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UKRAINE IN THE POST-STALIN PERIOD

At the time of Stalin's death in March 1953, only the last flickers of armed resistance in Western Ukraine and the defiance being shown by Ukrainian political prisoners in the Gulag attested that Ukraine's spirit had not been completely broken. Yet no sooner had the dictator died than his secret police chief Lavrentii Beria demonstrated the political importance of Ukraine: in his abortive bid for power, he made his first moves in this republic, ones which were designed to win Ukrainian support. Among the changes which he engineered was the removal of the leader of the CPU, Leonid Melnikov—a Russian—on the grounds that he had made mistakes in nationalities policy and promoted the Russification of Western Ukraine's institutes of higher education. Melnikov was replaced by Oleksandr Kyrychenko—the first ethnic Ukrainian to head the CPU.

Khrushchev and measured de-Stalinization

After Beria's arrest and execution, Khrushchev, who had largely made his political career in Ukraine, sought to use the republic as a power base and wooed its Party and state apparatus. Significantly, he and others in the post-Stalin Kremlin leadership went to the unusual lengths of in effect offering the Ukrainians the role of the junior partners of the Russians, but only after reaffirming in more precise detail the Stalinist line on how the 'special' Russo-Ukrainian relationship was to be understood. At the end of 1953 Moscow announced that there would be lavish celebrations during 1954 of the tercentenary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, and at the beginning of the jubilee year the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) issued special 'Theses' for the occasion. In this prescriptive document Ukrainian history was reduced to an age-old longing for 'reunion' with the Russians

and Ukrainian patriotism reinterpreted in terms of a commitment to inseparability from, and dependence on, Russia. The following month, as a token of the 'indissoluble' bond between the two peoples, the Ukrainian SSR was handed the Crimean peninsula by the RSFSR. This region had lost its autonomous status within the Russian Federation following Stalin's deportation in 1944 of its Crimean Tatar population (which by that time, as a result of emigration, Slavonic immigration, purges and earlier deportations, had shrunk to about 25% of the peninsula's population), and Russian and Ukrainian migrants were moving in. Crimea's economic dependence on Ukraine, territorial proximity and cultural ties were cited as the reasons for Khrushchev's decision to transfer the peninsula to Ukraine.

What this 'courtship' amounted to in practice was that, for all of Ukraine's supposed sovereignty, Moscow continued to treat the republic as if it were merely an extension of Russia that had preserved its own quaint folk traditions and dialect. Much as imperial St Petersburg had done, it viewed docile Ukrainians as surrogate Russians, nationally minded Ukrainians as 'nationalists', and the stauncher ones as subversive separatists. This attitude was to foster a climate in which, as Ukrainian patriots were to protest over the next three decades, in many parts of Ukraine simply speaking Ukrainian in public was regarded as a manifestation of nationalism. On the other hand, as in tsarist times, compliant Ukrainians prepared to act as latter-day 'Little Russians' could make good careers within the Soviet system. Indeed, under Khrushchev both the size of the CPU and the proportion of Ukrainians within it grew rapidly. Moreover, not only did Ukrainians gradually take over the key leadership positions in the CPU but also quite a number of them were promoted to important posts in Moscow and the Kremlin.

The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, at which Khrushchev caused a sensation by condemning some of Stalin's crimes, seemed to herald better days ahead. The Soviet leader also declared at the congress that 'the petty tutelage of the Union republics' was 'impermissible' and that 'far from erasing national differences' the Party would ensure the 'flourishing' of the cultures of the non-Russian peoples. For a while, Khrushchev's measured de-Stalinization and zig-zags in nationalities policy allowed Ukraine to gain a little control over some parts of its economy and to begin reasserting itself. Moreover, the post-war economic rebuilding and

development had restored the republic's economic importance; in 1957, for example, Ukraine supplied almost one-fifth of the USSR's total industrial production. The political thaw also precipitated the emergence of an amorphous cultural self-defence movement led by the Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia and a campaign in defence of the Ukrainian language in the pages of the republic's press.

The scope for action turned out to be rather limited, though, and Khrushchev's selective approach to de-Stalinization did not extend to the rehabilitation of Skrypnyk, Khvylovy and other national Communists, much less Hrushevsky and Stalin's non-Communist victims. Furthermore, the repercussions in Poland and Hungary of Khrushchev's denigration of Stalin alarmed the Kremlin and in October 1956 the Soviet leadership sent in troops to crush the Hungarian Revolution. This led to a tightening of ideological controls in the Soviet Union and an offensive against 'revisionism'. On 4 December, *Pravda* reported cryptically that two well-known Ukrainian writers and Party members, Vasyl Shvets and Andrii Malyshko, had been censured for making 'utterances of an anti-Party, hooliganish nature aimed at undermining the friendship of the peoples'. It also said that a third writer, Mykyta Shumylo, who in the summer had published an outspoken article in which he invoked Lenin to condemn Russification and defend the Ukrainian language,¹ admitted that he had made 'mistakes' in some of his previous statements.

Hopes that Khrushchev would reduce Russification, continue with his decentralization of the economy, and grant more powers to the republics were soon dashed when, beginning from about 1958, he began to retreat from his more liberal course. Despite considerable opposition from the non-Russian elites, Khrushchev forced through provisions in a new education law which promoted Russification. With non-Russian parents already under increasing pressure to send their children to Russian schools, the law had the effect of depriving the native language of its status as an obligatory subject of study in the Russian-language schools in the non-Russian republics. The implications for Ukraine, with its Russified larger cities and eastern and southern regions, were obvious, and among the Ukrainian officials who opposed the change were the CPU's ideological secretary, Stepan Chervonenko, and the first deputy

¹'Lyubov do ridnoi movy' [Love for the Native Language], *Zmina*, July 1956.

chairman of the Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers, Mykhailo Hrechukha.

In 1958, Khrushchev also launched a major anti-religious campaign which hit Ukraine the hardest: between 1959 and 1964, 3,933 Russian Orthodox churches (the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches were still banned) were closed down.² In Western Ukraine, petitions for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church inspired by de-Stalinization were treated as acts of treachery; indeed, in the spring of 1958 the leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Metropolitan Yosyf Slipy, was arrested in his place of internal exile, accused of maintaining illegal contacts with his catacomb Church, and given a further seven years of imprisonment.³

Meanwhile, in the labour camps Ukrainian political prisoners — largely UPA and OUN members and their sympathizers — played a leading role in the strikes and uprisings which shook the Gulag after Stalin's death. Many of the most active Ukrainian prisoners were not released, or were rearrested soon after being freed. Indeed, with the Soviet authorities continuing to pursue a tough policy towards Ukrainian 'nationalists', from the 1950s onwards Ukrainians formed a disproportionately large proportion of Soviet political prisoners. In Western Ukraine, the tradition of underground nationalist activity continued and between 1958 and 1962 at least a dozen clandestine groups are known to have been uncovered. Although none of these groups used violence, their members were depicted at closed trials as dangerous terrorists and usually given heavy sentences including the death penalty.

The best known of these cases involved a group, led by the lawyers Levko Lukyanenko and Ivan Kandyba, which between 1959 and 1960 had discussed setting up an organization — provisionally called the Ukrainian Workers' and Peasants' Union — which would campaign openly and non-violently for Ukraine to exercise its constitutional right to secede from the USSR. Charged with treason, Lukyanenko was sentenced to death in May 1961 (his

" LP. Merkatun, 'Antyrelihiina kompaniya 50-60-kh rokiv na Ukraini' [The Anti-Religious Campaign of the 50s and 60s in Ukraine], *Ukrainskyi htorychnyi Zhurnal*, no. 10, 1991, p. 75.

Metropolitan Slipy was finally freed in early 1963 and allowed to leave for Rome after the personal intervention of Pope John XXIII.

sentence was later commuted to fifteen years' imprisonment), while six of his colleagues received terms ranging from ten to fifteen years.

After the Twentieth Party Congress the Khrushchev leadership also did not soften its line towards the large Ukrainian Western diaspora and its anti-Communist leaders. Continuing the Stalinist practice of eliminating political adversaries who were living abroad, the Soviet secret police assassinated two prominent Ukrainian political leaders living in Munich: in 1957 a Soviet agent using a special cyanide-spraying pistol killed Lev Rebet, a moderate nationalist, and two years later the same agent using the same method assassinated the more militant Bandera.

The toughening of the Kremlin's nationalities policy was emphasized at the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU in October 1961 and reflected in the new Party programme adopted by the congress. Emphasis was switched from allowing the non-Russian cultures to 'flourish' to accelerating their eventual 'fusion' or 'merger'. The new Party programme also stressed the special role and importance assigned to the Russian language, and it even declared that the boundaries between the Union republics were losing their former significance. After the congress, proponents of the Soviet melting-pot scheme went on the offensive, and the prospect of denationalization and the creation of a Russian-speaking 'homo Sovieticus' generated anxiety and indignation among the non-Russians, and some Russian patriots too. In Ukraine, in February 1963, a conference attended by over 1,000 representatives of the nation's cultural intelligentsia defiantly opposed the new assimilationist course and called on the leadership of the CPU to carry out the Ukrainization of the republic's public, educational and cultural life.

During the early 1960s, the ferment in Ukraine was given fresh impetus by the emergence of a new generation of writers and artists known as the *shestydesyatnyky* or 'Sixtiers', who combined a strong sense of Ukrainian patriotism with a search for new creative forms and values. They included: the poets Ivan Drach, Lina Kostenko and Vasyl Symonenko; the literary critics Ivan Dzyuba, Ivan Svitlychny and Yevhen Sverstyuk; the theatre director Les Tanyuk; the artists Alia Horska and Panas Zalyvakha; and the composer Leonid Hrabovsky. Representatives of this 'new wave' formed an unofficial Club of Creative Youth in Kyiv, which served as a focal point of national dissent until its dispersal in 1963. Its members sought to

rediscover and retrieve Ukraine's officially forbidden past, especially the national renaissance of the 1920s, and, in open defiance of the Kremlin's renewed emphasis on assimilation, worked to bring about a new revival. They were also interested in establishing contacts with the large Ukrainian diaspora in the West and in Eastern Europe — in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania, from which Ukraine was still effectively sealed off. The bold spirit of the Sixtiers was perhaps best expressed in the powerful publicistic poems of Symonenko, who declared characteristically in one of his verses: 'My people exists! My people will always exist! No one can blot out my people!' The Party's efforts to reassert ideological controls only radicalized the students and young intellectuals: there were more and more protests against Russification and the volume of Ukrainian *samvydav* (or *samizdat* in Russian, that is, uncensored and 'self-published' literature) steadily expanded.

To a considerable extent the growing national ferment in Ukraine also reflected rising social and economic tensions resulting from the rapid urbanization of Ukrainians which was taking place and the simultaneous large in-migration of Russians into the republic, most of whom settled in the cities of the already Russified south-eastern regions. Between the two censuses taken in 1959 and 1970, the Russian population of Ukraine grew by just over 2 million, or by 28.7%, from 7 million to 9.1 million, whereas the number of Ukrainians in the republic increased by only 9.7%, from 32.1 million to 35.3 million. This resulted in a rise in the Russians' share of Ukraine's total population from 16.9% to 19.4%, and a drop in the proportion of Ukrainians from 76.8% to 74.9%. The influx of Russians, who enjoyed the various advantages which the system afforded them as the USSR's 'leading people', hampered the social mobility of Ukrainians, and during the decade they were unable to improve their disadvantaged standing among the students in higher education, the intelligentsia and white-collar occupations. The proportion of Ukrainian students attending the republic's institutes of higher education (*vuzy*) declined steadily from 63.8% in the 1955-6 academic year to 59.9% in 1970. The Ukrainians' share of the republic's intelligentsia and white-collar staff also roughly corresponded to this figure.⁴

On this, see Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine*, London, 1985, chapter 5.

The fate of the millions of Ukrainians living outside of Ukraine in Russia and in other parts of the USSR, and of the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who during the Khrushchev years left to work in Siberia or the Virgin Lands, was also a cause for serious concern for Ukrainian patriots, all the more so since the Ukrainian government turned a blind eye to this problem. While Russians who moved to Ukraine had no problems with using their language, or with access to Russian-language education and Russian cultural facilities, the Ukrainians outside their republic were, in the words of one prominent dissenter, condemned to 'denationalization and assimilation'. They did not have 'a single Ukrainian newspaper . . . radio program or cultural, educational establishment'.⁵

The trend toward economic recentralization continued and the republican Party bosses were increasingly treated as economic managers whose primary task was to ensure that the plans set by Moscow were met. Even at the highest levels dissent was not tolerated and in June 1963 the relatively new chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, was abruptly demoted and sent back to work in the provinces for disagreeing with the Soviet leader. Khrushchev often showed little regard for tact and sometimes criticized and embarrassed republican Party leaders in public. For instance, in April 1964, during a visit to Hungary, Khrushchev castigated the recently appointed Ukrainian Party chief Petro Shelest in front of 8,000 workers because a Ukrainian factory had not met its delivery dates. Pointing to the Party boss of the USSR's second most important republic, the Soviet leader declared in his typical boorish style: 'The main criminal is amongst us. Here is Shelest, eating Hungarian goulash, and he does not supply materials in time for this factory.'⁶

Later that year, one of the first Ukrainian *samvydav* protests appeared. It took the form of an appeal from a 'group of Ukrainian communists' to the outside world which claimed that Ukraine, like the other 'sovereign' Union republics, had been transformed into 'a colonial administrative-territorial region' and was being subjected to 'Russification and the colonialist policies of Moscow'. As an example of Ukraine's fictional sovereignty, the document stressed

Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, London, 1968, p. 109.

⁶ Reuter, 8 April 1964.

that in reality Shelest was not able even to authorize the building of an underpass for pedestrians of Kyiv without Moscow's approval.⁷

Shelest and renewed Ukrainian assertiveness

This was the situation in October 1964 when Khrushchev was deposed in a palace coup by his colleagues, including Shelest's predecessor in Kyiv, Mykola Pidhorny (Nikolai Podgorny), who was a member of the CPSU Presidium. The following month, Shelest, who had been the Party boss of Ukraine only since July 1963, but who had backed the plotters, was also made a member of the Presidium, which was now headed by the new leader of the CPSU, Leonid Brezhnev.

Some elements within the CPU, including Shelest, seem to have wanted to take advantage of the changing of the guard in Moscow to promote a more autonomous Ukrainian course. It appears that behind the scenes Ukraine's representatives became more assertive in defending their republic's interests, especially in the economic sphere. As early as June 1965, the Russian *samizdat* journal *Politicheskii dnevnik* (Political diary), whose contributors appeared to have links with circles within the Soviet establishment, reported that: 'According to reports from many comrades, a strengthening of nationalist tendencies in Ukraine is being witnessed.' Not only was this trend visible among the Ukrainian intelligentsia (the example of attempts to Ukrainize the republic's film industry was given), but also among some of the republic's state and even Party organs. The journal noted that Moscow's central planners were having problems with Ukrainian administrators, some of whom were openly claiming that Ukraine was being economically exploited by Russia. For instance, one unidentified 'highly placed' official was reported to have declared that Ukraine would have solved its housing problem a long time ago if the republic did not have to contribute so much to the all-Union budget.⁸

According to those who worked with Shelest, the Ukrainian Party leader was himself not afraid of speaking his mind and he developed a reputation for his readiness to stand up to the Kremlin

AS 912. AS = Archiv *samizdata* (*Samizdat* Archive, published by Radio Liberty, Munich).

⁸ *Politicheskii dnevnik 1964-1970*, Amsterdam, 1972, pp. 90-1.

leadership. In October 1965, the chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, Ivan Kazanets, was replaced by Brezhnev's friend and client and Shelest's political rival, Shcherbytsky. Shelest was later to explain that he and Kazanets had worked well together and formed an effective partnership which sought to defend the republic's economic interests. This had resulted in Kazanets and Shelest being criticized at a meeting of the CPSU Presidium: it had been pointed out to the two Ukrainian leaders that Ukraine was better off than the towns in the Moscow region and that they were expected to increase the republic's contribution to the centre. According to Shelest, Brezhnev and another key figure in the new Soviet leadership, Mikhail Suslov, 'wanted to have their own loyal person in the republic and wanted to separate us'. They arranged for Kazanets to be moved to a new position in Moscow, overrode Shelest's choice of Oleksandr Lyashko to replace Kazanets, and secured the important post for their man — Shcherbytsky.⁹

Some of Shelest's team also attempted to reduce the tension in Ukraine by showing more responsiveness to the problems in the sphere of nationalities policy. In August 1965, the republic's minister of higher and secondary specialized education, Yurii Dadenkov, announced far-reaching instructions regarding the Ukrainization of higher education which, if implemented, would have begun to reverse the accelerated Russification of education that Khrushchev had set in motion. The reform, however, generated strong opposition from lecturers who were not proficient in Ukrainian and, according to the dissident journalist and human rights campaigner Vyacheslav Chornovil, was blocked 'by a directive from Moscow'.

Reflecting on this period, Shelest revealed in 1989 how hard-line and chauvinistic members of the post-Khrushchev leadership had actually been in their attitudes towards the non-Russians generally, and Ukraine in particular. Already in the mid-1960s, the CPSU's chief ideologist Suslov and other Russian members of the Presidium began expressing concern about 'manifestations of nationalism' and 'localism' in Ukraine. Suslov 'strongly insisted on the speediest

See Dmytro Tabachnyk's lengthy interview with Shelest in *Kyiv*, no. 10, 1989, pp. 90-110.

¹¹ Author's interview with Vitalii Vrublevsky, Kyiv, 20 March 1993. Vrublevsky, a Belarusian, worked from 1964 to 1972 in the CPU Central Committee apparatus as a lecturer. See also the interview with Vrublevsky in *Ukraina*, no. 23, 1992, p. 13.

fusion of nations and their languages and cultures' and this was to result in 'repeated clashes' with the Ukrainian Party boss over 'questions of ideology and culture'. As for Brezhnev, at a meeting of the Presidium in the autumn of 1965, he ridiculed the very idea of Ukrainization and described the Ukrainian language as 'pidgin Russian'.¹¹

In the same month that the Ukrainian authorities sought to inaugurate a measure of Ukrainization, the new leadership in Moscow demonstrated its intention to 'restore order' by launching an extensive crackdown on Ukrainian national dissent and, two weeks later, arresting the Russian writers, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yulii Daniel. These repressive actions —the first major KGB operation of this sort since Stalin's death - backfired. They not only failed to stifle dissent, but triggered off a public protest campaign which, to the surprise and embarrassment of the authorities, was supported by a number of prominent Ukrainian cultural and scientific figures.

The offensive against Ukrainian national dissent prompted one of the leading representative of the 'Sixtiers', Ivan Dzyuba, to write a penetrating book-length critique of the Soviet nationalities policy aptly entitled *Internationalism or Russification?* in which he set forth Ukrainian grievances and demands. In his classic *samvydav* work, which was addressed to the Party and state leaders of Ukraine, Dzyuba contrasted what Lenin and the Bolsheviks had promised the non-Russians in the early years of Soviet rule with the 'chauvinism, Great-power ideology and Russification' which he argued had characterized Soviet nationalities policy under Stalin and his successors. Recalling the tremendous progress that Ukraine had made in the 1920s during the brief period of Ukrainization, he pointed to the 'crisis' in which his nation now found itself and which was giving 'cause for great alarm'.

Territorial unity and sovereignty are being gradually and progressively lost through mass resettlement . . . of the Ukrainian population in Siberia, Kazakhstan, the North, etc., where it numbers millions but is quickly denationalized; through an organized mass resettlement of Russians in Ukraine . . . and through the doubtful sovereignty of the government of the Ukrainian SSR over the territory of Ukraine. This latter reason,

See the interviews with Shelest in *Argumenty i fakty*, no. 2, 1989, and in *Kyiv*, no. 10, 1989.

coupled with excessive centralization and a total subordination to all-Union authorities in Moscow, makes it equally difficult to speak about the *integrity and sovereignty of the economic life* of the Ukrainian nation. A *common historic fate* is also being lost, as the Ukrainian nation is being progressively dispersed over the Soviet Union, and as the sense of the historic national tradition and knowledge of the historical past are gradually being lost due to a total lack of national education in school and society in general. Ukrainian national *culture* is being kept in a rather provincial position and is practically treated as 'second-rate'; its great past achievements are poorly disseminated in society. The Ukrainian language has also been pushed into the background and is not really used in the cities of Ukraine. Finally, during the last decades the Ukrainian nation has virtually been deprived of the natural increase in population which characterizes all present-day nations. As far back as 1913 one would hear about 'the 37 million Ukrainians'. After all. . . the number of Russians has doubled [since 1913] in spite of war losses.¹²

What had emerged, Dzyuba explained, was a 'spontaneous, multiform, widespread, self-originating process of a nation's 'self-defence' in the face of a clear prospect of disappearing from the human family'.¹³ But the official response had been 'an indefatigable, pitiless and absurd persecution of national cultural life'.¹⁴ Arrests and repression were no solution, he argued; what was needed was a return to a nationalities policy which recognized the equality of all the nations of the USSR, their right to free development and the sovereignty of the Union republics. The starting point, Dzyuba emphasized, however, had to be *hlasnist* (*glasnost* in Russian, i.e. openness) in the sphere of national relations.¹⁵

The protests in Ukraine failed to make the Kremlin reconsider and during the first half of 1966 sixteen dissenters were convicted behind closed doors of 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' and given sentences of up to six years. The trials provoked further indignation and protest and led activists like Chornovil to pioneer new forms of open and legalistic national dissent in which concerns for human and national rights were interwoven. One of the major

Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?*, pp. 14-15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. (. . .)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

problems facing the fledgling Ukrainian human and national rights movement, however, was Ukraine's isolation: it took seven months for news of the 1965 arrests in Ukraine to filter out to the West. In the late 1960s, therefore, Ukrainian dissenters established links with human rights campaigners in Moscow and Ukrainian groups in Eastern Europe and the West. Consequently, by the beginning of the 1970s, by which time the Ukrainian patriotic movement had begun publishing its own *samvydav* journal, *Ukrainskyi visnyk* (The Ukrainian Herald), a steady trickle of information about developments in Ukraine was reaching the West. Moreover, the work of Dzyuba, Chornovil and other Ukrainian dissidents, such as the historian Valentyn Moroz (one of the intellectuals imprisoned after the 1965 crackdown), also found their way to the West and helped to draw attention to the situation in Ukraine.

Significantly, despite the tough action taken against the more outspoken Ukrainian dissenters and the Kremlin's sensitivity to anything that smacked of Ukrainian nationalism, Shelest continued to identify with Ukrainian cultural values and sought to establish a *modus vivendi* with the republic's cultural elite. In November 1966, he addressed the Fifth Congress of the Writers' Union of Ukraine (WUU) and demonstratively pledged the CPU's support for improving the position of the Ukrainian language and culture. Shelest also called on Ukraine's technical and scientific intelligentsia to use the Ukrainian language in their work and, for instance, encouraged the preparation in Ukrainian of the USSR's first encyclopedia of cybernetics. The Ukrainian Party leader was proud of Ukraine's past, especially the period of Ukrainian Cossack statehood, and under him there began a revival of Ukrainian historical studies.

Shelest, a metallurgical engineer by training who was primarily dedicated to economic management, was also eager to stress Ukraine's economic and political importance and the great strides which the republic had made in urbanization, economic development and education. In 1966, for the first time the proportion of Ukraine's urban population exceeded that of the rural population, and by 1970 it had reached 54.5%. As for the republic's economic clout, in 1967 Ukraine produced 55% of the USSR's iron ore, 42% of its steel, 33% of its coal, 30% of its natural gas, 47% of its metallurgical equipment, 22% of its grain, 23% of its meat, 22% of its milk and 58% of its granulated sugar.

Another factor also underlay the new Ukrainian national asser-

tiveness associated with the Shelest period. During the 1960s the size of the CPU continued to expand rapidly, its membership growing from 1.1 million in 1959 to 2.5 million in 1971. The proportion of Ukrainians in the CPU also steadily increased, and in 1968 they made up 65% of the membership (although this was lower than their share of the total population of Ukraine —74.9% in 1970 — it approximated their still disadvantaged position within the urban and educated sectors of society). Moreover, Ukrainians took over most of the positions in the CPU leadership. In 1971, for example, nine out of the ten full CPU Politburo members were Ukrainians, as well as all five candidate members.

Shelest, however, was no crypto-nationalist, nor, for that matter, closet democrat, as his hawkish stance in 1968 during the events connected with the Prague Spring showed. It is worth noting though that in the spring of 1968, just as he was facing an indirect attack against him from his political adversaries within the CPU, Shelest was confronted with the largest protest yet from the Ukrainian public about the political repression and 'distortion of the nationalities problem' in the republic — an appeal from 139 scientists, writers, artists, students and workers addressed to the Party and state leaders in Moscow. Among the signatories was the historian Mykhailo Braichevsky, who in 1966 had got into trouble at the Institute of History for writing a study entitled 'Pryyednannya chy vozzyednannya?' (Annexation or Reunification?), in which he had challenged the officially prescribed line on the Treaty of Pereyaslav and the history of Ukrainian-Russian relations. By this time, his work was circulating in *samvydav* and providing further ammunition for Ukraine's burgeoning human and national rights movement.

Many Ukrainian intellectuals followed the process of liberalization in neighbouring Czechoslovakia with considerable interest and sympathy, though few dared to speak out openly. In May 1968, the Ukrainian political prisoner Valentyn Moroz, whose writings were vividly describing the mechanics of totalitarianism and Russification and exposing conditions in the Gulag, wrote an appeal to Shelest drawing a parallel between the situation in Czechoslovakia and Ukraine. 'The Communists of Czechoslovakia are demonstrating to the Communists of all countries the necessity of throwing overboard that which had become a ballast and opening the sluices to those forces which guarantee a future', he wrote. 'Will the

Communists of Ukraine succeed, in their own interest, in mastering this lesson?"¹⁶

Instead, during these crucial months, the Ukrainian Party leader denounced 'reformism and revisionism, whenever and in whatever form they may appear', and called for the closing of Communist ranks against proponents of 'contrived, lifeless "models of socialism", abstract humanism, ideas of so-called "democratization" and "liberalization" of socialism'.¹⁷ Though twenty years later Shelest was to attempt to 'whitewash' himself, he was one of the Soviet leaders who pressed for the military intervention to crush Czechoslovakia's attempt to build socialism with a human face.¹⁸

Shelest also adopted an uncompromising position towards, as he put it in early 1968, 'treacherous Ukrainian counter-revolutionary elements' among the emigres who continued to 'babble on about so-called "independence", [and] about some sort of decline of culture and language'.¹⁹ He also appears to have been a hard-liner on foreign policy issues and remained outspoken in warning about the dangers purportedly posed by 'world imperialism'.

In essence then, Shelest turns out to have been a watered-down version of the national Communists of the 1920s who apparently saw nothing wrong in promoting a sense of 'Soviet' Ukrainian patriotism and defending the interests of Soviet Ukraine while remaining loyal to Moscow and the Soviet federation. Indeed, Shelest was not only proud of his Ukrainian heritage but also sought

See in Yaroslav Bihun (ed.), *Boomerang: The Works of Valmytn Moroz*, Baltimore, 1974, pp. 146-7.

¹⁷ *Pravda Ukrainy*, 6 July 1968.

In an interview published in *Komsomobkaya pravda* on 19 October 1989, Shelest condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia as a 'negative' and 'damaging' decision and sought to place all the blame on Brezhnev. Former Czechoslovak leaders, however, have portrayed the former Ukrainian Party boss as one of the main hard-liners on the Soviet side. This has also been confirmed by Pavlo Fedchenko, who in 1968 was appointed head of the CPU Central Committee's Cultural Section. He has described how Shelest called the Central Committee secretaries and department heads together and told them that at a meeting with the Czechoslovak leaders in Cierna, Brezhnev 'vacillated' but that he 'had impressed upon them that I and Czechoslovakia are neighbours and that I will not allow the disease to spread to here'. See the discussion with Fedchenko in *Uteratoma Ukraina*, 24 September 1992.

See, for instance, his speech at the Kyiv *oblast* Party conference in February 1968; *Pravda Ukrainy*, 17 February 1968.

to protect Ukraine's economic interests and opposed the diversion of funds away from the republic for the development of the Siberian regions. While his role in the political arrests and trials which took place in Ukraine during the time he was the CPU's first secretary is unclear, both he and some of his key officials, such as the republican KGB chief, Vitalii Nikitchenko, and ideological secretary, Fedir Ovcharenko, were generally regarded as being relatively moderate in their approach to national dissent. On being pressed to take tougher action against dissenters such as Dzyuba, Shelest was even reported to have told Ovcharenko's predecessor, Andrii Skaba, that he was not Kaganovich and that these were not the times of Stalin.²⁰ In short, the Ukrainian Party leader's attitude and forceful personality stimulated the restoration of a sense of national pride and afforded some protection to those dissenters who were prepared to work 'within the system'.

Shelest's removal

Shelest's 'autonomist' course gave rise to concern not only in Moscow but also in some quarters in Ukraine. The CPU was after all by no means monolithic: apart from its large Russian element, it contained a considerable number of Ukrainians who were Russified, or who had a 'Little Russian' mentality, and were hostile to Ukrainian national aspirations. For instance, Yurii Yelchenko, who was the head of the Ukrainian Komsomol from 1960 to 1968, told the author in an interview that he and his colleagues had been 'educated to accept the idea of the indivisibility of the Soviet Union' and the sense of the national factor 'had been diluted in all of us'. Thus 'not everything' that Shelest and his team did in the nationalities sphere 'was understood or accepted' within the CPU.²¹ Also, apart from Moscow's continuing emphasis on assimilation, the situation was complicated by the Russian influx into Ukraine and the ensuing competition for jobs, housing and places in higher education between Ukrainians moving into the cities from the villages and the Russian newcomers. There was thus a very large 'Russian' constituency which feared and, under the guise of defending 'internationalism', resisted any moves

John Kolasky, *Two Years in Soviet Ukraine*, Toronto, 1970, p. 206.

Author's interview with Yurii Yelchenko, Kyiv, 20 March 1993.

towards Ukrainization.

Perhaps the best example of the kind of problems which Shelest faced from the orthodox 'internationalists' was the case of Valentyn Malanchuk, whom Dzyuba had portrayed in *Internationalism or Russification?* as a zealous Russifier and promoter of 'the national dissolution of Ukraine into Russia.'"²² The son of a Party worker from Eastern Ukraine who had been killed in the Lopatyn district of Western Ukraine by the UP A, Malanchuk is described by those who worked with him as having had a 'pathological' hatred of everything connected with Ukrainian nationalism. He specialized in the study of 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism' and, as a Doctor of Historical Sciences and professor, became a leading expert on the nationalities problem, especially in Western Ukraine. After being appointed the ideological secretary in the Lviv region Party organization in 1963, he wrote numerous articles, the purpose of which seemed to be to warn that the nationalities problem in Ukraine was not under control and that the Shelest leadership was not doing enough in this respect. After the crackdown on Ukrainian dissent in the summer of 1965, Malanchuk published an outspoken article in *Pravda* on 16 December of that year which portrayed the ideological situation in the republic, especially in Western Ukraine, as still unsatisfactory and implicity seemed to criticize the line being taken by Shelest's team. The Ukrainian Party boss apparently realized that Malanchuk was a 'time bomb' that had to be defused. First, in 1967, Malanchuk's wings were partly clipped when he was transferred to Kyiv as the deputy minister for higher and secondary special education. Nevertheless, he continued to cause trouble. Fedchenko recalls that in 1971, for instance, when Shelest authorized the publication of a book about Drahomanov, Malanchuk was quick to fire off a protest to Suslov. Shelest's people therefore sought to discredit the self-appointed ideological watchdog. A special CPU Central Committee team was formed to find 'compromising' evidence against Malanchuk: it was duly discovered in the form of the latter's alleged 'distortions' in his interpretation of the role of certain Ukrainian social democrats. Apparently, there was even talk of having Malanchuk expelled from the Party, but Shelest's fall saved him.²³

²² Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?*, pp. 183-6.

²³ Author's interviews with Vrublevsky, Yelchenko, and also Ivan Kuras, Kyiv, 17

The existence of differences within the Ukrainian leadership was confirmed when, in the spring of 1967, the Communist Party of Canada (which contained many Canadians of Ukrainian descent) sent a delegation to investigate the ferment in Ukraine. In its report, which was not published until January 1968, the delegation concluded that the Ukrainian leadership was divided on nationalities policy, especially on how to deal with the language issue and the dissidents. Shelest himself was cited as acknowledging that 'we have had problems, many of them, and we still have problems, but we are overcoming them'. Oudining his position, the Ukrainian Party leader told the Canadian delegation 'emphatically' that 'the development of Communist society must permit the fullest and freest economic and cultural development of each nation'. As for the language question, he declared: 'Yes, some comrades have, on occasion, expressed mistaken ideas about what they call the merging of languages, but only a fool could imagine that there is any possibility of Russian taking over in Ukraine.' The report, however, portrayed, among others, the CPU's conservative ideological secretary Skaba, who had held this key post since 1959 and was detested by the nationally minded intelligentsia, as taking a very different view and displaying indifference to Ukrainian national aspirations and sensitivities. It also noted the 'tendency in some quarters to brand as bourgeois nationalism, or some kind of deviation, demands for the greater use of the Ukrainian language in public institutions', and expressed concern about the recent arrests and trials of Ukrainian intellectuals.²⁴

Soon after this embarrassing document was published, Shelest managed to replace Skaba. Although the change was made at a time when, just across the border in Czechoslovakia, the Prague Spring was in full bloom, Shelest appointed a liberal figure, the chemist Ovcharenko, who, just after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, had been made head of the CPU Central Committee's Department for Science and Culture, to oversee ideology in Ukraine. Despite

March 1993. Kuras, a historian, headed the Social Sciences Sector of the Science and Educational Institutions Department of the CPU Central Committee from the mid-1970s until 1983. See also the above-mentioned interview with Fedchenko in *Literatuma Ukraina*.

See 'Report of Delegation to Ukraine. Central Committee Meeting, September 16, 17 and 18, 1967', *Viewpoint*, 5, no. 1 (January 1968).

Shelest's subsequent tough stance on Czechoslovakia, Ovcharenko did in fact adopt a milder line than his predecessor.

Within the CPU Shelest and his allies were opposed by the powerful Dnipropetrovsk group, which was closely linked with Brezhnev and Shelest's political adversary, Shcherbytsky. The latter had twice headed the Dnipropetrovsk region Party Organization and in the meantime, between 1961 and 1963, had been chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers. In October 1965 Brezhnev had helped him regain this position.²⁵ In 1968, the Dnipropetrovsk region's Party bosses launched a major implicit attack against Shelest in the form of an unexpected and vitriolic campaign against a new novel called *Sobor* (The Cathedral) by the head of the WUU, Oles Honchar. In it, the writer had painted a candid picture of some of the problems facing Ukrainian society; but he had also defended Ukrainian cultural and historical values and raised environmental issues. It later transpired that in the Kremlin there had been objections to the novel's praise for the Ukrainian Cossack era, or in other words, to Honchar's treatment of Ukrainian history, and that the Dnipropetrovsk region Party boss, Oleksii Vatchenko, had seen the work as a veiled attack against him and his policies. Whether by coincidence or not, the latter fired the opening salvo in the campaign against Honchar at the same plenum of the CPU Central Committee on 29 March at which Skaba was replaced by Ovcharenko.²⁶

Increasingly, Ukraine's assertiveness under Shelest and the more tolerant domestic line identified with Ovcharenko appeared to be at variance with the new emphasis in Soviet nationalities policy, which was finally enunciated by Brezhnev at the Twenty-fourth Congress of the CPSU in March 1971. The Soviet leader announced that a 'new historical community of people — the Soviet people', had emerged and that the Party would concentrate on promoting the further 'drawing together' of the nations of the USSR and strengthening the unity and cohesion of the new supranational

²⁵ On relations between Shelest and Shcherbytsky, see the political portrait of the latter by Dmytro Tabachnyk, entitled 'Ostannii z mohikan' [Last of the Mohicans], in *Ranok*, no. 2, 1991, pp. 16-20, no. 3, 1991, pp. 18-21, and no. 5, 1991, pp. 24-8, and a revised enlarged version entitled 'Apostol zastoyu' [Apostle of Stagnation], in *Vitchyzna*, no. 9, 1992, pp. 159-63; no. 10, 1992, pp. 107-13, and no. 11, 1992, pp. 119-23.

²⁶ On the Sofcoraffair, see Vitalii Koval, *'Sobor' i navkolo Soboru* ['Sobor' and Around Sobor], Kyiv, 1989.

entity. Furthermore, Brezhnev's paean to the 'Great Russian people' and their 'revolutionary energy, selflessness, diligence and profound internationalism', which was reminiscent of the Stalin era, indicated that the Russians would continue to be the first among 'equals'. It was also at this time that the idea of the Soviet economy as an 'integral national-economic complex' was projected with its even greater emphasis on the importance of the role of Moscow and the central planners.

In July 1970, just as a Ukrainian human and national rights movement seemed to be crystallizing, Moscow abruptly replaced Ukraine's KGB chief and Shelest's friend, Nikitchenko, with Vitalii Fedorchuk, who had formerly worked for SMERSH²⁷ (a division of the Soviet security service which had eliminated opponents to the Soviet government). The resulting tougher line against Ukrainian national dissent was demonstrated in November of that year when the recently freed former political prisoner Moroz was given a new draconian fourteen-year sentence for his protest essays.

Soon afterwards, as if heeding Malanchuk's continuing warnings about the tenacious hold of nationalism in Western Ukraine, a special group was sent to the region by the CPSU Central Committee to investigate the situation. But as Yelchenko, who served as the second secretary in the Lviv region Party organization from 1969 to 1971 told the author, it was clear that the 'brigade' from Moscow had come to 'collect ammunition against Shelest'. On 7 October 1971, the CPSU Central Committee adopted a special resolution criticizing the ideological situation in the Lviv region and calling for a tightening of ideological controls and a 'cultural-educational' offensive against all vestiges of nationalism and religion. Despite this, the following month Shelest is reported to have still managed at a CPSU Central Committee plenum in Moscow to block the removal of his political ally heading the Lviv region Party organization, Vasyl Kutsevol.

In January 1972, however, Fedorchuk used the pretext of the detention of a Ukrainian student from Belgium, who had met with a number of Ukrainian dissenters, to launch a new wave of arrests on a far larger scale than the clampdown of 1965. It soon became clear that this operation represented more than just an attempt to suppress the Ukrainian human and national rights movement. The

See the *Ukraina* interview with Vrublevsky, p. 13.

offensive developed into a broad political and cultural purge which also targeted the republic's top Party leadership. Behind the closed doors of a Politburo meeting in Moscow in March, Shelest and the CPU leadership were criticized for 'shortcomings in the internationalist education of the workers, [and their] conciliatory attitude towards manifestations of nationalism'.²⁸ In May 1972 Shelest was replaced as leader of the CPU by Shcherbytsky and transferred to Moscow to serve as a deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. During 1972 and 1973 scores of Ukrainian dissidents were arrested and given heavy sentences, or, in some cases, confined in mental hospitals; nationally minded elements of the intelligentsia were purged; and the CPU was thoroughly cleansed of 'national Communists'.

In April 1973 the CPU's theoretical organ *Kommunist Ukrainy* finally revealed publicly what Shelest and his associates were deemed to have been guilty of. Vehemently attacking Shelest's book *Ukraino nasha Radyanska* (Ukraine, Our Soviet Land), which had been published in 1970, it accused the author of 'ideological errors', 'serious mistakes', and 'biased evaluations of important historical matters'. Among other things, Shelest was castigated for 'elements of autarchy'. In other words, acting almost like a latter-day hetman, Shelest had overstepped the mark in his promotion of a Soviet Ukrainian patriotism and defied the CPSU's canons on the treatment of Ukrainian history and the nature of the Russo-Ukrainian relationship.²⁹ That same month Shelest was dismissed from the Politburo of the CPSU, banned from returning to Ukraine, and for the next fifteen years vanished from sight.

Shcherbytsky and 'normalization'

Although Ukraine had hardly been on the brink of breaking

" Heorhii Kasyanov, *Nezhodni: ukrainska intelihtentsiya v rusi oporu 1960-80-kh roku* [Dissenters: the Ukrainian Intelligentsia in the Opposition Movement of the 1960s-1980s], Kyiv, 1995, pp. 132-3.

- Both Vrublevsky and Yelchenko, who held important positions under Shcherbytsky, told the author that they consider the charges against Shelest to have been deliberately exaggerated. The day after he became Ukraine's new Party boss, Shcherbytsky asked Vrublevsky, an economist, to become his personal aide. He served Shcherbytsky loyally until the latter's last day in office. Yelchenko was Ukraine's minister of culture from 1971 to 1973. After this, until 1980, he was the head of the CPU Central Committee's Propaganda and Agitation Department.

away, Moscow had decided to intervene to bring the Ukrainians back into line. The wave of arrests was followed by an extensive ideological purge and an intensification of Russification, and Shcherbytsky himself set the new tone by addressing meetings of the CPU in Russian. But the official most directly involved in overseeing the extirpative campaign against Ukrainian 'nationalism' was none other than Malanchuk. Shortly after Shcherbytsky had taken over, Malanchuk had written an 'emotional' letter to the new leader of the CPU describing the attempts Shelest's team had made to discredit him and in effect proposing a programme of struggle against Ukrainian nationalism. According to the historian and CPU Central Committee functionary Ivan Kuras who later saw the letter, Shcherbytsky wrote on it: 'Comrade Malanchuk is a genuine internationalist.' The zealous ideologist was proposed by his patron, Shcherbytsky's ally and member of the Dnipropetrovsk group, the veteran neo-Stalinist CPU apparatchik Ivan Hrushetsky, who in the summer of 1972 was appointed chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet as the replacement for Ovcharenko; moreover, Malanchuk's candidacy was also strongly supported by Suslov. In October 1972 Malanchuk was appointed the CPU's new ideological secretary.

Under Malanchuk's hard-line stewardship, restrictions on the development of Ukrainian studies, especially historical research and writing, and cultural life generally, were drastically tightened and educational and cultural institutes purged of nationally minded individuals. All this was accompanied by a renewed emphasis on the 'unity' and 'closeness' of the Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. In October 1973, Shcherbytsky explained what was expected of his fellow-countrymen. Addressing a meeting of Kyiv University's Party members he declared:

To be an internationalist means to express feelings of friendship and brotherhood towards all people of our country and, first of all, toward the great Russian people, their culture, their language — the language of the Revolution, of Lenin, the language of international intercourse and unity. To be an internationalist means to lead an uncompromising struggle against nationalism, and in particular against the worst enemy of the Ukrainian people — Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism — and also against international Zionism.³⁰

A year later, as if to reinforce the message, Shcherbytsky lashed

out in a major article against national communism in both its political and economic forms.³¹

These conditions encouraged the growth of what was later to be referred to in the second half of the 1980s as 'national nihilism', that is, a disdainful and cynical attitude towards one's native language and culture, and a readiness, for opportunistic and mercenary reasons, to go along with Russification and pass oneself off as a 'superinternationalist'.³² Shcherbytsky exemplified this attitude and even his former personal aide, Vitalii Vrublevsky, though seeking to project a favourable image of his former boss, depicted him in 1992 as a 'product of the system' for whom the Party line was sacred.³³ Consequently, as Honchar was to point out, 'in the 1970s, Ukrainian national schools were closed in their dozens and hundreds, and all this was done in order to flaunt "loyalty", zeal and orthodoxy in one's capacity as an official.'³⁴

Despite the devastating blow which it had been dealt, Ukrainian resistance manifested itself again in November 1976 when, inspired by the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, ten dissenters, including two well-known writers (Mykola Rudenko and Oles Berdnyk), a former Red Army Major-General (Petro Hryhorenko) and several former political prisoners (including Lukyanenko and Kandyba), set up the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group. Its goal was to expose human and national rights violations in Ukraine and to reduce the republic's international isolation. During its four-year existence, the group issued numerous documents and appeals, but paid a heavy price for its defiance: over twenty Ukrainian Helsinki monitors were arrested, half of them receiving sentences of ten years or more. The repression only radicalized Ukrainian national dissent and during the 1970s there was a shift away from cultural and largely patriotic protest activity

³⁰ *Pravda Ukrainy*, 5 October 1973.

³¹ V. Shcherbitskii, 'Mezhdunarodnoe znachenie opyta natsionalnykh otnoshenii v SSSR' [The International Meaning of the Experience with National Relations in the USSR], *Kommunist*, no. 17, November 1974. See especially pp. 18 and 22.

³² See, for example, the interview with the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov in *Ogonek*, no. 26, July 1987, pp. 4-9.

³³ See the above-mentioned interview with Vrublevsky in *Ukraina*, pp. 12-14.

³⁴ *Literatuma Ukraina*, 10 October 1987, p. 3.

to political opposition with more and more Ukrainian dissidents coming out in support of independence.

All this time Moscow was continuing to promote the idea of 'the Soviet people' and it was becoming increasingly clear that the Ukrainian and Belarusians were being moulded to form part of the assimilated Russian-speaking Slavonic core of this entity. In January 1979, for instance, on the occasion of the 325th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, Shcherbytsky reiterated the unchanging refrain: 'Indissoluble fraternal union' with Russia, he declared, 'that is how it has been, how it is, and how it will be forever!'³⁵ The theme of unity in both the past and the present also figured prominently in the preparations for the celebrations in 1982 of the 1500th anniversary of Kyiv (the date seems to have been chosen quite arbitrarily) with the ancient state of Kyivan Rus being depicted more or less as a forerunner of the Soviet Union.

During this bleak period, the Ukrainian philologist Yurii Badzo worked on a mammoth study examining Soviet policy towards Ukraine, entitled 'The Right to Live'. Although the work was confiscated, before he was arrested in April 1979, the author addressed an open letter to the Soviet authorities in which he concluded:

There is enough evidence to see that my description of the present national predicament of the Ukrainian people as a state of siege possesses not only a metaphorical and ideological import, but also a practical one. The official ideology of the 'internationalization', 'drawing together', and fusion of nations and the historiographic concept of Ukraine leave the Ukrainian people virtually no room for free movement either forward or backward. They block our access to the future and to the past; and the practical creators of this predicament beat over the head anyone who rises above the level of planned extinction, anyone who tries to tell the truth about the reality of the Ukrainian nation, or God forbid, tries to evaluate the overall picture on an 'all-nation', historical scale, according to political criteria.³⁶

Radyanska Ukraina, 31 January 1979.

Iurii Badzo, 'An Open Letter to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU', Part 2, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* (Toronto), no. 17 (winter 1984), p. 70.

Badzo's concern for the fate of his nation earned him a twelve-year sentence.

The results of the 1979 census certainly gave nationally minded Ukrainians plenty to worry about. They revealed that since 1970 the Russian population of Ukraine had increased by 1.3 million while the Ukrainian population had risen by only 1.2 million. The proportion of Ukrainians who named Ukrainian as their mother tongue had dropped from 91.4% to 89.1%. This, of course, was only the tip of the iceberg, for although Ukrainians still spoke their native language at home, at work or when conducting official business they switched to Russian, or, as was frequently the case, to *surzhik*, that is, a mixture which was neither Russian nor Ukrainian. A stark example of the way things were going was provided by the data on book and brochure publication in Ukraine during 1984: 72.6% of books and brochures published in the republic during the year were in Russian (in 1979 Russians accounted for 21.1% of Ukraine's population) and 24% in Ukrainian.³⁷ With Ukrainian also being artificially squeezed out of kindergartens and schools, not to mention science, technology and the economic sphere, the future for the mother tongue seemed bleak. What was also alarming for the long term was the sharp drop in the rate of natural population growth in the republic from 6.4 per 1,000 in 1970 to 3.4 per 1,000 in 1980.

In April 1979, however, Malanchuk was suddenly replaced in circumstances which were hitherto shrouded in secrecy. According to Vrublevsky, Malanchuk's 'ideological maximalism' and seemingly boundless zeal gradually antagonized not only the more docile representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia but also leading Party officials and eventually Shcherbytsky himself. Not only did the ideologist virtually set himself up as a law unto himself, preparing 'black lists' and interfering in areas that lay beyond the scope of his duties, but also he was suspected of continuing to act as Suslov's informant. As Vrublevsky points out though, Malanchuk was armed with a seemingly invincible trump card: everything he did was purportedly in the name of internationalism, Soviet patriotism and hostility towards all manifestations of Ukrainian nationalism.

The story of Malanchuk's removal, as related to the author by Vrublevsky, sounds like something out of a political thriller. At the

See Roman Solchanyk, 'Oversight or Disinformation? Language Politics and Book Publication in the Ukraine', RL 69/86, 10 February 1986.

beginning of 1979, a pretext for Malanchuk's dismissal was found: after a tip-off, Vrublevsky confirmed for Shcherbytsky through friends in the Central Committee apparatus in Moscow that Malanchuk, without clearance from the Ukrainian Party leader, was preparing to publish a monograph in Moscow on the nationalities question in Ukraine under the pseudonym V. Yefimov. 'Normalization' in Ukraine, it seems, had not gone far enough for Malanchuk. This information apparently finally convinced Shcherbytsky that Malanchuk was an 'adventurer' who was 'playing for the highest political stakes'. That very night the Ukrainian Party leader made an emergency telephone call to the Kremlin and succeeded in persuading Brezhnev that, regardless of what Suslov might think, Malanchuk had to go. The very next day, Shcherbytsky dictated to Vrublevsky the main theses of a secret letter to members of the CPU Central Committee in which Malanchuk was accused of abuses, of not understanding the Party's nationalities policy properly, and of having alienated the Ukrainian intelligentsia from the Party. A plenum of the CPU Central Committee was promptly convened at which the unsuspecting Malanchuk was fired.

With Malanchuk's departure there was a slight easing up in the cultural sphere, though not in the general Russification drive. As if to indicate that the process of 'normalization', or stamping out of 'Shelestivism', had gone far enough, Shcherbytsky announced a few weeks later that there now existed 'a healthy ideological situation in the republic'.³⁸ The CPU leadership proceeded to seek a working accommodation with the cultural intelligentsia, but within the new narrower limits, and offered modest concessions in return for the cultural elite's help in rallying the population behind the Party's policies. To make the deal more attractive, additional material incentives were also provided, including awards, apartments, travel and various other perks.

Members of the W U U immediately made use of the opportunity to revive the historical novel and publish a number of important historical documents in their literary journals, such as modern Ukrainian translations of the Rus Primary Chronicle and the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle. At the Eighth Congress of the W U U in April 1981, writers like Dmytro Pavlychko, Ivan Drach, Roman Lubkivsky and Volodymyr Yavorivsky pressed once again

for more Ukrainian literary journals, bilingual dictionaries, more foreign contacts and travel abroad. In November of that year, the CPU Politburo convened a meeting with representatives of the Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia at which Shcherbytsky appeared to reaffirm that the CPU leadership wanted to maintain a *modus vivendi* with Ukraine's cultural elite.

Malanchuk may have unexpectedly emerged as a problem for Shcherbytsky, but he was apparently not his only one. According to Vrublevsky, the Ukrainian Party leader, though ultra-loyal to Moscow and to the idea of the preservation and strengthening of the Soviet Union, felt in private that he was not always trusted as fully as he should be by the leaders in Moscow, or the 'Moscow *boyars*' as he and his closest aides referred to them behind closed doors. These were years when 'if you didn't praise the Russian elder brother enough in your speeches, eyebrows were immediately raised in Moscow'. At home, Shcherbytsky remained wary of the secret police chief Fedorchuk, who in September 1974 was elevated to candidate membership of the Ukrainian Politburo. Vrublevsky also says that the Ukrainian Party leader 'did not like' the fact that Ivan Sokolov, the Kharkiv region Party boss and an ethnic Russian, was elected second secretary of the CPU Central Committee in February 1976 — the first time since 1949 that this sensitive position was not held by a Ukrainian.

True, Shcherbytsky maintained a close friendship with Brezhnev, who at the end of 1975 apparently failed to persuade the Ukrainian Party leader to agree to replace Aleksei Kosygin as Soviet prime minister. But as Brezhnev's health began to fail in the second half of the 1970s, Shcherbytsky found himself increasingly left out of the Politburo's decision-making and, apparently not wanting to get involved in the 'game-playing and intrigues' going on in Moscow, found himself more and more in the role of a spectator as the power struggle in the Kremlin got under way. For instance, according to Vrublevsky, in 1978 Suslov's choice for the new CPSU Central Committee's secretary for agriculture, Mikhail Gorbachev — the first secretary of the Stavropol *krai*, was chosen in preference to Shcherbytsky's nominee, Fedir Morhun. At the end of the following year, the Ukrainian Party leader was simply asked *pro forma* to endorse the decision to invade Afghanistan after it had already been made by a small inner group led by Soviet Defence Minister Dmitrii Ustinov and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. In private,

Vrublevsky maintains, Shcherbytsky was opposed to this 'adventure'.

In the economic sphere also Shcherbytsky had soon found himself forced to defend the economic interests of the republic *vis- a-vis* the centre. Of his team, according to Vrublevsky, the head of the Ukrainian State Planning Committee (Derzhplan, Gosplan in Russian), Rozenko, was apparently especially courageous in this respect. Though Shcherbytsky did not display the forcefulness in this area which Shelest had done, his former colleagues stress that he did much to ensure that the food supply and the standard of living remained better and higher in Ukraine during the 1970s and 1980s than in most of Russia's major industrial regions, and to develop the republic's economic and scientific-technological potential.

After Malanchuk's removal, Fedorchuk continued to oversee the Ukrainian KGB and there was no let-up in the suppression of dissent. With the emergence of the Polish independent trade union movement Solidarity in August 1980, the Ukrainian authorities began to show signs of concern about a possible spillover effect from Poland and clearly did not want to leave anything to chance. After all, the first attempt to form an independent trade union in the Soviet Union had been made in 1977 by a miner from the Donbas, Vladimir Klebanov. The republic's ideological apparatus also had to contend with the influence of the Polish Pope, John Paul II, who had been elected in October 1978 and who, unlike his predecessor Paul VI, was determined to speak out in defense of the USSR's Catholics. In October 1982, three priests and two laymen from Western Ukraine announced the formation of an 'Initiative Group' to campaign for the legalization of their outlawed Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The death of the Kremlin's chief ideologist, Suslov, in January 1982 did not bring any significant improvement; soon afterwards Fedorchuk moved to Moscow to take over control of the entire KGB, while the former chief of the Soviet secret police, Yuri Andropov, took over Suslov's responsibilities for ideology in the Central Committee Secretariat. In November of that year Brezhnev died and was replaced as Party leader by Andropov. The latter began by appearing, in his speech in December 1982 on the sixtieth anniversary of the USSR, to rehabilitate the concept of the fusion of nations.³⁹ During Andropov's brief rule supplementary measures were taken to boost Russification: in Ukraine teachers of Russian

and Russian literature were given a pay rise of 16%. Taking his cue from Andropov's jubilee speech, in March 1983 Shcherbytsky called for even greater 'internationalization' and, sounding a familiar note, warned the cultural intelligentsia about getting carried away with historical themes. The 'passion' for, and 'idealization' of, 'antiquity', he stressed were incompatible 'with the objectives of Communist upbringing'.⁴⁰

After Andropov's death in February 1984 Konstantin Chernenko took over but he himself lived only for thirteen more months. Nevertheless, during this period all the signs pointed to a further toughening of Moscow's policy. Between June and November 1984, leading Russian nationalist writers received prestigious awards. Towards the end of the year, one of the USSR's most senior historians, Sergei Tikhvinsky, called for a reassertion of Moscow's control over the writing of history in the non-Russian republics. And in the labour camps, conditions became harsher and even greater pressure was applied to force political prisoners to recant. During a six-month period in 1984, three Ukrainian dissidents died in the camps: Oleksii Tykhy, Yurii Lytvyn and Valerii Marchenko. The only open dissent in Ukraine at this time was the continuing campaign of the Ukrainian Catholic activists, who in the spring of 1984 began publishing their own *samvydav* journal, *Khronika Katolytskoi Tserkvy v Ukraini* (A Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Ukraine). At the end of 1984 and beginning of 1985, two of the leaders of the Ukrainian Catholics' 'Initiative Group' were arrested.

Stagnation

According to Vrublevsky, Shcherbytsky watched the changes going on in the Kremlin with growing concern and dismay. Although within the Politburo he was a respected figure, he continued to remain aloof from the maneuvering for power. Contrary to what was supposed by many Western observers at the time, the Kremlin gerontocracy did not form a united front. Shcherbytsky, for instance, genuinely mourned the death of Brezhnev and had deep respect for Andropov. He was also supportive towards Gorbachev, who had become a full member of the Politburo in 1980 and whom

Pravda, 22 December 1982.

Radyanska Ukraina, 26 March 1983.

Andropov had taken under his wing. According to Vrublevsky, the relatively young Gorbachev in turn was very respectful towards Shcherbytsky. On the other hand, the Ukrainian Party boss 'detested' the Moscow city Party chief, Viktor Grishin, and was very 'sceptical' about both Chernenko (whom, when the latter was elected Party leader, he saw very much as a compromise figure), and the Leningrad Party boss, Grigorii Romanov, who was Gorbachev's rival. As for other members of the Soviet leadership, the Ukrainian Party leader apparently got on especially well with Petr Masherov, the Belarusian Party first secretary (who was killed in a car crash in 1980) and Kazakhstan's Party boss, Dinmukhamed Kunaev.

The high reputation which Shcherbytsky enjoyed within the CPSU leadership seems to have been based largely on his record of having maintained order in Ukraine. Certainly, with dissent stifled, and Shcherbytsky's team firmly in control, Ukraine in the mid-1980s appeared to be a model of political stability—at least in the old Brezhnevist sense. In actual fact, like the rest of the Soviet Union, it was experiencing a deepening economic and social crisis for which the old methods were no solution. More and more complaints were being officially sounded about excessive bureaucracy, corruption, bad management and falling labour discipline and production.

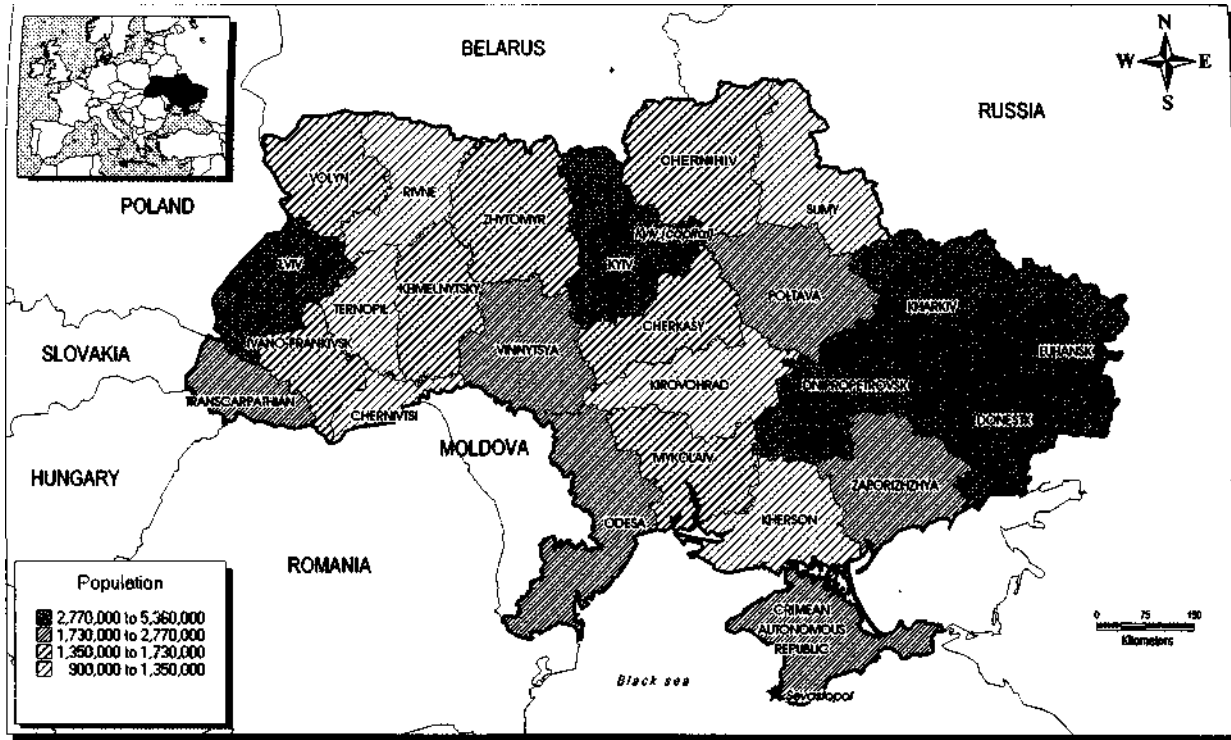
As throughout the USSR, for the Ukrainian authorities the number one issue was the economy. If for Ukraine the 1960s had been a period of above-Union-average economic growth, the 1970s and early 1980s had brought mounting economic difficulties and deceleration in growth rates. Centralized planning, which meant that Ukraine's economy was run from Moscow to serve the interests of the Soviet empire, had taken its toll. After years of intensive exploitation, with Ukraine's labour resources depleted and energy reserves exceeded, and with Moscow having reduced the level of capital investment, the Ukrainian economy had begun to stagnate. In the industrial sector, many of the plants and much of the machinery was outdated and inefficient; coalmining in the Donbas had become increasingly costly and dangerous; and agriculture was plagued with chronic inefficiency and a shortage of rural labour. Ukraine remained one of the major Soviet military staging areas against the West and a significant portion of its economy was connected with the defence sector. On top of this, the official

disregard for environmental issues while economic development was pursued had created serious ecological problems, the full scale of which were not acknowledged in the press. This was particularly so in the case of the development of nuclear energy, which also involved fundamental issues of safety and ultimately also of the republic's right to have some say about what was happening on its territory and about its future well-being.

Although in 1970, Ukraine still had a small energy surplus, the growing energy needs of the republic's heavy industrial complex had made Ukraine increasingly dependent on the import of fuels from Russia and other republics. Moscow, however, was faced with the problem of plugging the energy gap not only in the European part of the USSR but also in Eastern Europe, which relied heavily on the imports of Soviet oil at relatively inexpensive prices. The decline of Ukraine's coal industry and the difficulties and costs of both producing oil in Siberia and shipping it westward had led the Soviet leadership to seek alternative supplies of energy. Nuclear power seemed to offer the solution and in the 1970s the USSR had embarked on the large-scale and increasingly rapid development of nuclear energy. As a voracious consumer of energy and because of its location next to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, Ukraine was designated the principal area for nuclear power development.

The first nuclear reactor in Ukraine began operating in 1979 at the Chornobyl (Chernobyl in Russian) power station (which was commissioned in 1971 when Shcherbytsky had been chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers), north of Kyiv; by 1985, nine nuclear power stations or nuclear power and heating plants were either in operation or under construction in Ukraine. The speed and 'shock-work' methods of construction, shortage of skilled labour, chronic supply problems and shoddy construction materials raised questions of safety. But these matters, together with the issue of the seemingly irresponsible siting of some of the nuclear power stations close to major cities, were not a subject for public discussion. As became known much later, some of the republic's leading scientists did express their concern to the Ukrainian Party and state leaders, but to no effect.⁴¹

See some of the letters from the President of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Borys Paton, to Ukrainian leaders written in 1980 and 1981 and other material. *Pravda Ukrainy*, 30 January 1993.



ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS
AND POPULATION

As the economic difficulties mounted, the centre increased its demands of Ukraine and the republican leadership found it even more difficult to defend the republic's interests, though not from any national considerations but rational ones. In fact, those of Shcherbytsky's former colleagues who were interviewed by the author maintain that in reality Ukraine was far more of a colony than was supposed in the West. Yelchenko, for instance, who from 1980 was the first secretary of the Kyiv city Party organization and from 1982 a member of the CPU Politburo, described the atmosphere during the first half of the 1980s to the author as follows:

Shcherbytsky would return from Moscow and say to us: 'What do they think they're doing. Do they think that they can simply go on demanding more and more from us?' The main part of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers wasted at least 75% of its time and efforts trying to convince Moscow that 'Lads, don't exploit us, don't take it all away, leave us something.' Whenever any of our people returned home with a victory - whether it was the head of the Council of Ministers or one of his deputies, or the head of the Ukrainian Derzhplan, Vitalii Masol — we would carry them on our shoulders. There seems to have been some strange conviction in Moscow that in Ukraine we had it too good, that we were stuffing ourselves. What did this amount to in practice? Take the case of the republic's metallurgical industry. Shcherbytsky campaigned very hard for its modernization. But for the repair and modernization of our metallurgical plants we needed metal. We ourselves produced the metal but didn't have any for repairing our own plants because it was all divided up and distributed by Moscow It was craziness. Everything could have collapsed much earlier, in 1984 or 1985 We needed metal to repair our metal factories but couldn't have any because Moscow thought that it was more important that, say, Kyrgyzia had enough hammers. It was the same with dairy products, meat and grain. Every year it was: 'Give us over three million tons of milk, butter and other dairy products, six hundred thousand tons of meat and 17 million tons of grain!' Such quantities can't just be produced out of thin air, but each year they expected even more and their attitude was one of: we don't care how you do it, even if you perish, just deliver what you're expected to.

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Shcherbytsky's former colleagues speak very highly of him. They consider him to have

been a very capable politician and administrator — a dedicated technocrat who understood the workings of the economy and who got on well with the directors of the republic's large enterprises. With someone else in charge of administering Ukraine during these difficult years, they maintain, the exploitation by the centre would have been much greater and the economic and social conditions in the republic would have deteriorated more markedly. They also claim that, compared to many other high-ranking Soviet officials at that time, Shcherbytsky did not tolerate corruption within his inner circle and was relatively modest when it came to accruing decorations and privileges. But then, as Kuras emphasized to the author, Shcherbytsky's team 'put the interests of production first', above the interests of the individual or society at large. Loyal to the system which had shaped and made them, in serving it they lost sight of both the human factor and the national dimension, which cut them off from their people and their homeland. While the Kremlin's leading figures were absorbed by the protracted struggle for power and the USSR's economic decline, Shcherbytsky and his lieutenants perpetuated and refined the old-style Brezhnevist 'administrative-command system' in Ukraine. In some ways, they grew more orthodox than the centre itself.

At the end of December 1984, the population of the Soviet Union was informed by an ailing Chernenko that the achievement of communism had been put off indefinitely and that the future would consist of 'a historically long period of developed socialism'⁴² His heir apparent, Mikhail Gorbachev, told a conference on ideology that same month that the Party's priority was 'the rational distribution of productive forces and their further integration into the overall national complex'. He also accused the West of having stepped up its 'psychological warfare' against the socialist countries and called for an improvement of the Party's ideological work and counter-propaganda, and especially for greater 'ideological vigilance' and 'intolerance of alien views'.⁴³ Thus, at the time of Chernenko's death in March 1985 there did not seem to be any real grounds to expect changes in Moscow's approach towards Ukraine

Kommunist, no. 18, December 1984, pp. 3-21.

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Radio Moscow and *Pravda*, 11 December 1984. For the full text of this speech, see M.S. Gorbachev, *Zhivoe tvorchestvo naroda*, Moscow, 1984.

and the other non-Russian republics or, for that matter, that official Kyiv would want to alter things.

The Ukrainian Party leader was on one of his rare visits outside of the USSR when Chernenko died: he was heading a delegation from the USSR Supreme Soviet to the United States. Shcherbytsky flew back to Moscow and endorsed a decision which had already been made in his absence — that Gorbachev, whom Gromyko had nominated, would take over as the new Soviet leader. A last-minute attempt by Romanov to block Gorbachev's appointment by proposing Grishin instead was defeated, thereby eclipsing Shcherbytsky's two least popular Politburo colleagues. Although a younger figure had broken the hold of the Kremlin's old guard, Shcherbytsky had no reason to feel that he had anything to fear from Gorbachev. Whatever changes were taking place in the Moscow leadership, with no significant personnel changes having taken place in the CPU leadership since Malanchuk's departure, Shcherbytsky's conservative team appeared solid and self-confident.