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THE REBIRTH OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC AND CULTURAL LIFE

A number of other developments during the spring and summer of 1987 helped to revitalize Ukraine's public and cultural life: Gorbachev's gradual release of political prisoners and the resumption by some of them of their dissident activity, the appearance throughout the Soviet Union of unofficial, or 'informal' as they were referred to, clubs and associations, and religious resurgence in Western Ukraine. Furthermore, by the middle of the year some non-Russian groups had begun to put *glasnost* and democratization to the test by organizing large demonstrations and other protests. Latvian activists led the way with a commemorative march in Riga on 14 June to honour the victims of the mass deportations of their countrymen by the Soviet authorities in June 1941; in July the Crimean Tatars, who had been campaigning since the 1960s to be allowed to return to their homeland in Crimea, held a series of demonstrations in Moscow; and, on 23 August, in all three Baltic republics, the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was marked by protests. All this only increased the salience of the nationalities question.

Although political conditions in Ukraine were not as auspicious as in Russia's major cities or in the Baltic republics, the more liberal atmosphere emanating from Moscow also encouraged the mushrooming of unofficial groups in the republic. While most of them seemed to be concerned with pop music or sport, some of the new associations devoted their attention to the preservation of the Ukrainian cultural and historical heritage, ecology, and even the issues of peace and disarmament. As their activity unfolded and came under fire from the republican Party authorities, it soon became apparent that some of them represented not so much a 'counter-culture' as a 'counter-ideology'.

The Ukrainian Catholics emerge from the underground

At the same time, a wave of religious fervour spread through Western Ukraine. The climate was conducive because not only was the millennium of the Christianization of Kyivan Rus now only a matter of months away, but also the Chornobyl tragedy had created apocalyptic associations in the minds of many people. The name Chornobyl means wormwood in Ukrainian and this happens to be the name of the apocalyptic star mentioned in the Revelation of St John the Divine (8: 10-11). Furthermore, for Ukrainian Catholics 1987 was special: it had been declared a Marian year by the Pope and also, with Gorbachev's freeing of political prisoners and emphasis on democratization, it seemed to offer the prospect of an improvement in the situation of the outlawed Ukrainian Catholic Church.

In April, on the first anniversary of the Chornobyl disaster, a young girl claimed to have seen an apparition of the Virgin Mary by a locked-up Catholic chapel in Hrushiv, near Lviv, which had been built in the nineteenth century on the site of a supposedly miraculous shrine. Reports about recurrent apparitions quickly spread and soon thousands of people were converging each day on Hrushiv. So great were the excitement and curiosity that by September, according to *Moscow News*, 'some half a million people dropped everything and rushed to the place where, as they said, the Virgin Mary had appeared'¹ This mass display of religious zeal left the authorities at a loss as how to respond; moreover, both the local and the central Soviet media were forced to acknowledge this phenomenon, which only focused attention on a church which officially no longer existed.

At the height of the interest in the 'Miracle of Hrushiv', some of the leaders of the Ukrainian Catholic Church decided to emerge from the underground in order to give the campaign for the legalization of their church new impetus. Early in 1987 the leadership of the Ukrainian Catholic Church had appealed in vain to the Soviet government and to Gorbachev personally to lift the ban on

¹ *Moscow News*, no. 37, September 1987. On the 'Miracle of Hrushiv', see also Andrew Sorokowski, 'The Apparition at Hrushiv: A Miracle in Western Ukraine?', *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 16 August 1987; 'Our Lady in the Soviet Union', *The Tablet*, 25 July 1987; Felicity Barringer, 'Purported Miracle Focuses on a Non-Existent Church', *New York Times*, 13 October 1987.

their church, without disclosing their identities. The only reply, they claimed, had been an intensification of the harassment of Ukrainian Catholic believers and more attacks on their church in the press." Subsequent calls for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church by the newly freed political prisoners Vitalii Shevchenko (who also called for the removal of the ban on the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church³) in May and Stepan Khmara⁴ in June also fell on deaf ears. On 4 August, therefore, two clandestine Ukrainian Catholic bishops, twenty-three priests, and a group of 206 monks, nuns and laymen appealed to Pope John Paul II to press Soviet officials for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. They declared that:

In light of restructuring in the USSR and the more favourable circumstances which have arisen, as well as in connection with the jubilee of the millennium of the baptism of Ukraine, we consider it inopportune to remain in the underground.

Three weeks later, some 3,000 Ukrainian Catholics, including Bishop Pavlo Vasylyk, gathered in the village of Zarvarnytsya, in the Ternopil region. The local authorities seemed unsure how to respond, and although police with dogs sought to disperse the gathering, no arrests were made. The Catholics proceeded to form parishes, and here and there priests began to hold religious services in the open. Clearly, this manifestation of the vitality of a church which officially had ceased to exist long ago and which was now demanding quite openly that the official policy towards it be changed was something that required decisions from Moscow. For the time being, though, the Ukrainian authorities refused to register the Catholic parishes and subjected Catholic activists and clergy to petty harassment and small fines. In September, the head

" See AS 5759: 'The Appeal of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Catholics in the Catacombs of Ukraine', dated 8 February 1987; and a statement addressed in the early part of 1987 (no date is given) to Gorbachev and the Pope by a group of leading Ukrainian Catholic activists. A copy of the handwritten document exists in the former RFE/RL Samizdat Archive in Munich.

See Shevchenko's open letter to *Izvcstiya* in *Soviet Ukrainian Affairs*, no. 1 (1988), pp. 15-16.

⁴ AS 6038. Also published in *Russkaya mysl* (Paris), 28 August 1987, p. 6.

AS 6097. Also published in Ukrainian in *Ukrainskyi visnyk*, no. 7, (Kyiv-Lviv), 1987; reprinted ed, n.p.: Suchasnist, 1988, pp. 76-7.

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of the Committee in Defence of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Terelya, was allowed to leave for the West, ostensibly for medical treatment. His departure, however, did not weaken the movement for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. His successor, the former political prisoner Ivan Hel, was to prove an effective leader and good organizer.⁶

In October, the Ukrainian Catholics were given a boost by a deft move in the Pope's Ostpolitik which placed the Soviet authorities in an embarrassing situation. Only a month after he had addressed a synod in Rome of the Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy in the West, Pope John Paul II arranged a historic reconciliation between the leaders of the Polish and Ukrainian Catholic Churches. At a ceremony in Rome on 17 October, the Polish primate, Cardinal Josef Glemp, emphasized how 'few altars' Ukrainian Catholics had to worship at in their homeland and invited the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Cardinal Myroslav Lyubachivsky, and his bishops to come to Poland the following summer to participate in the Polish celebrations of the millennium of the Christianization of Kyi van Rus.⁷

The denial of the basic human rights of Ukrainian Christians did not square with *glasnost* and democratization, and this was to be increasingly pointed out not only by the Vatican, but also by Western politicians and churchmen. For instance, during a pioneering television linkup in October between representatives of the US Congress and the USSR Supreme Soviet, Senator Daniel Moynihan raised the issue of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The reaction, however, indicated that the Kremlin was not about to change the traditional policy which had been pursued towards the Ukrainian 'Uniates' by both the tsarist government and Stalin and his successors. On 23 December, *Izvestiya* responded to Senator Moynihan with an old-style diatribe against the Ukrainian Catholics. The newspaper denied the existence of a Ukrainian Catholic Church in

⁶ On these developments see *Ukrainskyi visnyk*, No. 8 (Kyiv-Lviv), September 1987; reprinted edn, n.p.: External Representation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, 1988; and *Ukrainskyi visnyk9-10* (Kyiv-Lviv), October-November 1987; reprinted, n.p.: External Representation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, 1988, pp. 260-3.

⁷ *The Times*, 31 October 1987. For the texts of the statements made by the two primates, see *Studium Papers* (Ann Arbor, Michigan), XII, no. 2 (April 1988), pp. 43-6.

Ukraine and dismissed its representatives in the West as the successors of the agents of 'the Polish gentry', 'the Austro-Hungarian monarchy' and the 'Hitlerites', claiming that they were serving 'reactionary imperialist circles'.

Izvestiya's broadside against the Ukrainian Catholics may also have been prompted by the fact that the Committee in Defence of the Rights of the Ukrainian Catholic Church had begun collecting signatures in support of the legalization of their church. On 22 December, Hel and two priests travelled to Moscow to attend an unofficial human rights seminar and while in the Soviet capital handed a petition to the USSR Supreme Soviet.⁸ The contacts which the Ukrainian Catholic activists established in Moscow with Russian Orthodox dissenters also proved useful, and during the next few months the Russians Alexander Ogorodnikov, Father Georgii Edelshtein and Vladimir Poresh were to speak out in defence of the Ukrainian Catholics.

It should be pointed out that apart from the obvious political reasons why Moscow did not want to lift its ban on a church which was so closely identified with Ukrainian nationalism, the Russian Orthodox Church had its own reasons for opposing the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Quite apart from its traditional antipathy towards the Uniates, the reappearance of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, or, for that matter, any concessions to a specifically Ukrainian church, threatened to undermine its position. In fact, of the close to 7,000 Russian Orthodox churches functioning at this time in the Soviet Union, over 4,000 were situated in Ukraine. Moreover, the largest single Russian Orthodox eparchy was Lviv-Ternopil, which had over 1,000 working churches; but, this was the heart of the traditionally Catholic Ukraine.⁹ In other words, for the Moscow Patriarchate there were also the questions of status and prestige, revenues, and the loyalty of clergy and their parishes to think about.

Unofficial groups in Lviv and Kyiv become catalysts

Whether by coincidence or not, in the same week that some of

⁸ Reuter, 22 December 1987.

⁹ See Bohdan Nahaylo, 'Ukrainian Catholic Issue Overshadows Start of Moscow Patriarchate's Millennial Celebrations', RL 230/88, 6 June 1988.

the Ukrainian Catholic leadership emerged from the underground, newly released political prisoners in Lviv and Kyiv launched attempts to revive independent public life. They formed groups seeking both to extend *glasnost* more fully to the nationalities problem as it existed in Ukraine and to focus the public's attention on the situation in which the Ukrainian nation found itself.

In Lviv, the new circle of activists coalesced around the veteran dissidents Vyacheslav Chornovil and Mykhailo Horyn. On 4 August, Chornovil issued an open letter to Gorbachev announcing the intention of the group, which included Hel, to resume publication of *o£Ukrainskyivisnyk* (The Ukrainian Herald), or in other words, to renew the Ukrainian campaign for human and national rights that had been suppressed during the 1970s. This thirty-page document was an important programmatic declaration which revealed how Ukraine's latent national-democratic opposition viewed the changes that were taking place in the Soviet Union and how much the writers, who as members of an official union were after all trying to operate within the general limits set if not by Kyiv, then by Moscow, had still left unsaid.

While in principle welcoming Gorbachev's new course, Chornovil began by placing certain things in perspective. He pointed out that for all the Soviet leader's claims, the changes he had inaugurated so far amounted only to a 'revolution in words' because there was still no legal recognition of the right to dissent, no toleration of political opposition, nor any restructuring in the sphere of nationalities policy. Chornovil also reminded the Soviet leader that long before he came to power the 'dissidents' and former political prisoners had been the pioneers of genuine *glasnost* and democratization. They, he maintained, were 'only the tip of the iceberg', the representatives of 'those healthy forces which had resisted stagnation and the bureaucratization of Soviet society and, in the non-Russian republics, also the great-state chauvinistic policies of denationalization'.

Chornovil went on to stress that the same system and people who had once stifled the voices of 'all independent thought' were still in place, except that non-Russian cultural figures, mainly writers, had now been given a licence to speak about the 'depressing situation' of their native language and national culture. But this was a 'superficial' *glasnost*, he argued, for the permitted discussion did not delve into the reasons for this state of affairs and avoided the question

of the erosion of the statehood of the supposedly sovereign nations. Chornovil also accused the Soviet leader of avoiding any analysis in his speeches of the issues connected with the national question and of simply repeating the same vague phrases and warnings that had been used since Stalin's time.

As far as the situation in Ukraine was concerned, Chornovil was equally blunt. In the twenty-two years since Dzyuba had completed *Internationalism or Russification?*, he wrote, the situation in the republic had 'significantly worsened thanks to the efforts of Shcherbytsky and Fedorchuk'. Thus, 'many people' in Ukraine were convinced that 'in order for restructuring to reach the republic, the entire Shcherbytsky "team", poisoned by bureaucracy, corruption and chauvinism, should have been removed from leading positions . . . a long time ago'.

As for the Ukrainian writers and their campaign in defence of the Ukrainian language and culture, Chornovil pointed out that they were sticking to the limits of an incomplete *glasnost* and hence were not yet calling things by their real names or addressing the cardinal issues. Was not the fact that at the last writers' plenum not one of the speakers had had 'the courage or decency' to mention 'with gratitude' the name of Dzyuba, who had dared to tell the truth in the *pre-glasnost* era and paid for it, and who was sitting in the audience, an apt illustration of the state of *glasnost* in Ukraine, Chornovil asked.

The former political prisoner urged Gorbachev to face up to the acuteness and real nature of the national question and not simply accept the assurances of 'some literary half-patriots and half-careerists' that Moscow was not to blame for the problems, that it was all the fault of Russified non-Russians, and that all that was needed was to revoke 'the more abhorrent provisions of Khrushchev's education policy'. The opening of more Ukrainian schools or theatres, which the writers were calling for, would only be a palliative, not a remedy and, in any case, Chornovil stressed, without more fundamental changes in the official policies, this would only antagonize Ukraine's sizable Russian population.

What was needed, Chornovil maintained, was a special plenum of the CPSU Central Committee to discuss the national question with the same courage and openness as economic problems. At this meeting, 'the true situation of the USSR's non-Russians' would have to be examined and the 'fictitious character' of the sovereignty

of their republics acknowledged. After this, there would have to be a return to the principles which Lenin had set out for Soviet nationalities policy in the last years of his life and on which the Ukrainization programme of the 1920s had been based. What it boiled down to, Chornovil specified, was that the CPSU leadership would have to recognize that it was essential to broaden the political, economic and cultural rights of the republics and to restore the native language in their official and public life.

In the final part of his letter to Gorbachev, Chornovil pointed out that compared with the progress made in Russia, the process of filling in the blank pages of Ukrainian history had essentially not even begun yet. He added a long list of themes and individuals, beginning with the Ukrainian struggle for independence in the 1917-20 period and ending with the death of Vasyl Stus in 1985, which still remained forbidden topics or were subject to falsification and distortion. Among them he mentioned the UNR, the ZUNR, Hrushevsky, Vynnychenko, Skrypnyk and Khvylovy, the 'executed renaissance of the 1920s', 'the greatest and most infamous blank page in the Soviet history of Ukraine' —the 'genocidal' great famine of 1932-3— the fate of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches (Chornovil called for the ban on them to be lifted), the armed resistance in Western Ukraine in the 1940s and early 1950s, the 'smothered renaissance' of the 1960s and the suppression of Ukrainian national assertiveness in the 1970s. Chornovil ended by requesting that the body of Stus be allowed to be brought back for reburial in Ukraine and that the poet's confiscated works be returned to his family.¹⁰

Although Chornovil's demands and proposals stopped well short of calling for independence for Ukraine or even challenging the Communist Party's monopoly on power, they went much further than what the writers had dared to press for. Chornovil's open letter to the Soviet leader represented a manifesto from those indomitable Ukrainian patriots who had refused to give in even during the most difficult years and who, being very sceptical about the 'democratization' that was taking place under Gorbachev, felt they had nothing to lose. Having spent long years in imprisonment, these

Ukrainskyi visnyk, no.7, pp. 7-25. For an English translation, see Taras Kuzio (ed.), *Dissent in Ukraine Under Gorbachev*, London, Ukrainian Press Agency, 1989, pp. 3-20.

activists had been released but not rehabilitated, and now existed in a legal limbo. Moreover, quite a few Ukrainian political prisoners, such as Lukyanenko and Badzo, had still not been freed or allowed to return to Ukraine from their places of exile.

The letter also indicated the distrust with which the former political prisoners viewed some of the new 'nightingales of restructuring' (as the former journalist Pavlo Skochok dubbed them¹¹), especially those like Oliinyk who, as Chornovil pointed out, had once publicly smeared the dissidents. The latter stressed that the official creative unions, like the W U U, were continuing to regard the former political prisoners as *personae non gratae* even though some of their members were now 'repeating from public platforms and in the press' the kind of things 'for which until not long ago we were carted off to labour camps'. Chornovil announced that because of this the newly freed dissident intellectuals were considering forming their own creative circles and publications independent from the official organizations.

That same month, Chornovil and his colleagues went ahead and published a new *samvydav* issue of *Ukrainskyi visnyk*. In October 1987, this circle founded two new groups: an Action Group for the Release of Ukrainian Political Prisoners and a Ukrainian Association of Independent Creative Intelligentsia (UANTI). The former represented the first human rights group to be set up in Ukraine since the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group was suppressed at the end of the 1970s. It sought to establish ties with human rights activists in other republics, and its first contacts were with similar new groups in Armenia and Georgia. The UANTI aimed to unite writers, poets and artists who had been victims of the cultural purges in Ukraine and who wished to work for the good of Ukrainian culture outside of official institutions.¹²

The authorities responded with old-fashioned denunciations in the official press, and organized special meetings for this purpose at local factories. Much was made, for instance, of the fact that in September Chornovil and Horyn gave a video interview to an

Ukrainskyi visnyk, no. 7, p. 52.

¹² For details, see Roman Solchanyk, 'New Human-Rights Group Formed in Ukraine', RL 403/87, 7 October 1987, and Bohdan Nahaylo, 'Ukrainian Association of Independent Creative Intelligentsia Formed', RL 489/87, 25 November 1987.

American-Ukrainian journalist which was 'discovered' and confiscated by the republic's vigilant customs officers.¹³ In December, Chornovil and Horyn were prevented from travelling to Moscow to participate in an unofficial human rights seminar.

Chornovil's group, however, was not the only indication of the revival of independent public activity in Lviv. For instance, in September an unofficial peace group — the Lviv Trust Group — held a demonstration in the city in which about thirty people took part. The following month, an important semi-official patriotic association—the 'Tovarystvo Leva', or Lion Society—was formally founded. Its members, mainly young people, including Komsomol members and officials, had begun their activity during the summer of that year by cleaning up the city's famous but long-neglected Lychakivsky cemetery. The Lion Society subsequently concentrated on preserving national traditions and cultural monuments and on local ecological issues.¹⁴ On 30 October it organized a charity concert at which a newly formed group called 'Ne Zhurys' (Don't Worry) made their debut and introduced vital new elements to the burgeoning Ukrainian national renewal — political satire and songs of social and political protest.¹⁵

Meanwhile in Kyiv, the former political prisoners Serhii Naboka, Leonid Milyavsky and Oles Shevchenko, along with other dissenters, founded a discussion group for nationally minded citizens — the Ukrainian Culturological Club — which became an important vehicle for Ukrainian national dissent. Its inaugural meeting on 6 August on the theme 'Ukrainian Culture: Facade and Reality' drew scores of people. Subsequent meetings dealt with environmental issues, the preservation of historical and cultural monuments, and 'blank pages' in Ukraine's history.

It was the meeting on 4 October which first drew the wrath of the custodians of orthodoxy. At it, Leonid Milyavsky, a young Ukrainian Jew, who had been arrested in 1981 with Naboka and their wives for attempting to set up a democratic club in the

See, for instance, P. Vilkhovy's diatribe against the two in *Radyanska Ukraina*, 13 November 1987.

¹⁴

See Marusia Drohobycy, 'The Lion Society: Profile of a Ukrainian Patriotic "Informal" Group', RL 325/88, 18 July 1988.

See the reports on Ne Zhurys' debut and on the singing 'bards', Andrii Panchyshyn, Viktor Morozov and others, in *Ukrainskyi visnyk*, nos 8-9, pp. 118-21.

Ukrainian capital and posting up leaflets in defence of Ukrainian political prisoners, gave a candid presentation aimed, as he put it, at curing the 'national amnesia, or loss of historical memory' to which the Ukrainians had been subjected. He touched upon numerous sensitive themes, such as Stalin's famine in Ukraine, which he said the whole world now knew about but was still a 'blank page' in the official Soviet history of Ukraine, and the persecution of dissidents. Milyavsky concluded by declaring that the prerequisites for the success of restructuring and society's triumph over the 'anti-democratic' and 'anti-national' 'bureaucratic administrative system' inherited from the Stalin era were 'freedom' and making the authorities publicly accountable to society. At the same meeting, Oles Shevchenko called for monuments to be erected to the victims of Stalin's purges and famine in Ukraine, while another recently released political prisoner, Khmara, decried the fact that on the occasion of the centenary of Stalin's Russian 'henchman' in Ukraine during the 1930s, Pavel Postyshev, who himself later became a victim of Stalin's terror, the Stalinist functionary was being white-washed in the Ukrainian press by 'so-called historians, or more accurately falsifiers of history', while the real history of Ukraine was, 'as in the past', still being approached with 'lies and half-truths'.

The first salvo against the Ukrainian Culturological Club was delivered on 19 October by the Kyiv evening newspaper *Vechirnyi Kyiv*. But the effect was only to draw attention to the club and its activities. The members of the club defended themselves in various statements and letters. Shevchenko, for instance, sent a statement to leading Russian liberal figures and publications in which he asked for support in the name of democracy against the 'conservatives' who had 'transformed Ukraine into a reserve of Brezhnevism'. There was something of a breakthrough in November and December, however, when *Vechirnyi Kyiv* broke with standard practice by also publishing letters which supported the group. From these, and subsequent articles in the newspaper, it was clear that the club enjoyed the backing of at least some members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who were members of official institutions. Though subjected to heavy fire from the authorities for refusing to abide by 'Soviet' and 'Socialist' values

and discipline, the club defiantly continued to test the limits of *glasnost* and to revive national consciousness.¹⁶

As new unofficial Ukrainian groups and *samvydav* publications continued to appear, there were also indications that, in Western Ukraine at any rate, there also existed a more militant and uncompromising strain of opposition among some young people. In November a Ukrainian newspaper revealed that in the Ternopil region alone two clandestine 'nationalist' youth groups had recently been uncovered. One of them, in Chortkiv, had hoisted the banned blue and yellow flag of independent Ukraine over 'a government building'; the other, in Zbarazh, almost all of whose members 'had a higher education', had been preparing to disseminate 'anti-Soviet leaflets'.¹⁷ During this period *Sohesednik*, the weekly supplement to the all-Union Komsomol daily, *Komsomolskayapravda*, also published letters from two young Western Ukrainians which attested to the growing boldness of the youth in this region. The author of the first letter asserted his Ukrainian Catholic faith and challenged members of the Komsomol to a public debate, while the other called on the newspaper to take heed *ofglasnost*, stop 'singing songs about brotherhood' and begin 'a serious discussion of national problems'.¹⁸

The widening rift between the writers and the CPU leadership

In the meantime, Ukraine's writers kept up their campaign on a broad front encompassing the language issue, the filling in of the blank pages of Ukrainian history and opposition to the construction of more nuclear reactors in the republic. Responding to the mounting pressure, in August the CPU Central Committee adopted a special resolution on the national question formulated to placate the writers and their allies. The document acknowledged that 'recently, many questions of a national-cultural character' had 'been raised by the public' and that the CPU leadership, the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet and the mass media were receiving

On the Ukrainian Culturological Club, see Bohdan Nahaylo, "'Informal' Ukrainian Culturological Club Under Attack', RL 477/87, 23 November 1987, and 'Informal Ukrainian Culturological Club Helps to Break New Ground for *Clasnost*', RL 57/88, 8 February 1988.

B. Yefremov, 'Po rizni boky mynuloho' [On Different Sides of the Past], *Kultura > zhyttya*, 22 November 1987, p. 2.

¹⁸ See *Sohesednik*, no. 27, 1987, p. 11, and no. 48, 1987, p. 11.

letters expressing concern about the situation of the Ukrainian language. The actual 'complex of measures' offered in the resolution, however, boiled down to the modest concessions on the language question which Yelchenko had proposed in June.¹⁹

The following month, the Presidium of the W U U replied with what was in effect a counter-resolution of its own which only highlighted the gap between what the writers were demanding and what the CPU leadership was prepared to offer.²⁰ The tug of war on the language issue continued with the discussion being taken up in more and more newspapers and journals, and representatives of the CPU being forced to respond.

The writers' campaign against the building of the Chihirin and other new nuclear plants in Ukraine also gathered strength. In August *Literaturna Ukraina* published a protest in the form of a collective letter to the editor signed by seven Ukrainian writers,²¹ including the first secretary of the Poltava region Party organization, Fedir Morhun. The latter had recently become something of a maverick and some Western observers viewed him as a potential replacement for Shcherbytsky. The protesters also collected about 6,000 signatures and sent them in October to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The following month, work on the Chihirin plant was stopped, but the Ukrainian press kept silent about this."

In October, Honchar delivered his most outspoken speech yet, at a conference in Leningrad, in which he took a frank look at some of the problems troubling the Ukrainian public, ranging from Russification to the 'endless' construction of new atomic reactors and the alarming environmental situation. Now, *Literaturna Ukraina* promptly published the full text while Radio Moscow and *Literaturnayagazeta* subsequently provided toned-down versions.²³ Honchar, Shcherbak and Drach also proposed the organization of a forum in

Radyanska Ukraina, 14 August 1987. See also Roman Solchanyk, 'Ukrainian Party Adopts Program on National Question', RL 350/87, 26 August 1987.

Literaturna Ukraina, 1 October 1987.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6 August 1987.

See Bohdan Nahaylo, 'Mounting Opposition in Ukraine to Nuclear Energy', RL Supplement 1/88, 24 February 1988.

Literaturna Ukraina, 1 October, 1987. Radio Moscow excerpted the speech on 22 October 1987, and *Literaturnaya gazeta* published its abridged version on 9 December 1987. For a Western reaction to Honchar's speech, see Arnold Beichman, 'Anxieties in Ukraine', *Washington Times*, 1 December 1987.

Kyiv for writers from all over the world at which some of the questions and issues raised by the Chernobyl disaster could be discussed. The idea seems to have been blocked, though.²⁴

The writers also started to cooperate more closely with concerned scientists and engineers, who in the summer of 1987 began holding their own meetings and discussions in response to the Soviet Ministry of Atomic Energy's determination to continue with its programme of expanding nuclear energy in Ukraine. In December, *Literatuma Ukraina* and *Radyanska Ukraina* organized a round-table discussion at which the growing solidarity between the writers and the scientists was demonstrated. Drach, who in November had been elected head of the Kyiv section of the WUU, welcomed the example which the president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Paton, had set with his 'principled position' on the nuclear energy and related ecological issues, and urged the participants that:

All of us, as one community, should support the position of our leading scientists. Why is our conscience, [our sense of] morality, dormant when these energy units are being forced upon us beyond reasonable limits. . . . It is necessary that everything that is happening, being planned, especially in the field of nuclear energy, should become the subject of the widest possible public discussion, [and] the strictest public control.

Drach went on to announce that the WUU had decided to form an ecological commission, headed by Yurii Shcherbak, which would 'work in close contact with the scientists'.²⁵ That same month, writers were among the founders of an unofficial 'Green World' ecological association.

Despite the mounting protests, in December three more nuclear reactors were put into operation in the republic, including the third unit at the Chernobyl plant; it was restarted even though, as *Izvestiya* pointed out on 5 December, concern persisted about whether conditions in and around the station could be considered normal and safe. On 3 January, *Radyanska Ukraina* welcomed the starting up of the new reactors, noting that the motto at the builders at the Zaporizhzhya plant was: 'Each year—a new reactor'.

This only cemented the new coalition of writers and scientists. Three weeks later, the writers' weekly published a letter from

See Nahaylo, 'Mounting Opposition'.

Literatuma Ukraina, 17 December 1987.

thirteen leading Ukrainian scientists, most of them academicians, explaining in considerable detail why they were opposed to the expansion of nuclear energy in Ukraine and urging the authorities to reassess their policy. The way it was worded, their blistering attack on the Soviet Ministry of Atomic Energy might equally have applied to the Shcherbytsky team. The scientists accused the central ministry of displaying a 'belligerent, bureaucratic' attitude and 'of refusing to submit itself to any restructuring'. They argued that its refusal to take into account public opinion and 'the bitter lessons of Chornobyl' seemed to be dictated by 'the desire to hold on to a system . . . that is slipping out of their hands'. 'But times are changing', the authors stressed, and it was 'not so easy to wave restructuring aside'.²⁶

The battle for the recovery of the nation's history and 'rehabilitation' of some of its most prominent figures also intensified. Drach and others had indicated at the June plenum of the Board of the W U U that the writers would not be deterred by Yelchenko's pronouncement on this subject. Among other things which made the position of the CPU leadership increasingly untenable was the fact that the Russians were being allowed to publish historians like Vasili Klyuchevsky, who, as one Ukrainian author pointed out in an article published in June, were not only not Marxists but were outright imperialists.²⁷ The situation was aptly described by the American historian Roman Szporluk:

If Karamzin, the bard of autocracy who in Pushkin's words had sung the praise of 'the charms of the knout' (*prelesti knutd*) is being rehabilitated—and he is being published in hundreds of thousands of copies—then the rehabilitation of Ukrainian historians—many of whom were leftist (populist, socialist, and radical) but had been banned precisely because they were Ukrainians—could not be denied much longer.²⁸

For the time being, though, the CPU's overseers of the writing of history seemed determined to act as the defenders of orthodoxy against both Ukrainian critics and the 'revisionists' among the more

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 January 1987.

FedirBratyslan, 'Stezhky do dzerel' [Paths to the Sources], *Zhovten*, no. 6, 1987, pp. 121-2.

Roman Szporluk, 'National Reawakening: Ukraine and Belorussia' in Uri Ra'anana (ed.), *The Soviet Empire: The Challenge of National and Democratic Movements*, Lexington and Toronto, 1990, p. 78.

liberal historians in Moscow. In June, the director of the Institute of Party History in Kyiv, Vasyl Yurchuk, declared that there was 'no basis' for re-examining the Party's position towards the likes of Hrushevsky, Vynnychenko and Khvylovy, and went on to criticize two Russian historians: Academician Vladimir Tikhonov, for questioning the necessity of Stalin's liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class', and Yurii Afanasev for his description of the 1930s as 'the Stalinist epoch'.²⁹

Less than a month after the writers' plenum, Zhulynsky opened an important new series in *Literatuma Ukraina* entitled 'Pages of a Forgotten Heritage', which was devoted to uncovering aspects of Ukraine's submerged history and culture. During the next few months, the newspaper earned articles on Khvylovy³⁰ and other leading cultural figures of the 1920s. By the end of the year, several important bridgeheads had been established: in December, *Kyiv* published works by Vynnychenko; another literary monthly, *Vitshchyna*, published a number of Khvylovy's short stories, and *Literatuma Ukraina* of 10 December ran a long piece by a young philologist turned historian, Serhii Bilokin, on Skrypnyk and his cultural policies.

For the first time in an official publication, in November a call was also made to tell the truth about the more recent past, namely the KGB offensive in Ukraine in 1972-3. Demonstrating his talent as a budding publicist, the young literary critic and poet Mykola Ryabchuk insisted in his review of the Russian-language edition of *Sobor* that the purges of those years should be seen for what they really were — 'repressive measures' directed against 'many talented writers and activists in the artistic, cultural and educational fields'. Ryabchuk's pithy review went on to examine the mentality of the bureaucratic class in Ukraine which had found *Sobor* so objectionable and which now, as he suggested, regarded restructuring as nothing more than an exercise in 'window-dressing'.³¹

In the meantime, however, there also appeared the first tentative

" *Pravda Ukrainy*, 9 June 1987. See also the articles in the same newspaper by V. Melnichenko on 31 July 1987, and by V. Kulchytsky on 11 September 1987.

' *Literatuma Ukraina*, 24 September 1987.

Mykola Ryabchuk, 'Sobor u ryshtovannyakh' [The Cathedral in Scaffolding], *Sotsialistychna kultura*, no. 11, 1987. The review also appeared in Russian in *Novyi mix*, no. 11, 1987.

signs that some of the official Ukrainian historians favoured a somewhat less rigid approach to the nation's past. In April 1987, *News from Ukraine* carried a candid interview with Kuras, who for the last few years had been the deputy director of the CPU Central Committee's Institute of Party History. He acknowledged that, in dealing with the period 1917-20, Soviet historiography was 'stereotyped, simplified, [and] incomplete' and that instead of trying to 'present our ideological adversaries in a grotesque and caricatural way', historical works should be 'populated with people with all their merits, controversies and shortcomings'.³² Four months later, the director of the Institute of History, Yurii Kondufor, admitted that 'We know practically nothing or very little about the tragic events in Ukraine in the 1930s, particularly about the famine, and a whole series of other episodes'.³³ And in September, Yurii Shapoval, a senior scholar at the Institute of Party History, admitted that 'the figure of silence' had ruled over Soviet historical research. 'Surely it does no harm', he asked in a newspaper article, 'to raise the question of the famine at the start of the 1930s, of the victims of illegal repression'.³⁴

Defending the bastion of stagnation

Any hopes that Shcherbytsky and his team would start giving way a little on the past as they had done on the language issue were dashed, however, by the speeches which the Ukrainian Party leader delivered during the final weeks of 1987 and the first month of 1988. In essence, though, Shcherbytsky adhered to the cautious line on the Soviet past which Gorbachev set out in his eagerly awaited address on 2 November on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. The Soviet leader hardly went beyond what Khrushchev had acknowledged over two decades before, and broke no new ground with respect to the history of relations between Moscow and the non-Russians.³⁵

In fact there were disturbing signs at this time that the conservatives in the Soviet leadership, headed by Yegor Ligachev, had

³² *News from Ukraine*, no. 17, April 1987.

³³ *Lyudyna i suit*, no. 8, 1987, p. 24.

³⁴ *Pravda Ukrainy*, 20 September 1987.

³⁵ TASS, 2 November 1987.

strengthened their position and forced Gorbachev on to the defensive. News had begun to filter out that at a Central Committee meeting on 21 October the outspoken Moscow Party chief Boris Yeltsin had declared that reform was being blocked by Ligachev and other conservatives and announced his resignation. Yeltsin had also asserted that *perestroika*, as far as the man in street was concerned, seemed to amount only to words, and that a new personality cult was growing up around Gorbachev. Three weeks later, after the rumours about the 'Yeltsin affair' had begun to be confirmed, Gorbachev dismissed the most radical member of his team.³⁶

Against this background of increasing drama and turmoil in Moscow around the struggle for reform, Shcherbytsky continued in his role as a staunch defender of the status quo. The thrust of his speech on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution was that whatever 'shortcomings, difficulties and mistakes' had occurred during the years of Soviet rule they could not be allowed to overshadow the 'convincing successes in all areas of economic and cultural construction'. The people, he declared, would 'obviously have to be helped' to ~~assess~~ the past 'correctly'.³⁷

A few weeks later, on 12 December, Shcherbytsky elaborated. Addressing a plenum of the Kyiv city Party organization, he acknowledged that the 'interest of the public, and in particular of young people, in questions of culture and our history' was growing, 'especially in connection with the introduction of Christianity in Rus'. Betraying a certain amount of unease about the way things were going, he warned patriotically minded individuals, regardless of whether they were members of unofficial associations (here the Ukrainian Culturological Club seems to have been one of the implicit targets) or official structures, not to overstep the mark. The Ukrainian Party leader clarified the CPU's attitude towards the incipient revival in the republic's public and cultural life with the following warning and instructions:

It is . . . necessary to take account of the fact that culturological problems often also become the object of political speculation. And now, when many issues are the subject of sharp discussions, informal associations, including ones with dubious platforms,

⁶ See John Morrison, *Boris Yeltsin: From Bolshevik to Democrat*, London, 1991, pp. 60-73.

³⁷ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 6 November 1987.

often take the initiative themselves. There must not be an unprincipled attitude towards instances when some comrades, including Party members, use *glasnost* and the development of democracy as a pretext for misrepresenting tendentiously and in a sensational manner our difficulties and failures [and] individual historical facts without making any constructive proposals. In ideological questions, a wait and see attitude is impermissible . . . Communists, and primarily leaders, must defend the Party line . . . and resolutely combat any attempts to utilize the processes of *glasnost* and *perestroika* for purposes far removed from the tasks of restructuring.

Three weeks later, in a speech on the seventieth anniversary of the Ukrainian SSR, Shcherbytsky seemed to go out of his way to reassert the Party line on one of the major blank spots in modern Ukrainian history - the great famine of 1932-3. Hailing collectivization as a 'turning point of historical significance', he acknowledged that there had been 'violations' and 'distortions' in the implementation of this policy and said that 'an unanticipated drought caused additional problems'. All of this, he maintained, had 'brought serious food problems' and 'famine in a number of rural areas', not only in Ukraine, but also in Russia and Kazakhstan. Without delving into the specifics of the Ukrainian case, Shcherbytsky denounced the 'political speculation' in the West on 'this difficult time'.

Having indicated that no new approach to the famine or to Ukraine's history generally was to be expected, the Ukrainian Party leader nevertheless conceded that there were periods and events that needed 'further study and elaboration'. He announced that the CPU Central Committee had instructed the Institute of Party History and the Institute of History 'to examine and clarify a series of questions and to submit appropriate proposals'.

For a second time that month, Shcherbytsky also warned that there were those who wanted to 'misuse *glasnost* and democracy' and to 'exploit national feeling'. Without providing any concrete examples, he claimed that they were setting themselves up as the only defenders of 'national dignity' and the 'historical heritage', and posing 'virtually as fighters for restructuring'. Although the Ukrainian leader expressed his confidence that 'our people', as he put

it, 'have a resolute immunity to ideationally alien views', he nevertheless stressed that ideological work needed to be modernized.³⁹

There was little evidence that in Ukraine this was being done, though. By now, the acuteness of the multifarious nationalities question in the Soviet Union was becoming more and more evident. In the Baltic republics, the pressure for greater national rights was growing. Here, representatives of the native elites had begun to raise political and economic issues, such as those of sovereignty and republican economic self-management. During the last six months, there had been protests in Armenia, and even in Belarus and Moldova patriotic forces were emerging which were challenging Russification and foreign domination. Yet, for instance, the best that a Ukrainian 'official historian' and 'specialist' on the nationalities question, Larysa Nahorna, could manage in an article in *Radyanska Ukraina* on 22 January 1988, which was billed as a discussion of some of the 'questions of the theory and practice' of 'national relations in the USSR', was to echo Shcherbytsky by asserting that there were 'extremist elements' which were 'openly seeking to exploit *glasnost*' for 'subversive anti-Soviet actions' in order 'to undermine the friendship of nations'. She maintained that: 'In quite a few republics, including Ukraine, attempts are being made behind the cover of informal associations to exploit the lack of proper political education of young people, and to entangle them in the snares of nationalistic fantasies.' Nahorna also repeated another standard warning that hostile foreign forces were seeking to exacerbate and exploit these difficulties, citing as an example the interest shown in the Stalin famine in Ukraine by 'bourgeois Sovietologists' and the US Congress.

In actual fact, at the beginning of 1988, just as it was preparing to hold the Central Committee plenum devoted to the progress of restructuring in Ukraine, the CPU leadership was indeed being subjected to heavy criticism, not from Washington, but from much closer to home. In a sequence reminiscent of the events surrounding the Berkhin affair, on 2 December 1987 *Literaturnaya gazeta* uncovered another scandal in Ukraine pointing to high-level corruption, this time involving the frame-up of a local official in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Odesa. Early the following month, *Pravda* reported that the CPSU Politburo had criticized the work of

Ibid., 26 December 1987.

the Kyiv city Party Committee and stressed that restructuring had not yet taken hold in the Ukrainian capital.⁴⁰ This was seen as an indirect attack on Shcherbytsky and once again fuelled speculation about his replacement.

What was also significant was that on 8 January, the same day as *Pravda's* swipe against the CPU leadership, Gorbachev held a meeting with representatives of the mass media, cultural unions and ideological institutions at which he seemed to call on supporters of reform not to lose hope but to regroup their forces. Acknowledging that the campaign for restructuring and democratization had come under fire from critics on both the right and the left, he declared that 'to stop now would be disastrous. If we take fright and stop the process we have begun, it would have the most serious consequences, because we simply could not raise our people to such a massive task a second time.' The Soviet leader also indicated that a Party conference scheduled for June 1988, which he had first suggested a year ago as a way of speeding up reform instead of waiting for the next five-yearly Party Congress in 1991, would see a crucial showdown between the forces for change and their conservative opponents. He promised that at the conference, 'questions concerning the democratization of Soviet society will be the main, central problems', adding that they would also include electoral and judicial reform.

As for *glasnost*, Gorbachev stressed that 'If *glasnost*, criticism and democracy are in the interests of socialism and the people, then they have no limits.' Clearly, much depended on how socialism was to be understood, and this in turn was connected with how the Soviet past was viewed. And here too Gorbachev seemed to want to reassure liberal intellectuals that his recent speech on the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution was not a final official version. He told the newspaper editors and cultural figures that the interpretation of the past 'was not something frozen and handed down once and for all time. It will deepen and develop in the course of further research.'⁴¹

At the plenum of the CPU Central Committee, which was held on 22-3 January, Shcherbytsky and the CPU Politburo faced

⁴⁰ *Pmvda*, 8 January 1988.

TASS, 12 January 1988. The TASS report on the meeting was reprinted in Ukrainian in *Literatuma Ukraina* on 14 January, taking up the first three pages.

unprecedented direct and 'incisive', as *Pravda* called it, criticism. Several of the regional Party bosses, as well as the Party chief of the Kyiv city Party organization, Kostyantyn Masyk, complained that the Politburo had not gone far enough in 'renewing its style of work'. The Lviv region Party leader, Pohrebnyak, suggested that the top CPU leadership was too conservative, remote and out of touch with the real state of things. Addressing the Ukrainian Party leader directly, he stressed: 'Effecting the reorientation of the style of work of the Politburo and Secretariat depends to a considerable degree on you, Volodymyr Vasylovych, as first secretary of the Central Committee.' For his part, Masyk, who spoke as if he represented other delegates, declared that 'In our opinion, when it comes to questions of the development of democratic norms in their work, the Politburo and... Comrade Shcherbytsky have something to think about.' Although the latter survived this criticism and once again emerged as Party leader, *Pravda* echoed what Masyk had said, commenting that, 'with regard to developing democratic initiatives', the CPU 'Politburo and the first secretary of the Central Committee' were left with plenty to think about.⁴²

Although under fire, and forced once again to engage in self-criticism, Shcherbytsky nevertheless reiterated his general tough line as regards *glasnost* and democratization. He noted that in some newspaper publications and even sometimes in radio and television programmes, there were instances when certain facts had been 'distorted and slanted', the 'ideological criteria' for assessing them ignored, or 'undisguised disinformation' presented unchallenged. *Glasnost*, he stressed, required 'a Party standpoint from journalists and a responsible attitude towards shaping public opinion'. He singled out for criticism both the CPU's ideological secretary, Yelchenko (whom he accused of not displaying sufficient 'initiative and dynamism'), and the head of the Central Committee's department of agitation and propaganda, Leonid Kravchuk (who, he said, would have to analyse these problems more profoundly and provide editors with better 'assistance'). Shcherbytsky also stressed that it was imperative that Party organizations within the republic's creative unions did not permit the 'the broad rights that have now been given the creative unions' to be used 'for the satisfaction of ambitious pretensions, manifestations of cliquishness, not to mention demag-

¹² *Pravda*, 26 January 1988.

ogy and political indifference'. At the same time, he said, the Party would continue to 'react promptly to the enemy's ideological sabotage, including its attempts to use certain unofficial organizations for its purpose'. He notified the plenum that 'active ideological and organizational pressure' was being applied against such groups 'to neutralize the aspirations of demagogues and extremists'.⁴³

The fact that Pohrebnyak, Masyk and some others criticized Shcherbytsky at the plenum did not mean that they were necessarily more democratically minded themselves. Pohrebnyak, for instance, who was responsible for the region in which Chornovil's circle and the Ukrainian Catholics were so active, also said in his speech that 'the deepening of democratization and *glasnost*' had activated the CPU's 'ideological opponents'. 'Nationalist and religious propaganda' were on the rise, he complained, and 'all sorts of rabble-rousers and slanderers' had appeared. He also hinted that there could be more trouble in store because in 1989 the fiftieth anniversary of the 'reunification' of Western Ukraine with the Ukrainian SSR would be celebrated. Pohrebnyak urged that those responsible for overseeing ideological work should improve their work and ensure better coordination of counter-propaganda. Masyk was even more categorical here, and accused the ideological apparatus and the republic's media of not doing enough to combat 'manifestations of nationalism, religious extremism and fanaticism, [and] the exploitation for anti-social purposes of all sorts of unofficial groups'. He criticized the ideological cadres for not being aggressive enough in 'defending our class and ideological principles' and demanded that the CPU ideological secretary, Yelchenko, adopt a tougher position.

A good example of such a hard-line position was given by the editor of the workers' daily *Robitnycha hazeta* and head of the still highly conservative Union of Journalists of Ukraine, Mykola Shybyk. Despite his profession, he did not call for the broadening of *glasnost* and democratization, but attacked the 'non-literary' activity of Ukrainian writers. He accused them of having become preoccupied with resolutions and open letters and, especially when they discussed the issue of the Ukrainian language, of offending with their 'excessive, angry tone' and 'lack of objectivity'. Shybyk pointed out that

this applied even to such highly respected figures as Honchar, and he proposed that some of the writers be called in for a 'discussion' either by the Central Committee, or at least by Yelchenko.

There were, however, a few speeches at the plenum which reflected the growing frustration and anger in society with the Shcherbytsky regime and the policies it was associated with. The president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Paton, for example, complained that certain republican and central ministries were ignoring the scientific findings and recommendations of the republic's scientists concerning ecological questions, the best use of the republic's water and other natural resources, and the siting and construction in Ukraine of new heavy industrial complexes. The Poltava region Party chief, Morhun, also emphasized the need for greater attention to be paid to ecological problems and urged that the CPU leadership begin repairing part of the colossal damage that had been done to some of Ukraine's most fertile areas through flooding as a result of grandiose but shortsighted irrigation schemes. He also called for radical changes in the policy that had promoted the development of urban centres at the expense of the villages and led to the impoverishment and depopulation of the rural communities. A third speaker, the rector of Kyiv State University, Viktor Skopenko, protested, among other things, about the 'sharp' decline of textbooks and manuals published in Ukrainian, and the failure of the Kyiv city authorities to keep to the approved plans for the expansion of the university. The rector declared that in no other capital of a Union republic did the local authorities display such indifference to the needs of their university as in Kyiv.⁴⁴

The following month brought further disappointment. At a special CPSU Central Committee plenum in Moscow on education on 17-18 February, Gorbachev failed to respond to the calls from the Ukrainians and other non-Russians to bolster the status of their native languages and did not offer anything new in the sphere of nationalities policy. Apart from acknowledging that the national problem was a 'most fundamental and vital issue', the best he could come up with was to admit that the Party leadership should some day hold a special plenum devoted to nationalities policy.⁴⁵ Though the Kremlin leadership seemingly preferred to prevaricate in this

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 January 1988. The speeches were published in a summarized form.

⁴⁵ *Pravda*, 19 February 1988.

crucial area, the eruption of ethnic conflict in the Transcaucasus between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and the growing national assertiveness of the Baltic elites, demonstrated the perils of continuing to delay dealing with the nationalities question.