had been unsuccessfully used against Rukh and the shortsighted threats of an economic blockade against Western Ukraine. On top of all this, the CPU now seemed to be openly at odds with the Soviet Party and state leadership. The overall impression, therefore, was of a drifting listing ship for which state sovereignty was the only realistic dock where essential repairs could be carried out.

Meanwhile, Rukh was also having problems, especially in adjusting to the new political situation after the elections. Its Grand Council met on 23 and 24 June in Kyiv and heard various speakers criticize the lack of coordination between the leadership and the regional sections and organizations representing the disaffected miners in the Donbas, the 'lumpenization' of the movement and the growing intolerance of the 'ultra-radicals' within it, and Rukh's failure to effect and sustain a mass political mobilization of the population. Chernyak and others spoke of the need for a more professional approach and changes in Rukh's orientation, strategy and organization. Drach also openly questioned the need for a new Union treaty and he and other speakers thereby indicated that, even as the proclamation of the state sovereignty of Ukraine was being awaited, Rukh was already embracing the idea of independence for Ukraine. The Grand Council decided to amend Rukh's statutes, to convene a second congress of the Popular Movement and, in the meantime, to prepare for mass celebrations in August in Zaporizhzhya of the 500th anniversary of Ukrainian Cossackdom — an action designed to promote the revival of national memory and pride generally, and to stimulate the development of national consciousness in Eastern Ukraine in particular.⁶

It was made very clear at the meeting of the Grand Council that among the issues continuing to divide the national democratic movement was the festering hostility between the nation's main Christian groups. While Rukh's leaders continued to suspect that the rivalry between both the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholics, and among the Ukrainian Orthodox themselves, was being fomented by the Communist authorities, the situation attested not only to the lack of a tradition of religious tolerance, but also to

⁶ Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 27- 34; Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, pp. 110-12.

the weakness of democratic culture even in Western Ukraine, which had not been under Soviet rule as long as other regions of Ukraine, and where anti-Communist forces were now in power. On 2 July, several prominent national democrats, including Drach, Lukyanenko, UAOC activist Sverstyuk and staunch Ukrainian Catholic -Iryna Kalynets, issued an appeal to Ukraine's Christians calling for religious toleration and an end to the antagonism between Orthodox and Catholics.³⁷

Despite the inter-confessional conflicts, the growth and organizational consolidation of both of the two main independent churches — the UAOC and the Ukrainian Catholic Church — continued. On 5 and 6 June, the UAOC held its First Sobor (Council), confidently choosing Kyiv for the venue. The Sobor was preceded by a religious ceremony outside St Sophia's Cathedral and a procession through the streets of the Ukrainian capital. Seven bishops and 547 delegates from the clergy and faithful took part in the Sobor and there were numerous representatives from Ukraine's democratic forces and intellectual elite, including Drach, Holovaty, Oles Shevchenko, Sverstyuk, the art historian Dmytro Stepovyk and the archaeologist Petro Tolochko. The Sobor proclaimed an All-Ukrainian Patriarchate, and elected *in absentia* Metropolitan Mstyslav Skrypnyk, the ninety-two-year-old head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States,³⁸ who had not been given a Soviet visa, as Patriarch of Kyiv and All Ukraine and Metropolitan Bodnarchuk as the Patriarch's *locum tenens*. The Sobor ended on an especially uplifting note: despite the determined opposition of the Russian Orthodox Church, the UAOC was able to hold a service within St Sophi's — the pre-eminent symbol of Ukraine's thousand-year-old Christianity.³⁹

³⁷ *Literatuma Ukraina*, 12 July 1990.

Metropolitan Mstyslav Skrypnyk was a living link with Ukraine's hitherto suppressed religious and political past. A nephew of Petlyura, he had fought for Ukrainian independence in 1918-20. As a deputy in the Polish Sejm during the inter-war period, he had defended the rights of Ukrainian Orthodox believers in Volhynia. During the German occupation of Ukraine, he had taken part in efforts to revive the UAOC. After the war he eventually emerged as the leader of Ukrainian Orthodox believers in the West.

The author was in Kyiv at the time and witnessed part of the Sobor. Also, see the reports on the Sobor by Larysa Lohvytska in *Literatuma Ukraina*, 21 June 1990, and by V. Stelmakh, *Kultura i zhyttya*, 24 June 1990.

Three weeks later, in Rome, the Pope convened the first joint meeting of all the Ukrainian Catholic bishops from both inside Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora. Ten bishops from Ukraine and eighteen from outside the homeland participated and the meeting was declared an Extraordinary Synod of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. This deprived the Soviet authorities of an excuse they had used to justify their delay in registering the Ukrainian Catholic Church — namely, that the Vatican had not formally recognized the Ukrainian Catholic clandestinely consecrated bishops.⁴⁰

Many other developments, both conspicuous and less evident, also indicated the continuing process of social and political liberalization and national renewal. New political parties were publishing their manifestos, a host of new independent newspapers and journals were appearing, and more information was being made available about Ukraine's history, culture and the Ukrainian diaspora. Indeed the general impression was one of a nation that had survived a severe winter and was beginning to bloom.⁴¹ 'There are congresses going on everywhere in Ukraine right now,' one observer noted, 'and they're all "founding"'. For instance, on 5 July a quasi-religious patriotic movement headed by the former political prisoner Berdnyk — the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic (sic) — which sought to promote the Ukrainian nation's spiritual renewal, held a much-publicized mass meeting in the Western Ukrainian town of Kolomiya; it drew support from politicians and cultural figures ranging from Lukyanenko to Oliinyk.

Of course, the resurgence of Ukrainian patriotism, in all its different forms, was not the only indicator of changing social

See Bociurkiw, 'The Ukrainian Catholic Church', p. 17.

The author was first able to witness this resurgence for himself in June 1990 when, while Director of the Ukrainian Service of Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe, he visited Ukraine for three weeks at the request of the Ukraina Society. This official body, which for decades had sought to monopolize and control ties with Ukrainians abroad, was now 'restructuring' itself and was anxious to shed its negative image. Although I represented an institution which until recently had been officially branded as an 'enemy voice', I was allowed to travel freely and meet with whoever I wanted. In connection with my visit, permission was also finally given by the Communist authorities for the publication of an interview which I had given several months earlier over the telephone to *Molod Ukrainy*. The newspaper published it on 28 June 1990. A second interview, describing my impressions of what I had encountered in Ukraine, appeared in the Ukraina Society's weekly, *Visti z Ukrainy*, no. 28, July 1990.

attitudes and tastes. The removal of Communist ideological and political controls was allowing very different values to be asserted, and for many people the resulting ideological vacuum or confusion was creating a curiosity in, and a readiness to experiment with, all manner of things which previously had been taboo or officially disapproved of. 'On the whole', the same observer noted, 'mysticism, astrology, palmistry and various types of magic are incredibly popular among us. This is the newest sign of the times, the biggest fad . . . Another is pornography . . . Calendars and crude postcards with half-naked and naked girls are sold everywhere.'⁴²

The scope of sovereignty is debated

After the CPU Congress and the meeting of Rukh's Grand Council attention once again shifted to the parliament and the main issue on its agenda — the affirmation of Ukraine's state sovereignty. During the last few days, Uzbekistan and Moldova had become the latest republics to proclaim their sovereignty. In Moscow, the conference of Russia's Communists had transformed itself into the founding congress of the Communist Party of the RSFSR. Although it emerged that this organization was far from monolithic, Gorbachev had come under strong attack at the meeting from hard-liners such as Ligachev but had managed to put a brave face on things and to ride out the storm. Nevertheless, under its elected leader, the arch conservative Ivan Polozkov, the new Russian Communist Party represented a serious threat both to Gorbachev's authority and to the political cohesion within the Soviet multinational state which the CPSU had embodied. In an implicit warning both to Yeltsin and Polozkov about the potential dangers of the Russian Federation continuing to assert its own republican interests and to develop its own republican institutions, the Soviet leader pointed out at the congress: 'The question of a Russian Communist Party has cropped up repeatedly, beginning, so to speak, in Lenin's time. And also the question of Russia and its role . . . To put it briefly, one can say that all of this is connected with the unifying role of the Russian Federation and of the peoples

⁴² Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 45-6. On the meeting of the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic in Kolomiya, see *Literatuma Ukraina*, 19 July 1990.

of Russia, with the role they played in the formation of our huge, multinational state.⁴³

Against this background, on 25 June Ivashko proposed proceeding directly to the debate on the declaration of state sovereignty but the deputies insisted that a decision first be made on who would head the Council of Ministers. He therefore proposed Masol but, rather surprisingly, the latter did not receive the requisite number of votes. The same happened when Ivashko nominated Fokin. Both advocated economic sovereignty and a gradual transition to a regulated market economy, with Fokin sounding somewhat less conservative than Masol. Among their most outspoken critics during the debates was Rukh's leading economist, Chernyak, who urged that a government of national salvation should be created.⁴⁴

Unable to secure the election of the CPU's candidates, Ivashko made an unexpectedly bold move to end the impasse: he proposed both Masol and Chernyak. Although the latter was taken by surprise and was given only one night to prepare a speech, he made full use of the opportunity to present an outline of a radical alternative programme aimed at promoting a transition to democracy and a mixed economy. Chernyak also argued that for Ukraine to have real economic sovereignty, it should have its own financial and banking system and its own currency. Only 219 deputies participated in the voting, which was insufficient for a quorum. The People's Council also claimed that, in any case, the votes were being tampered with.

Angered by this accusation, and probably not too happy that one of Rukh's leaders was in the running to become the head of the government, Hurenko sought to reinforce Party discipline among the Communist deputies and called a special meeting of their caucus. Ivashko, too, condemned the behaviour of deputies who were absent without good reason and announced that from now on they would need to seek permission in writing from either him or his deputies if they wanted to be away. After this, on the fourth ballot, Masol was endorsed as the chairman of the Council of Ministers by 229 votes to Chernyak's 134.⁴⁵

On this and the emergence of the Russian Communist Party, see John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, Princeton, NJ, 1993. pp. 18-20.

⁴⁴ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 26 and 27 June 1994; Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 35-6.

⁴⁵ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 28 and 29 June 1994; Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 36-7.

On 28 June, with one eye on the last-minute manoeuvring in Moscow before the CPSU Congress, Ivashko formally opened the discussion about the declaration of state sovereignty. The previous Presidium of the Supreme Council had appointed a working group to prepare a draft and, three weeks earlier, the document had been given to the members of the new parliament. Six other variants had been submitted. They included one which had been prepared jointly by a dissenting member of the working group, Tymchenko, and Holovaty.⁴⁶ None of these drafts, however, had been published in the press.

Dorohuntsov introduced the officially prepared variant, which essentially reflected the CPU's line. He acknowledged what Rukh and before it Ukraine's dissidents and political prisoners had claimed all along: 'The republic had formally been proclaimed sovereign, but in fact was deprived of the opportunity to realize a whole series of rights characteristic of a sovereign state.' It was therefore essential, he explained, to adopt a declaration on state sovereignty, although Ukraine's future as a sovereign state was, of course, seen to lie within a revamped Union. Indeed, the draft contained an entire section elaborating the basis on which Ukraine should accede to the new Union treaty. But the conditions which were stipulated differed quite significantly from Gorbachev's general approach to the revamping of the Union. They stressed that only the people of Ukraine and its elected parliament could decide which powers they would be prepared to transfer to the Union, that any decision or act by the Union authorities deemed to encroach on Ukraine's sovereignty would be regarded as invalid, and that the republic would retain the right to leave the Union. Furthermore, Dorohuntsov also announced that the working group had prepared a statement addressed to the other republics proposing that a special conference be convened to draw up the new Union treaty at which each republic would have one vote, the chairmanship would rotate, and decisions would be made on the basis of consensus.

After Dorohuntsov's presentation, the authors of the alternative variants were given the floor. As they were virtually all from the national democratic camp, their proposals were far more radical, and they and their colleagues either opposed, or expressed misgivings about, Ukraine signing a new Union treaty. Indeed, several of them

argued that the declaration should proclaim not Ukraine's sovereignty but its independence, that the Union Treaty of 1922 had in fact been imposed on Ukraine and was therefore not binding, and that a sovereign Ukrainian republic should not still have to call itself a Soviet and Socialist state. Holovaty and others emphasized that a sovereign Ukraine should have the right to have its own national armed formations, while Viktor Bed, a lawyer from Transcarpathia, expressed a view which was also gaining popularity among the deputies — that Ukraine should become a non-aligned state. Several of the more moderate Communists who spoke at the beginning of the debate, such as the journalist Serhii Pravdenko, also indicated that their understanding of sovereignty went a lot further than the officially proposed version of the declaration.

The CPU's leadership had nonetheless prepared their more disciplined parliamentary forces for the debate. When it came to his turn to speak, Hurenko sought to assert the CPU's official line on the question of state sovereignty and declared that the majority of Communist deputies supported the idea of Ukraine becoming a sovereign state, but on the understanding that it would remain part of a renewed Soviet federation on the basis of a new Union treaty. He went on to announce that 239 deputies were forming a bloc whose motto would be: 'For a Soviet sovereign Ukraine!'

The heated debate about what sort of sovereignty Ukraine should strive for continued, in full view of the public, for a second day. After almost forty speakers had voiced their views it was evident that the rift between the proponents of either independence, or a confederate arrangement, and the defenders of the idea of a revamped federation and of a new Union treaty was widening, not narrowing, and that the latter remained numerically stronger.

Several of the deputies warned against allowing 'euphoria' to drown out realism. For instance, Viktor Petrov from the Poltava region, emphasized that it was essential 'to tell people that the proclamation of sovereignty is not a panacea'. It was quite possible, he argued, that economically, things would get worse, not better. Already there was a 'great shortage of fuel' and, because of the lack

⁴⁷ See *Persha Sessiya Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainskoi RSR: Byuleten no. 53* [First Session of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR: Bulletin no. 53], Kyiv, 1990. The official report of the proceedings of the Ukrainian parliament will hereafter be referred to as *Parliamentary Bulletin*.

of newsprint, many newspapers were not appearing (Russia was the main source of both fuel and newsprint). Although the important thing was that, having asserted its sovereignty, Ukraine would be in control of its own affairs, economic ties with the other republics would be further complicated. Another indication of the potential problems facing a sovereign Ukraine was provided by a representative from Crimea, Vladimir Terekhov, who called for the federalization of Ukraine and autonomous statehood for his region.

At the end of the second day of debate, Plyushch announced a break until 5 July in order to provide time for the commissions to work on the draft declaration,⁴⁸ though the democratic opposition suspected that it was really to allow sixty-three Communist deputies who were delegates to the Twenty-eighth Congress of the CPSU to leave for Moscow. As representatives of the People's Council were subsequently to point out, the parliament was not even formally consulted or notified about the departure, at this crucial moment, of such a large group of deputies and of the chairman of the parliament.

While the 804-strong delegation from the CPU was making its way to the Soviet capital, the USSR's miners decided to call a warning strike on 11 July in protest against the Soviet government's failure to meet its promises of the previous year. They issued a number of far-reaching political demands, including the resignation of the Soviet Government, the nationalization of the CPSU's property and the depoliticization of the security ministries, judiciary and state bodies responsible for administration and economic management. The threat of this major protest was to hang over both the work of the CPSU Congress and of the Ukrainian parliament.

In Moscow, Hurenko was asked by journalists to describe the CPU's position and the general political situation in Ukraine. In his response, the Ukrainian Party leader went out of his way to emphasize that the CPU had embarked on 'a course of increasing' its 'independence' within the CPSU and rejected the view that the recent Congress of the CPU had been 'conservative in its spirit and make-up'. He acknowledged that the 'national element' was figuring more and more prominently in Ukraine's politics but added that the majority of Ukraine's parliamentary deputies believed in 'the development of Socialist Ukraine within a renewed Federation'

Much depended, he said, on what would happen in the other republics.⁴⁹ Pressed by a Ukrainian journalist on the confrontation in the Ukrainian parliament between pro-independence and pro-Union forces, Hurenko replied that if a crisis arose, it would be necessary to hold a referendum and let the people of Ukraine decide.⁵⁰

The Congress was to last for two weeks and witness a continuation of the struggle between Gorbachev and the conservatives and the growing assertiveness of radical and pro-democratic elements. At the Congress, Hurenko and Ivashko were given responsibility for important tasks: Hurenko was chosen to head the commission on social and economic matters, and Ivashko was elected chairman of the Congress's editorial commission. But at home, their absence was to cause a political storm.

TASS, 3 July 1990.

See Vitalii Portnikov's interview with Hurenko in *Molod Ukmyny*, 30 June 1990.