

5

NATIONAL RENEWAL

Facing up to the enormity of the task

With Shcherbytsky and the CPU leadership clinging to their reactionary positions, the tension in society increased. The forces for change grew stronger and bolder, forcing the defenders of the political status quo even more on the defensive. But the general political situation remained complex because the continuing struggle in Moscow between the conservatives and more liberal elements in the Party periodically seemed to place Gorbachev's new course in jeopardy. Furthermore, despite the flare-up of inter-ethnic strife at the end of February 1988 between Armenians and Azerbaijanis over the disputed territory of Nagorny-Karabakh, the Gorbachev leadership was still not injecting any new thinking into its nationalities policy.

Although there was more and more talk of a new Ukrainian cultural revival, it was also evident that for many of those involved in bringing about a Ukrainian national regeneration the uncertainty about the scope and duration of *glasnost* and democratization reinforced the feeling that this might be the 'last chance' and the attitude of 'now or never'. Another reason for this was that with the advent of a measure of *glasnost*, the full scale of the damage that had been inflicted on Ukrainian culture and the sense of national identity was being exposed. The picture which was emerging was depressing, to say the least.

The material appearing in the more liberal press — especially in the various literary publications — revealed the virtual destruction of the Ukrainian cinema (in the 1920s Oleksandr Dovzhenko had been hailed as one of the world's best film directors and in the 1960s Ukrainian cinema had experienced a revival), the 'denationalization' of Ukrainian theatre, and the Russified and sorry state of Ukrainian television. On top of this, there were complaints in the press about such basic problems as the lack of typewriters with Ukrainian

keyboards, the refusal of post offices in Ukraine to accept telegrams written in Ukrainian, the absence of a single record factory in the republic, the isolation of Ukraine's population from the large Ukrainian diaspora, including from the Ukrainians in the neighbouring 'Socialist' countries of Eastern Europe, and the total lack of any cultural facilities for the millions of Ukrainians living in other parts of the Soviet Union.

The writers themselves had to face up to questions and doubts about the quality and appeal of the Ukrainian literature which they had produced or were producing and the general perspectives for Ukrainian literature, especially in light of the challenge from Russian letters. Korotych, enjoying immense success in Moscow as the liberal editor of the revamped *Ogonek*, triggered off a heated debate on these issues by giving an outspoken interview in January 1988 to a Ukrainian newspaper in which he described contemporary Ukrainian writing as unexciting and unable to match the level being set by, say, leading Belarusian authors. He claimed that after years of complaining about censorship and bans, now that *glasnost* had been ushered in, Ukrainian writers were not coming forward with material they had written 'for the drawer'.¹ Korotych's provocative comments drew an angry response from other Ukrainian writers, who reminded him not only of the trials which Ukrainian literary and cultural life had had to endure, but also of how he had made a career for himself and won numerous awards during 'the years of stagnation'. What moral right, they asked, had he to judge his colleagues."

Considerable attention was focused on the damage done to Ukrainian historical studies and national memory. The numerous blank pages were not restricted to the more recent periods. As the young Kharkiv-based scholar Yuriï Isichenko now emphasized in print, 'the first eight centuries' of Ukraine's 'thousand-year-old literature' had been 'crossed out'.³ Describing what had gone on after Shcherbytsky had replaced Shelest, the historical novelist

¹ *Molod Ukrainy*, 7 January 1988.

" See, for instance, the letter by four Ukrainian writers in *Literaturna Ukraina* of 21 January 1988. Just before he had left for Moscow, Korotych had been criticized by Drach at the Ninth Congress of the W U U for his 'demagogic divertissements' in connection with the Chernobyl disaster.

³ *Prapor* (Kharkiv), no. 2, 1988, p. 169.

Roman Ivanychuk asserted that in 1973 a 'taboo was placed on all Ukrainian historiography and historical novels'.⁴ How could one begin talking about national self-respect, the young philosopher and poet Oksana Zabuzhko asked, when there were no courses in 'Ukrainian history' in the schools.⁵ In addition to this, the emphasis being placed by the Moscow Patriarchate on the 'Russian' dimension of the millennium of the Christianization of Kyivan Rus, and the enduring ban on the two Ukrainian 'national' churches — Autocephalous Orthodox and Catholic — did not help matters.

Not surprisingly, this impoverishment and provincialization of Ukrainian culture through the erasure of national memory, Russification, isolation from the outside world and the stigma of 'Ukrainian nationalism' had perpetuated 'Little Russianness' and what Dzyuba described as a 'complex of national inferiority' among millions of Ukrainians.⁶ Ryabchuk provided a graphic example of this problem. Citing data from a survey recently carried out in the Kirovohrad region in central Ukraine by the republican Institute of Linguistics, he revealed that 68% of the region's urban population spoke Ukrainian at home, 24% spoke it outside the home with friends and colleagues, and only 12% used it for conducting official business. Decades of relentless assimilatory pressure, Ryabchuk pointed out, had subjected not only the Ukrainian language to 'severe erosion', but also national consciousness as such. 'A disdainful nihilistic attitude towards the Ukrainian language, culture, and history', he concluded, had 'become almost the norm for many of our denationalized fellow citizens'.⁷

What all this suggested was that nationally conscious Ukrainians had become a minority among their own people. Not only did many Ukrainians in the Russified southern and eastern regions of Ukraine no longer see any point in seeking a Ukrainian-language education for their children, but also a considerable number of them were even hostile to most things Ukrainian. 'Ukrainophobia among Ukrainians' was how the writer Volodymyr Bazilevsky was to describe the problem.⁸ Another writer, Shcherbak, ventured in *Literaturnaya*

⁴ *Kyiv*, no. 4, 1988, p. 119.

⁵ *Prapor*, no. 3, 1988, p. 163.

Literaturna Ukraina, 30 June 1988.

⁷ *Sotsialistychna kultura*, no. 11, 1988, pp. 30-1.

⁸ *Dnipro*, no. 2, 1989, p. 9.

gazeta that the main conflict in Ukraine was not between Ukrainians and 'outsiders', but between Ukrainians and 'Little Russians'."

Assessing the state in which the Ukrainian nation found itself in the late 1980s, Drach concluded that after all the 'bone-breaking blows' that had been inflicted over the decades on its literature, culture and very soul, it was remarkable that it had survived at all.¹⁰ But perhaps the most sober appraisal of the situation was offered by the literary critic Valerii Dyachenko. Unless, on the one hand, broad sectors of Ukrainian society recognized the seriousness of the Ukrainian nation's predicament and the need to withstand denationalization, and on the other, the Ukrainian authorities altered their negative attitude, the efforts of the nationally conscious cultural intelligentsia would resemble the 'work of Sisyphus'. What were needed, he stressed, were 'Heracleian feats' undertaken by a united people.¹¹

Dzyuba was more concrete in pointing the way. Returning to some of the issues he had raised over twenty years earlier in *Internationalism or Russification*, he published a seminal article on 24 January 1988 in *Kultura i zhyttya* calling on his compatriots to think harder and more critically in philosophical and sociological terms about what constituted Ukrainian culture and how its structures were interrelated, and to begin conceptualizing it as a complete system. Otherwise, he argued, because of 'missing pieces' or 'links', caused through such factors as a distorted historical perspective and 'blank pages', the lack of contacts with the Ukrainian Western and Eastern diaspora, compartmentalization in the approach of the Cultural Unions, and 'purism assiduously limiting the sphere of Ukrainian cultural phenomena only to that which appears in the Ukrainian language', the notion of Ukrainian national culture would continue to be marred by 'incompleteness', resulting in a perpetuation of a faulty sense of its strengths and weaknesses.

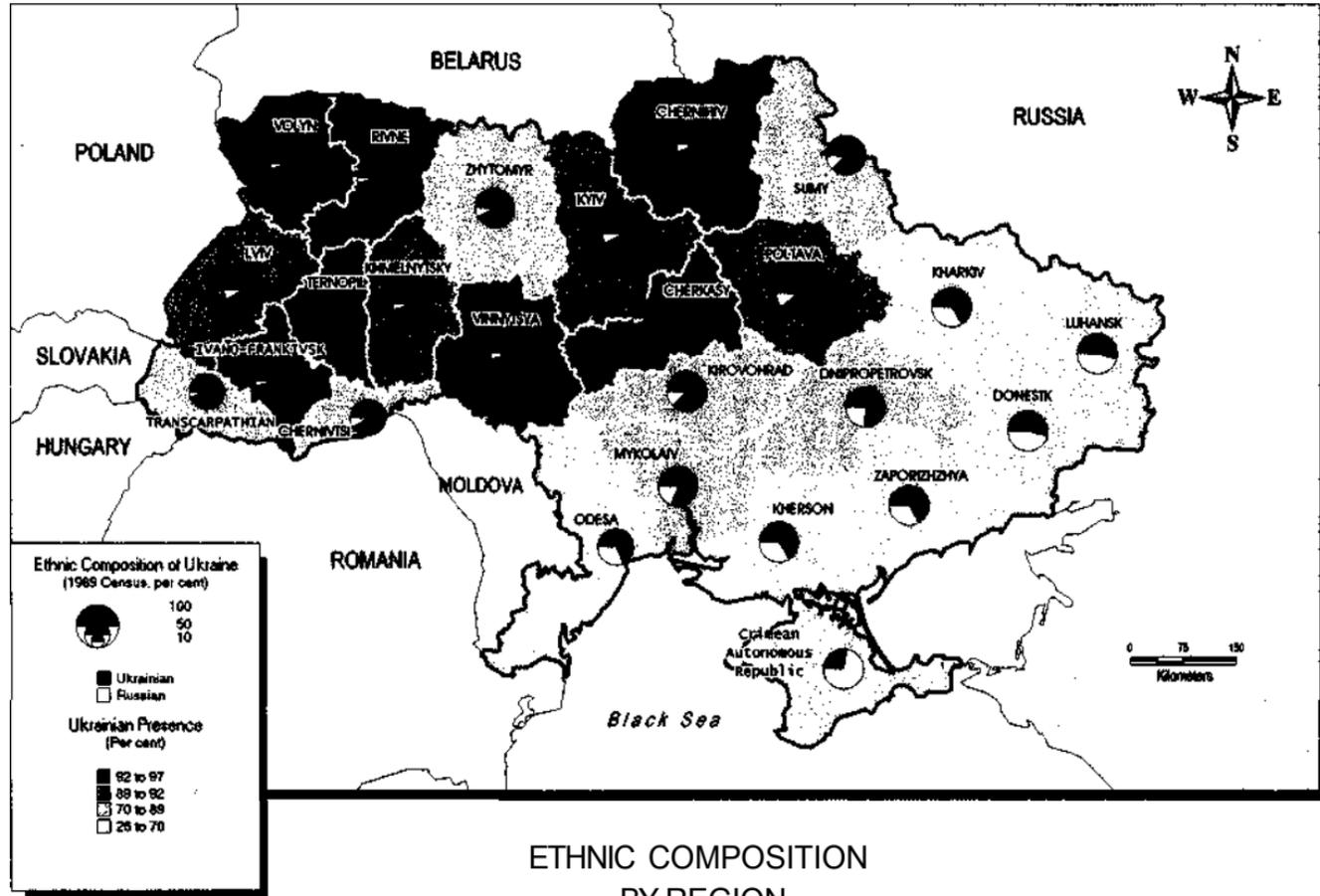
The affirmation of national identity

However difficult, the process of national recovery had nevertheless now begun. Indeed, at the end of 1987 and during the first part

Uteratymaya gazeta, 18 January 1989.

¹⁰ *Uferama.no.* 13, 1988, p. 9.

¹¹ *Prapor*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 151-70.



ETHNIC COMPOSITION
BY REGION

of 1988 a new vitality became apparent in Ukrainian cultural and public life. This was also the period when *glasnost*, albeit still far from complete, really began to take hold in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Cultural Fund had by now established a republican network and with a full-time staff of fifty-nine was seeking to mobilize public support for the preservation of historical and cultural monuments, museums, the preparation of historical and cultural reference books, and efforts generally to revive historical memory and to encourage interest in local history, customs and folklore. Among the tasks which the organization set itself was to seek the return of all items of cultural and historical value which 'for one reason or another' had been removed from Ukraine.¹²

In December and January, the writers held important meetings at which their assessment of Ukraine's experience during seven decades of Soviet rule contrasted sharply with the picture that Shcherbytsky presented. The first, held in the middle of December in Kharkiv, the city which had been the capital of Soviet Ukraine during the dynamic 1920s, was a conference devoted to the theme 'Great October, Restructuring, Literature'. Radio Kyiv's reporter commented that he had never heard such 'forthright, sharp, and constructive' discussions among the literati and that they had focused their attention 'on the most important things'—'historical truth', the 'revival of national traditions', 'civic consciousness' and the role of the writers in the restructuring process.¹³ A few days later, at a joint meeting of the Board of the W U U and the Learned Council of the Institute of Literature to discuss Soviet Ukrainian literature of the 1920s and 1930s, the writers raised to a new level their campaign for the rehabilitation of the architects of the Ukrainian national renaissance of the 1920s. Emphasizing that far from flourishing, as the official line stated, during most of the Soviet period Ukrainian literature and culture had in fact been trammelled, the writers called for a new truthful history of Ukrainian literature and decided to push ahead with the publication of the works of the major literary figures of the 1920s.¹⁴

" Oliinyk, 'Cultural Fund'. For a more detailed description of the work of the Ukrainian Cultural Fund, see the article by B. Bilyashivsky in *Sotsialistychna kultura*, no. 2, 1988, pp. 26-8.

¹³ Stanislav Soldatenko, Radio Kyiv, 18 December 1987. For details of the speeches, see *Literaturna Ukraina*, 31 December 1987.

¹⁴ *Literaturna Ukraina*, 21 January 1988.

By focusing on the 1920s the writers not only drew attention to a suppressed heritage but also reopened the main issues of the great political and cultural debate of 1925-8: relations with Russia and Europe, Ukrainization and its tempo and goals, freedom of speech and the principle of free competition between literary groups.¹⁵ All of these questions which had preoccupied the Ukrainian intelligentsia during the 1920s were still very relevant. During February and early March, *Literaturna Ukraina* ran a four-part series by Nataliya Kuzyakina which provided much interesting information about the context in which the literary discussion of the 1920s took place. On 24 May, the Creative Association of Critics of the Kyiv section of the W U U devoted a meeting to this subject which was also given prominent coverage by *Literaturna Ukraina*”

For the writers, however, the 1920s were only the thin end of the wedge in their assault on the CPU's interpretation of Ukrainian history. On 28 January 1988, that is, less than a week after Shcherbytsky had enjoined the Party organizations within the republic's Creative Unions to exercise more control, the deputy secretary of the Party organization of the Kyiv branch of the W U U who, moreover, was responsible for ideological questions, delivered a bombshell. Addressing a meeting of his branch's Party organization on the theme 'The Writer and Restructuring', Oleksa Musiyenko presented a totally different account of the Soviet period from what Shcherbytsky, or for that matter, even Gorbachev, had recently put forward. In fact, what he had to say amounted to the most outspoken and critical speech in living memory from a Ukrainian Communist official. Moreover, in another dramatic sign of the times, the speech did not have to be disseminated in *samvydav* but was reproduced in *Literaturna Ukraina* on 18 February, filling almost two full pages.

Although Musiyenko, a fifty-three-year-old writer from Poltava, did not challenge the Leninist foundations of the Soviet system, his depiction of Stalin and his heirs and the consequences of their policies for Ukraine was boldly unorthodox. Portraying Stalin as a ruthless dictator and 'monster' who began his autocratic ways almost immediately after Lenin's death in 1924, Musiyenko described in

¹⁵ On this, see Myroslav Shkandrij, 'The Twenties Revisited', *Soviet Ukrainian Affairs*, no. 4 (1987), pp. 5-7 and 'New Line on Soviet Ukrainian Literature?', *Soviet Ukrainian Affairs*, no. 1 (1988), pp. 2-3.

¹⁶ *Literaturna Ukraina*, 30 June 1988.

graphic detail how he had destroyed the political and cultural elite of the Ukrainian nation and precipitated the 'mass famine' of 1933. The writer also emphasized that Skrypnyk had been one of the first to 'protest openly against the deformation of socialism and the establishment of an autocratic regime', and argued that Stalin had never forgiven the Ukrainian Communist leader for challenging him on the nationalities policy and standing up to him in the name of Leninist principles. Skrypnyk's suicide had been a 'demonstrative protest' and warning against Stalinism. Yet, for some reason, Musiyenko pointed out, Skrypnyk — 'one of Ukraine's foremost sons — and 'a whole legion' of Ukrainian political and culture figures who became victims of the Stalin terror continued to remain discredited nonpersons long after Stalin's death. 'For whom was the silencing, distortion, and even falsification of many pages of our fatherland's history convenient?' the writer asked.

Musiyenko did not limit himself to the Stalin era. He criticized Khrushchev for the inconsistencies and half-measures inherent in the de-Stalinization that he had launched and described him as a crude 'green-eyed product of his times' who attempted to 'ride two horses simultaneously that were pulling in different directions'. As for the Brezhnev years, the writer said that during this period the 'administrative-command structures' that had formed during the Stalin era had been 'renewed, together with the administrative-command style of leadership, [and] the *diktat* of the bureaucratic functionary apparatus'. It became the heyday for all manner of 'lackeys' and 'careerists' as a new 'cult of personality' arose and was emulated by officials at the regional and district levels. Democracy and respect for the law were supplanted by lawlessness, corruption, nepotism, exploitation, a disregard for ecological factors and embezzlement and theft on a grand scale. In such conditions, Musiyenko reminded his colleagues, even such a well-known and respected writer as Honchar was given short shrift for exercising his civic duty as a writer and speaking out. Alluding to the dissidents and political prisoners, Musiyenko also stressed that the stigma of 'bourgeois nationalism' was used as a weapon against those 'who had the natural gift of critical thinking and who were sincerely concerned about the fate of their land and their people'.

Musiyenko concluded his remarkable speech with a series of recommendations to his fellow writers. At this crucial time, he declared, Ukraine's writers were called upon to fulfil their traditional

role of serving their nation by becoming 'the mouthpiece of *glasnost*' and implacable opponents of all vestiges of Stalinism. But in order to do this, he stressed, 'we should first cleanse ourselves of the nucleons of slavery that have eaten their way even into the cellular tissue of our bones, of the slime of conscious deception, of fear, servility and a lack of self-esteem'. Musiyenko called on the writers to concentrate on campaigning for the full rehabilitation of all the Ukrainian writers who had become victims of political repression and who had not yet been rehabilitated, and on the removal of all the blank pages in their nation's history. He ended by pointing out that at this time, when all sorts of new unofficial groups were appearing and new creative associations were being formed within the Cultural Unions, there was a danger of the fragmentation of the forces supporting restructuring and democratization: unity and the consolidation of these forces, Musiyenko stressed, was therefore essential.

Musiyenko's speech, with its emphasis on Skrypnyk and his legacy, indicated that despite the political and cultural purges which had been carried out in Ukraine under Shcherbytsky, the tradition of Ukrainian 'national Communism', at least among some of the writers, had lived on. Further evidence of the resilience of this tradition was provided by the publication in January and February of hitherto suppressed autobiographical writings by Volodymyr Sosyura, one of the century's outstanding Ukrainian poets, who had been in Petlyura's army, as a Communist taken part in the literary renaissance of the 1920s, survived severe criticism in the Stalin era and died in official favour in 1965. The newly published poems and autobiographical novel¹⁷ revealed Sosyura's enduring Ukrainian patriotism and his candid views on some of the blank spots in modern Ukrainian history. For instance, Sosyura's autobiographical novel *Tretya rota* (The Third Company) included the following lines which had a special significance in 1988, the year in which the Russian Orthodox Church was laying claim to the entire thousand-year-old heritage dating from the Christianization of Kyivan Rus:

Russian autocracy, having taken as a helper a terrible ally-
Orthodoxy—reduced our people (over almost three hundred
years) to such a state that it forgot its name (we were forbidden

¹⁷ See *Ukraina*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 7-9, and *Kyiv*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 63-122, and no. 2, 1988, pp. 69-122.

to pray in churches in our own language, not to mention [the ban on Ukrainian in] schools), and when Ukrainians were asked who they were, there was only one terrible response — Orthodox.^{1**}

The writers' campaign to recover Ukrainian history began to bear fruit in quite a few areas. In the first weeks of 1988, a series of articles appeared about the leading historian of the Ukrainian Cossacks, Yavornytsky, which were soon followed by the serialization in the Lviv literary monthly *Zhovten* of his classic history of the Zaporozhyan Cossacks.¹⁹ Even more encouraging was the first indication that the official attitude towards Hrushevsky was softening, at least in some quarters. On 12 February *Izvestiya* published an article by its Kyiv correspondent announcing that after 'half a century' Hrushevsky's works had become accessible again to scholars in the Ukrainian capital. The article provided a biographical sketch of the historian and a glowing appraisal of his achievements by the director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Ukrainian Academy of Science, Petro Tolochko.²⁰

That some month *Literaturnaya gazeta's* Kyiv correspondent reported that the process of removing the blank pages in modern Ukrainian history had finally got underway.²¹ Indeed, during the next few months, *Literatuma Ukraina* alone was to publish articles on Drahomanov and the national Communists Khvylovy, Shumsky and Yurii Kotsyubynsky.

The growing national assertiveness of the Ukrainian writers, as indeed of the non-Russian literati generally, was demonstrated at the beginning of March at a plenum of the Soviet Writers' Union in Moscow. This time Oliinyk reminded the delegates that 'from the time that the Zaporozhyan Sich was abolished and destroyed by Catherine II until October 1917, Ukrainians, not just on one occasion, have been deprived of the right to be themselves' and were only 'permitted to pass themselves off as Little Russians'. Even now, he pointed out, they were still being subjected to Russification

¹⁸ *Kyiv*, no. 2, 1988, p. 107.

¹⁹ See *Ukraina*, nos 1, 2, 4, and 5, 1988, and *Zhovten*, no. 4, 1988.

S. Sikora, 'K chitatelyu cherez polveka' [To the Reader after Half a Century], *Izvestiya*, 12 February 1988.

K. Grigorev, 'Rukopisi ne goryat' [Manuscripts do not Burn], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 10 February 1988.

under the guise of internationalism. His colleague Lubkivsky also spoke out strongly in defence of the non-Russian languages and condemned the falsification of the histories of the non-Russians and the 'excessive centralization of culture, sciences, education [and] publishing', as well as Moscow's 'unfamiliarity' with the 'values' of the diverse peoples of the USSR.

A new note was also creeping in — open criticism of Russian tutelage and imperial attitudes. In his speech at the plenum, for example, Lubkivsky took the Russian television moderator Genrikh Borovikh to task for being 'tactless' and 'patronizing' in his treatment of problems connected with national relations. He also rebuked an unnamed 'well-known Russian writer and editor of an all-Union journal' for making the 'strange and absurd claim' at the plenum that anti-Russian attitudes were being whipped up in Ukraine. Lubkivsky pointed out that Ukraine had 'from time immemorial' been a 'mother, and not a stepmother' for various ethnic groups and went on to suggest that whereas the rights of the Russians were well catered for, more should be done — as had been the case during the period of Ukrainization — to provide better cultural facilities for some of the other groups, such as Jews, Bulgarians and Czechs. At the same time, however, he emphasized that Ukrainians themselves were forced to campaign in their own homeland to safeguard their own cultural rights and language and to be allowed to establish contacts with the Ukrainian minorities in Eastern Europe.²²

Ryabchuk, too, came out with another provocative article which appeared in May in *Druzhba narodov*. In it he dealt with the perpetuation of the 'Little Russian image' of Ukrainians in Russian society. He claimed that even well educated Russians 'know practically nothing about Ukraine' and its history and culture. Consequently, as a result of this ignorance and what he called 'the poison' from Russian imperialistic 'propaganda and historiography', on the one hand a stereotype of the Ukrainians as 'Litde Russians' persisted, while on the other Ukrainian culture was 'being robbed of such names as [the composers] Vedel, Bortnyansky and Berezovsky, [the painters] Levytsky and Borovykovsky, [the philologist] Potebnya

~ See *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 9 March 1988. The full text of Lubkivsky's speech was published in *Zhovten*, no. 7, 1988, pp. 106-8. On 5 March 1988 *Izvestiya* had also reported that a well-known Russian writer had expressed concern at the plenum that anti-Russian feeling in Ukraine was on the rise.

and [the Orientalist] Krymsky, [the geochemist and mineralogist] Vernadsky and [the aeronautical engineer] Korolev'.

Ryabchuk went on to accuse the Russian intelligentsia of generally being insensitive to, and even disinterested in, the problems and demands of the non-Russians. Citing as an example how the Soviet media had treated the Kazakh protests in Alma-Ata, he emphasized that:

Scarcely a single Russian took the blame for what happened. And yet the blame was, and is there. It is there because hundreds of thousands of Russians don't know—and don't consider it important to know—the languages of the peoples among whom they live.

It was essential, he argued to change the approach to national relations and base it on 'a cultured appreciation of national sensibilities' and 'respect for everyone'.

During the spring, the 125th anniversary of the birth of the distinguished scientist Volodymyr Vernadsky, whom the world knew primarily as the 'Russian' Vladimir Vernadsky, was celebrated, and provided another occasion for Ukrainians to reclaim more of their suppressed heritage. Ukrainian publications carried hitherto unpublished material revealing Vernadsky (who in fact had been the first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences) to have been a Ukrainian patriot." In particular, the appearance of Vernadsky's essay entitled 'The Ukrainian Question and Russian Public Opinion',²⁴ which he apparently wrote in 1915, caused quite a stir. In it, Vernadsky had expressed his disappointment with the Russian democratic intelligentsia for its lack of understanding and sympathy for the Ukrainian national movement, or indifference to Ukrainian national grievances and aspirations. The scientist had emphasized that Ukrainians viewed restrictions on their educational and cultural life as 'a crime against universal human rights' and that they were

See Olena Apanovych, 'I lyubov do Ukrainy yednala nas' [And Love for Ukraine United Us], *Literatuma Ukraina*, 10 March 1988, and 'Chytach-Akademik Vernadskyi' [The Reader—Academician Vernadsky], *Vitchyzna*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 194-201. In the latter article, Apanovych emphasized that much of Vernadsky's unpublished writings, such as the diaries which he kept on and off for almost seventy years, had not been accessible to researchers in the archives of the USSR Academy of Sciences where they were kept.

²⁴ The essay was first published in the Kyiv Komsomol daily, *Moloda hvardiya*, on 12 March 1988; it subsequently also appeared in *Vitchyzna*, no. 6, 1988.

seeking to exercise their 'right to national and cultural self-determination', that is, to 'unhindered activity in the spheres of education, science, literature and public life', the 'Ukrainization of local community and religious life', and 'self-government'.

For readers in 1988, Vernadsky's essay brought home the extent to which after seven decades of Soviet rule, and despite 'Soviet Ukraine's' trappings of sovereign statehood, the Ukrainians were forced to return to essentially the same basic issues as before the collapse of the Russian Empire. This parallel was also apparent from some of the new societies which began to appear in the first half of 1988. Just as in the liberal interlude after 1905 *Prosvita* (Enlightenment) societies had sprung up in Russian-ruled Ukraine to promote Ukrainian cultural self-awareness, so now, ironically, Ukrainian language societies began to be formed to improve the status of the Ukrainian language.

Searching for ways to break the impasse with the authorities on the language issue, in February 1988 the writers supported a proposal by the director of the Institute of Linguistics of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Academician Vitalii Rusanivsky, to establish a 'Ukrainian Language Society'.²⁵ Behind the scenes, though, the authorities pressured the writers to call it a 'Native Language' rather than 'Ukrainian Language' Society. Nevertheless, that same month, one of the first Ukrainian language societies to be organized was set up in Donetsk.²⁶ The creation of such societies allowed the writers and other patriotic activists to begin harnessing popular support for the campaign in defence of Ukrainian cultural rights; gradually, it also helped to provide a broader infrastructure for this movement.

With the aim of raising the prestige of the Ukrainian language, the writers also began organizing 'Ukrainian language festivals', the first republican one being held in May in Poltava. These efforts to improve the standing of the Ukrainian language readily found a resonance in Western Ukraine, where the problem was not so serious as elsewhere; therefore, the writers' leaders seem to have consciously focused their attention on central and Eastern Ukraine. In mid-May, the main annual celebrations of the birth of the

²⁵ *Literaturna Ukraina*, 2 February 1988. There was an enthusiastic response to this proposal. See the survey of letters supporting it in *Literaturna Ukraina* of 21 July 1988.

²⁶ *Silskivisti*, 18 February 1988.

Ukrainian national bard Taras Shevchenko were held in Kharkiv; Kirovohrad was chosen to host the second republican Ukrainian language festival in September.

All this, of course, did not pass unnoticed in Moscow, which by now had to contend with similar campaigns by the literary elites in other republics, including Belarus and Moldova, in defence of the native language. Oliinyk was later to reveal, for example, that Honchar's letter to Gorbachev was not ignored and was instrumental in getting the Kremlin to send its representatives to investigate the situation in the republic. He mentions several commissions of the Central Committee of the CPSU which were dispatched to Ukraine, apparently during 1988, and which took a particular interest in the language issue and ecological problems.²⁷

Confronted, on the one hand, with the growing strength of the Ukrainian national revival and, on the other, with the Kremlin's acknowledgement that more attention had to be paid to the national question, the Kyiv authorities sought to appear more responsive. In April, the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet established a Commission for Patriotic and Internationalist Education and for Inter-Ethnic Relations.²⁸ This was hardly a bold move though, for similar commissions had first been set up in Kazakhstan and Latvia a full year earlier. Kravchuk, the ideological official, who was also a deputy in the Supreme Soviet, was made chairman of the commission.

Independent public and religious activity

Meanwhile, independent public and religious life also continued to develop. Undaunted by the old-style attacks on them in the press, Chornovil and Horyn sought to create a new organization which would campaign for human and national rights in the open and base its activity on international human rights norms. At the end of December 1987, they and other members of the editorial board of *The Ukrainian Herald* issued appeals addressed to Western governments and human rights organizations in which they described the harassment to which they were being subjected and

See Oliinyk's speech on 1 November 1988 at a meeting of the Communist members of the Kyiv section of the WUU in *Litiratura Ukraina*, 10 November 1988.

²⁸ *Pravda Ukrainy*, 19 April 1988.

explained that through their journal and other activity they were seeking to revive the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group.²⁹

The following month, two Ukrainian representatives travelled to Yerevan to take part with Armenian and Georgian representatives in a meeting of a newly formed Inter-National Committee in Defence of Political Prisoners. The participants issued statements calling on representatives of other nationalities to join forces with them and proposing a series of 'minimal' reforms designed to foster the overhaul of the official nationalities policy. This meeting and the documents which it produced represented the first attempt outside the camps and prisons by former non-Russian political prisoners to form a common front against Moscow's imperial rule.³⁰

A few weeks later, the visit to Kyiv of the British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe provided Ukrainian activists with an important opportunity to expose the limitations of democratization and *glasnost* in Ukraine and to publicize their demands. On 17 February they succeeded in handing an open letter addressed to the British foreign minister to a British journalist who was accompanying him. The document, signed by ten 'representatives of the independent Ukrainian community', including members of the Ukrainian Culturological Club and the editorial board of *The Ukrainian Herald*, invoked the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and asked for support on such issues as: securing the release of members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group, who were still serving sentences, as well as other Ukrainian prisoners of conscience; removing the ban on the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Churches; guaranteeing genuine freedom of expression in Ukraine and ending the official harassment of unofficial groups and publications; and ensuring conditions for the free development of Ukrainian culture and functioning of the Ukrainian language. Significantly, the signatories also demonstrated that, like the founders of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group, they were also anxious to reduce Ukraine's international isolation: they urged the British authorities to consider opening a consulate in Kyiv and inaugurating broadcasts in Ukrainian by the BBC World Service.³¹

" Ukrainian Press Agency (UPA) Press Releases, no. 6, 22 January 1988, and no. 15, 4 February 1988.

" See Bohdan Nahaylo, 'Representatives of Non-Russian National Movements Establish Coordinating Committee', RL 283/88, 22 June 1988.

On the same day Hel brought a new petition to Moscow calling for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church; it was signed by 5,450 people. Although the Soviet authorities refused to accept it, Hel told the Moscow correspondent of *Il Messagero* that the Ukrainian Catholics would continue gathering signatures and would pass on their demands 'to the Pope through diplomatic channels'. Describing the rapid growth of Ukrainian Catholic activity which was taking place despite harassment by the police, Hel informed the Italian newspaper that in the Lviv region alone there were some 300 Ukrainian Catholic priests and a secret seminary. Three bishops, including the first hierarch of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ukraine, Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk, had now emerged from the underground while another five were still awaiting more certain times. He also announced that in January the Ukrainian Catholics had begun publishing a new journal — *Khrystiyanskyi holos* (Christian Voice) and that they were preparing for a large-scale celebration in the open in the summer of the millennium of 'Christianity in Ukraine'.³²

The campaign of the Ukrainian Catholics for the legalization of their church was also beginning to find sympathy and support in the West. On 14 February, Ukrainian Catholics were heartened when, in connection with the millennium of the Christianization of Kyivan Rus, Pope John Paul II addressed a special letter to the Ukrainian Catholic Church praising the courage it had shown in remaining loyal to its faith.³³ What was even more encouraging, though, for Ukrainian Christians generally was that during his visit to Kyiv Sir Geoffrey Howe declared that he looked forward to the day when 'Ukrainian Christians' would be 'enabled to practice their religion with freedom and with pride'.³⁴

New unofficial groups and publications, some of which clearly followed the example of the Ukrainian Culturological Club and *The Ukrainian Herald*, continued to appear throughout the republic. In

³¹ UPA Press Release, no. 36, 28 February 1988.

³² *Il Messagero*, 18 February 1988; and UPA Press Release, no. 37, 28 February 1988.

Message *Magnum Baptismi Donum* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to Ukrainian Catholics on the Occasion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kyivan Rus, Rome, 14 February 1988.

Rupert Cornwell, 'Sir Geoffrey Pleads for Ukrainian Christians', *Independent*, 18 February 1988.

mid-February, *Radyanska Ukraina* commented that 'the politicization of clubs and associations attested to the growth of social activity among the youth.' It also mentioned, among others, a new society in Kyiv devoted to the protection of the capital's historic and architectural monuments called Spadshchyna (Heritage), which it said had over forty members, and a discussion group at Kyiv University called Danko.³⁵ Soon afterwards, university students in Kyiv formed a society called Hromada (Community), which concerned itself with the defence of Ukrainian historical monuments and the environment. One of its first actions was to organize a meeting demanding that the buildings of the celebrated Kyivan Mohyla Academy be restored and protected, and that a naval political school be removed from its premises.³⁶ This issue had been raised a few months earlier by members of the Ukrainian Cultural Club.

Discussion and debating groups were also springing up in Ukraine's cities. By the spring of 1988, meetings in Lviv to discuss political topics were drawing hundreds. At two such gatherings in March, Mykhailo Horyn argued that 'real democracy is only possible under a multi-party system' and that 'without economic freedom there cannot be civil and political freedom'.³⁷ That same month, Chornovil and Horyn announced the formation of a human rights organization, which they called the Ukrainian Helsinki Union (UHU). In order to emphasize that it was a continuation in a new form of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group, one of the latter's founding members, Levko Lukyanenko (who was still in internal exile in the Tomsk region) was named as its head.³⁸ The original leader, Rudenko, had left for the West after being freed at the end of 1987.³⁹

³⁵ L. Ostrolutska and M. Doroshenko, 'Formulyary . . . 'heformalam'' [Formulas for "informals"], *Radyanska Ukraina*, 1 February 1988. In fact, 'Danko' was founded a lot earlier, and its activities had been discussed by S. Pravdenko in *Radyanska Ukraina* on 5 June 1987.

³⁶ For details about this society, see Taras Kuzio, 'Unofficial and Semi-Official Groups and Samizdat Publications in Ukraine' in Romana M. Bahry (ed.), *Echoes of Glasnost in Soviet Ukraine*, Toronto, 1989, pp. 75-7; and Olena Yashchenko, 'Demokratiya "zadnim chyslom"' [Backdated Democracy], *Molod Ukrainy*, 8 December 1988.

³⁷ UPA Press Release, no. 71, 21 April 1988.

³⁸ See Kuzio, 'Unofficial and Semi-Official Groups', p. 68.

The revival of Ukrainian national self-confidence and assertiveness was also becoming detectable among Ukrainians living beyond the borders of Ukraine in other parts of the Soviet Union. On 3 March 1988, *Literaturna Ukraina* published 'An Appeal to the Citizenry of Ukraine' from fifty-five residents of Leningrad, including prominent Russians, who announced that they wanted to re-establish the Taras Shevchenko Society (which was first founded in the city in 1898) and to press for the erection of a Shevchenko monument there (such a project had been approved in 1918 but never realized). The following month, Ukrainians in Moscow organized the 'Slavutych' Ukrainian Cultural Society to serve as a focal point for the many Ukrainians residing in the Soviet capital.⁴⁰

While this process of national renewal was getting under way in Ukraine, the general political climate in the Soviet Union remained unsettled. The bloodshed in the Transcaucasus and the ensuing mass protests in Armenia, to which Moscow responded by sending troops into Yerevan on 24 March, was bad enough. But in the middle of it all, on 13 March, while Gorbachev was about to begin a visit to Yugoslavia, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* published the notorious 'open letter' written ostensibly by a certain Nina Andreeva attacking 'left-wing liberal intellectual socialism' and defending Stalin, 'Great Russian national pride', and traditional Soviet values. The Leningrad schoolteacher's letter, which evidently had Ligachev's blessing, was widely interpreted as a rallying call by the conservatives. For almost three weeks it went unchallenged until on 5 April *Pravda* finally denounced it as a 'manifesto of the *znti-perestroika* forces'.

The victory in this particular battle by the reformist forces in Moscow brought little change to Ukraine. If anything, news of the dismissal of Tanyuk from his position at the Kyiv Youth Theatre at the beginning of April suggested that here the clock was being turned back, not forward. On 26 April—the month in which the Ukrainian literary monthly *Vsesvit* became the first publication in the Soviet Union to publish extracts from George Orwell's classic anti-totalitarian novel *1984*—the authorities in Kyiv once again demonstrated their determination not to allow *glasnost* and the

See the author's interview with Rudenko taken shortly after his arrival in the West in *Index on Censorship*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 11-13.

See Roman Solchanyk, 'Ukrainians in Moscow and Leningrad Organize', RL 396/88, 5 September 1988.

revival of independent public activity to get out of control. When, on the second anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the Ukrainian Culturological Club attempted to hold a peaceful anti-nuclear demonstration in the centre of the Ukrainian capital, the gathering was roughly dispersed by plainclothes and uniformed police. Seventeen of the approximately fifty participants were detained, and one of them, Oles Shevchenko, was sentenced to fifteen days of so-called administrative arrest. Although the protest was quickly broken up and placards that read 'Nuclear Power Plants Out of Ukraine' and 'Openness and Democracy to the End' ripped from the demonstrators by the police, it marked the first unsanctioned political demonstration in Kyiv since the mid 1960s.⁴¹

The protest was also an indication of something else. While the demonstration had been going on, the Writers' Union had hosted a public meeting of their own to mark the Chernobyl anniversary. But, as a British professor who was present at it observed, there appeared to be 'some disappointment that the meeting had not been more outspoken', especially as the participants were informed that the police had broken up the protest in the city centre and detained the demonstrators.⁴² Clearly, the new independent forces which had appeared in Ukraine during the last months were more radical and militant than the writers, and this only reflected the general tendency towards politicization among the Soviet Union's numerous and multifarious unofficial groups. Now, all of a sudden, it seemed that those who had led the campaign to raise national and social consciousness and defend Ukraine's cultural rights were going to be faced with the choice of either moving with the times or being left behind.

⁴¹ AP, 27 April 1988. Although the protesters were branded 'extremists' in the local press, interestingly, the English-language weekly produced by Kyiv for Ukrainians living in the West, *News from Ukraine*, carried an unusually objective account of the demonstration (no. 21, 1988). On this, and the other accounts of the protest, see Roman Solchanyk, 'Soviet Press Reports on Antinuclear Demonstration in Kyiv', RL 249/88, 8 June 1988.

⁴² Geoffrey A. Hosking, 'A Public Meeting About Chernobyl; or *Glasnostin* Kyiv', *Index on Censorship*, no. 6, 1988.