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# PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH

### *Victories in the first multi-candidate elections*

The election campaign was now entering its final stages. In Ukraine, many of the new democratic activists cut their political teeth during this bitter struggle and were radicalized by the ruthless methods resorted to by Shcherbytsky's apparatus. In fact, speakers at Memorial's rally had warned the crowd that 'modern' Stalinism lived on in Ukraine and informed it about the detention in Kyiv ten days earlier of four activists who had taken part in a protest against undemocratic practices. In Lviv, the authorities once again began using units of the special riot police to disperse demonstrations,- and the brutal way in which a huge unsanctioned pre-election rally was broken up on 12 March generated outrage in the city and led the mayor, Bohdan Kotyk, to defy Party discipline and condemn the violence.

Assessing the general situation, a British correspondent reported from Kyiv that 'the Ukrainian Party machine had clearly been more ruthless than elsewhere' in manipulating the electoral screening process and that 'at least 30% of the Ukrainian candidates, probably the highest percentage' in the USSR, were standing unopposed.<sup>1</sup> In many cases where the CPU machine had ensured that its nominees would stand unopposed, there was little that the democratic activists could do other than to urge voters to cross out the names of the candidates. Shcherbytsky himself eventually did not risk running for election in the Ukrainian capital and instead opted for what was considered a 'safe' constituency in the Dnipropetrovsk region."

<sup>1</sup> Xan Smiley, 'Nationalist Assault Looks Likely to Topple Ukraine "Mafia"Boss', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 March 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Radio Kyiv announced on 12 January 1989 that Shcherbytsky had been nominated as a candidate in the Moskovskyy territorial electoral district in

When the voting finally took place the Ukrainian Party apparatus successfully secured the vast majority of the seats for its nominees, although it suffered a number of humiliating shocks. Several senior Party officials who had run unopposed failed to get the necessary number of votes (more than 50% of those cast) to be elected. This happened in the cases of Masyk and Zhursky in Kyiv (where almost 86% of the voters turned out), Pohrebnyak in Lviv (where the U H U had called for a boycott of the elections) and Kachura in Chernivtsi; the first secretaries of the Transcarpathian, Chernihiv and Voroshylovhrad regions were not elected either. Furthermore, although Shcherbytsky was successful, 63,000 of the 240,000 voters in his constituency crossed his name off the ballot. Among the candidates from the democratic camp who won were Shcherbak and Talanchuk in Kyiv, Yaroshynska in Zhytomyr, the scientist Ivan Vakarchuk in Lviv, and the writers Fedoriv in Drohobych and Roman Hromyak in Ternopil. Drach came in second out of six, losing to a celebrated surgeon, Mykola Amosov, who had declared his support for Rukh.

Oliinyk and Honchar also became deputies, though without having had to face the electorate: they were nominated for seats reserved for 'public organizations', in their case, by the CPSU and the Writers' Union of the USSR, respectively. In short, then, the CPU's monopoly on power in the republic had been breached (though far from broken), its reputation further sullied and the entire organization shaken by the unnerving exposure of its latent vulnerability. The election campaign, however, was not yet over: in about one-sixth of the republic's electoral districts new and run-off elections had to be held.

The conservative forces in the CPSU suffered embarrassing upsets in other parts of the USSR, too, but the victories by some of the radicals and reformists was hardly good news for the Gorbachev leadership. In Moscow itself, for instance, Yeltsin, whom the local Party authorities had tried to prevent from running, won a landslide victory, with 5.1 million of the 6.8 million registered voters casting their ballot for him; and, in the Baltic republics, the representatives

Kyiv. The Moscow *samizdat* publication *Eksprcss-Khwnika* subsequently reported, however, that attempts to nominate Shcherbytsky as a candidate in a Kyiv constituency had run into problems because of opposition both in the Institutes of Cybernetics and of Electrical Welding, which were to have formally proposed his candidature. See *Russkaya mysl*, 27 January 1989.

of the popular fronts swept to victory in a majority of the electoral districts. Although Gorbachev insisted that the results had shown that the USSR did not need a multi-party system, the voting confirmed something rather different: the processes which the Soviet leader had inaugurated were getting out of control.

In Eastern Europe, too, political change was taking place and was to assume an even faster pace. In Poland, the Communist authorities had by now effectively yielded on the sacrosanct principle of the leading role of the Party. In the political compromise finally concluded with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's Citizens' Committee on 5 April, they agreed to the legalization of Solidarity in exchange for the latter's participation in elections and support for tough economic measures.

As before, despite the continuing push for greater national rights by the non-Russians, the Soviet leadership showed no readiness to overhaul its nationalities policy. Its draft programme for republican autonomy which was unveiled in mid-March had made it abundantly clear that the degree of decentralization was to be kept to a minimum, with the republics being offered only limited control over their budgets and Moscow maintaining control over most heavy industry. Now, despite the excitement generated by the results of the elections, on 8 April Radio Moscow announced that the outgoing Supreme Soviet of the USSR had rejected calls by the non-Russians for a new Union treaty, or, in other words, a new deal for the non-Russians.

The very next day, a tragic development in Georgia sent new shock waves throughout the Soviet Union. Troops armed with sharpened spades and toxic gas were sent in against peaceful nationalist demonstrators in Tbilisi who were demanding independence for their republic: twenty protesters, the majority of them women, were killed. Outraged democratic activists, including Sakharov, condemned the killings and warned that the violent intervention showed how fragile the reform process still was. At one of the protests in Moscow, blue and yellow Ukrainian national flags, carried by members of the UPDL, were first seen in the Soviet capital. The police reacted by arresting the Ukrainian activists.<sup>3</sup>

To add to the consternation of the democratic forces, on the same day as the tragedy in Tbilisi, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme

<sup>3</sup> UPA Press Release, no. 52, 24 April 1989.

Soviet issued a decree designed to strengthen, rather than to moderate, the existing laws against anti-state activities. In connection with this, on 11 April *Pravda* called for tougher action against 'nationalists' and all those who it said were exploiting *perestroika* as an excuse to violate law and order.

The effect of all this was to increase disillusionment with Gorbachev and to convince leaders of the national movements that there was no point in waiting for reform in the sphere of nationalities policy to come from above. Thus, the following month the Baltic popular fronts held their first joint council, at which they rejected the limited economic autonomy scheme which the Kremlin had proposed. Moreover, on 18 May, the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet voted to assert the republic's sovereignty, while its Estonian counterpart passed a series of resolutions affirming the republic's control over its own economy and allowing for, among other things, private ownership of land.

Shaken by the defeats it had sustained in the elections, the CPU sought to take stock of the situation. On 6 April, the Party authorities in the Ukrainian capital held a plenum for this purpose. According to *Vechirniy Kyiv*, the degree of candour, soul-searching and division was unprecedented.<sup>4</sup> Masyk admitted that the Kyiv Party organization had made mistakes, especially by underestimating the 'novelty and complexity of the current electoral campaign'. Nevertheless, he sought to shift the main blame for the results on popular dissatisfaction with the lack of tangible results from Gorbachev's policy of *perestroika*.

One Kyiv district Party boss, Valerii Kiryan from Darnytsya, acknowledged that the CPU had 'lost authority', that 'cases of voluntary resignations from the Party' were becoming more frequent, and that it was 'getting increasingly difficult to recruit cadres for Party work'. Saliy went further and expressed what his colleagues were not prepared to admit openly. The 'moment of truth' had arrived, he declared, 'and we can no longer entertain illusions. And the truth is that we have suffered a major political defeat'.<sup>5</sup>

Public attention remained riveted on the new election campaigns in the numerous electoral districts where deputies had not been

<sup>4</sup> *Vechirniy Kyiv*, 10 April 1989.

See Roman Solchanyk, 'A Serious Political Lesson': Kyiv Party First Secretary Steps Down', *Report on the USSR*, no. 31 (4 August 1989), pp. 28-30.

elected. This time, encouraged by the results of the first round of elections, many more hopefuls put themselves forward as candidates. In some of the electoral districts the authorities gave in and registered all the candidates. By 20 April, Soviet domestic media were reporting that, for instance, in Kyiv sixty-nine candidates, including Pavlychko, Tanyuk, Chernyak, Yavorivsky, Salii and Karpenko were competing for three seats, and in the Dnipropetrovsk region, over fifty candidates for four seats. Some of the liberal Communists who decided to stand for election became even more outspoken. For instance, both Salii and Karpenko openly criticized the lack of democratization and renewal within the CPU, strongly supported Ukrainization, and called for dialogue and cooperation with unofficial groups, instead of confrontation and repression.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, there were still cases where democratic norms were blatantly violated to prevent the registration of 'undesirable' candidates or to hinder their campaigning activity. In Lviv, where the authorities were still smarting from Pohrebnyak's humiliation, Bratun was now reluctantly registered as a candidate, but Drach's candidacy was blocked. The leader of Rukh had been persuaded that he had a better chance of being elected in Lviv than in Kyiv (he was born-in the Kyiv region), but though he was nominated by over thirty local factories and enterprises, the Lviv authorities refused to register him as a candidate. On 20 April, Drach's supporters launched mass daily demonstrations to demand his registration. Thousands of people participated in them and workers at a number of enterprises staged warning strikes. These protests, in the same way as the ones before on behalf of Bratun and Khmara, served only to radicalize the Western Ukrainian public and, in Drach's case, also to promote Rukh in a city where the more radical UHU had its base. Meanwhile in the Ukrainian capital, conservative forces sought to discredit Karpenko (whose newspaper *Vechirnij Kyiv* had more than doubled its circulation during the last three years, from 210,000 to 460,000 copies) by accusing him in the pages of the worker's daily *Robitnycha hazeta* and a local newspaper of plagiarism. He fought back, however, and exposed the editor of *Robitnycha hazeta*, Shybyk (who had attacked the writers in 1987), as a conservative *apparatchik* who was hostile to the Ukrainian national revival.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, their discussion in *Ukraina*, no. 15,9 April 1989.

See David Marples and Roman Solchanyk, 'Plagiarism and Politics in Kyiv',

While the campaigning for the additional elections, scheduled in Ukraine for 14 May, was taking place, Gorbachev used the results from the voting on 26 March to force a quarter of the voting members of the CPSU Central Committee to resign. Altogether, at the plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, held on 25 April, 110 members of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission announced their retirement, ostensibly because they were pensioners, or because of the poor state of their health. By this skilful manoeuvre Gorbachev managed to remove quite a few, but by no means all, of the conservatives in the Party's ruling bodies.

According to Vrublevsky, this was the moment when Shcherbytsky finally acknowledged that it was time for him to go. Dismayed by what was happening all around him as a result of Gorbachev's policies, the Ukrainian Party leader had been 'deteriorating both psychologically and physically'.\* At the time of the mass resignation of members of the CPSU Central Committee, Shcherbytsky 'had a talk' with Gorbachev and offered to retire. But the Soviet leader had not accepted his resignation. On returning to Kyiv, Shcherbytsky told Vrublevsky with unconcealed satisfaction that Gorbachev had replied: 'Volodya, I ask you to stay. When the appropriate time comes, I'll let you know.'<sup>9</sup>

### *Rukh takes hold in Western Ukraine*

The public, and for that matter even other members of the CPU leadership, were not aware of Shcherbytsky's offer to resign, and the protests against him and what he represented continued. Once again, as during the previous summer, the citizens of Lviv took the lead. On 26 April, thousands of people attended a public meeting in the city called by local Rukh supporters, Greens and the Lion Society to commemorate the third anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. During it, some of the speakers, who included Mayor Kotyk, called for genuine sovereignty for Ukraine;

*Report on the USSR* (26 June 1989), pp. 17-19.

Vitalii Masol, who was the chairman of the Council of Ministers from 1987 to 1990 confirms this. He writes that during the last years of his life, Shcherbytsky increasingly displayed 'excessive caution, intolerance of even the slightest disagreement [with him], a weakness for praise, and caprice'. See Vitalii Masol, *Upushchennyi Shans* [The Missed Chance], Kyiv, 1993, p. 18.

Author's interview with Vrublevsky.

moreover, as a sign of mourning, the banned Ukrainian national flag with a black ribbon was raised. Within a week, the CPU leadership was embarrassed by demonstrations in Lviv and Chernovohrad during the official May Day celebrations, which were inspired largely by the UHU. In Lviv thousands of supporters of Drach and Rukh, some carrying blue and yellow flags, formed their own column in the official parade and, despite efforts by the police to block their path, managed to make their way past the tribune on which the startled local Party leaders were assembled.<sup>10</sup> This protest marked a turning point: the struggle for democracy and reform, of which Rukh was now the embodiment, had fused—in Western Ukraine at any rate—with the cause of national self-determination and national emancipation.

From now on, the question of restoring Ukraine's suppressed 'national symbols', that is, the blue and yellow flag of independent Ukraine, the national emblem—the 'tryzub' or trident, which had been used by the rulers of Kyivan Rus—and the national anthem, was to become an increasingly important issue. Although the UHU had raised this question in one of its press releases at the end of 1988, it was only now, when the Baits had succeeded in restoring their national flags and the national revival and growth of the democratic opposition in Ukraine had made more progress, that the push for the lifting of the ban on Ukrainian national symbols began in earnest. Two days after the success of the May Day protest, a mass meeting in Lviv adopted a resolution calling on the authorities to recognize and restore Ukrainian national symbols.

The mood in and around Lviv was now such that the local supporters of Rukh were able to proceed with organizing the first regional organization of the Popular Movement. On 7 May, some 200 representatives of various local independent groups, enterprises, and cultural, educational and scientific institutions and organizations participated in the inaugural conference of the Lviv Region Organization of the Popular Movement of Ukraine for Restructuring. It brought together an impressive team of leading local activists and prominent representatives of the region's cultural and scientific intelligentsia, many of whom were members of the Communist Party; they included: the physicists Academician Yukhnovsky and

For accounts of these protests, see the monthly information bulletin issued by the Lion Society, *Postup*, no. 2, May 1989.

Lviv University professor Orest Vlokh, the economist Mykhailo Shvaika, the editor of the local Komsomol daily (*Leninska Molod*) Mykhailo Batih, as well as representatives of the local Russian and Jewish cultural societies. The conference elected, among others, Bratun, Vakarchuk, Vlokh and UHU leader Mykhailo Horyn to head the council of the new organization.

The programmatic declaration issued by the Lviv regional organization of Rukh reflected the radicalization that had taken place over the previous three months. It went a lot further than Rukh's programme, moving closer to the programmes of the Baltic popular fronts, the UHU and UPDL. Not only did it not acknowledge the leading role of the CPSU, it even stressed that it was 'opposed to any monopoly on political power'. Among other more radical demands, the declaration called for a new Union treaty on the basis of a new Union and republican constitutions; the demilitarization of society and for military service by Ukrainian citizens to be done on Ukrainian territory; the institution of a citizenship of the Ukrainian SSR; the regulation of the inflow of migrants into the republic; the development of Ukraine's diplomatic representation abroad and of foreign diplomatic representation in the republic; the transfer of political power to freely elected councils of people's deputies at all levels; the recognition of different forms of ownership; the creation of a Ukrainian Olympics Committee and the establishment of direct links between Ukraine and international sports organizations; the restitution of Ukraine's cultural and historical treasures which had been 'removed from Ukraine'; the restoration of Ukrainian national symbols; and 'historical justice' for the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and recognition of them as part of the 'spiritual heritage of the nation'.<sup>11</sup>

In Western Ukraine then, the long-standing efforts to create a popular movement had finally been crowned with success. Significantly, the catalyst had been the political piggyback ride given by Lviv's democratic opposition to the leader of Rukh from Kyiv. 'The struggle to nominate Drach as a candidate for people's deputy', as one local independent publication commented at the time, became 'a lever which raised broad sections of society to conscious

For the text of the declaration and details about the inaugural conference of the Lviv Region Organization of Rukh, see the organization's journal *Viche*, no. 1, June 1989, and *Postup*, no. 3, May 1989.



political life' and paved the way for the creation of a regional organization of Rukh. 'Striking changes in the attitudes and psychology of people compared even with the end of 1988' were 'apparent everywhere'. The 'difference between the present and the summer of last year', it noted, was that 'after their victory in the elections of 26 March the people . . . [had] realized their strength and learned to resist the bureaucracy'.<sup>12</sup>

With the Party authorities having decided to block Drach's candidacy at all costs, Bratun's victory in the new elections on 14 May brought some consolation to Lviv's democratic opposition. Elsewhere in Ukraine, two liberal writers who had been blocked from standing in Moscow, Korotych and Yevgenii Yevtushenko, were elected in Kharkiv. Because of the large number of candidates in many electoral districts, quite a few of the results were inconclusive, necessitating run-off elections.

On 16 May, the embattled CPU leadership held a plenum of its Central Committee to assess the situation and, as Shcherbytsky put it, 'to draw lessons from the results of the elections'. Stressing at the very outset of his address that the Party did not intend to relinquish its leading role in society, the Brezhnevite holdover indicated that because of 'the growth and deepening of the restructuring processes' the CPU was having to operate in 'unusual and complex conditions' characterized by 'the unprecedented rise in the civic and political activity of people'. Although he maintained that there was no need to 'dramatize' the situation in the republic, from the picture which he presented, it was clear that the CPU was under siege and was losing ground. 'One cannot help but see', the Ukrainian Party leader acknowledged, 'that nationalist manifestations are at times taking on an aggressive and overdy anti-Soviet character in many regions of the republic'. Ecological questions had acquired 'strongly national overtones', students were continuing to fall under the influence of politically 'dubious' unofficial groups, and 'extremist formations' were attempting to penetrate 'workers' collectives' and establish their cells there. Because of 'growing shortages, inflation and crime' social discontent was growing and, 'under the pretence of criticizing the administrative-command system and struggling against the bureaucracy' all kinds of 'demagogues and extremists' were attacking the Party and its leading role. As if invoking the warning that

<sup>12</sup> *Postup*, no. 4, May 1989, pp. 1-2.

Gorbachev had made in Donetsk, the Ukrainian Party leader declared: 'Our people are seriously concerned and alarmed that the development of events could lead to a situation like that in the Baltic states and Transcaucasia.'

According to Shcherbytsky, during the election campaign the CPU had been confronted by 'overt political opponents with far-reaching goals' and the Party authorities in some areas had been either unprepared or found wanting in facing this challenge from 'political extremism'. He expressed concern that some CPU officials had broken ranks during the election campaign and in effect had sided with the democratic opposition. The Ukrainian Party boss singled out Saliy, adding that he and others like him would have to answer for their 'politically immature' behaviour.

Although Shcherbytsky said that there were 'about fifteen groups' that were 'overtly destructive and anti-Socialist in their orientation', he focused on the UHU and Rukh. The former, he claimed, was attempting to 'undermine constitutional laws and order', to rehabilitate the OUN, and 'to develop a broad "national" or, more precisely, nationalist movement for the secession of Ukraine from the USSR'. The growing 'impudence' of the UHU, Shcherbytsky added, had been demonstrated at the May Day protest in Lviv.

In actual fact, the dramatic surge of support for Rukh in Western Ukraine had somewhat eclipsed the UHU, which had done so much to prepare the ground. The leaders of the UHU (which still called itself a federation of human rights organizations, and in April had accepted the UPDL as a collective member) had gradually given up trying to transform their own organization into a broad popular front-type movement; instead, having given their backing to Rukh, they continued to concentrate on building up an organization which increasingly resembled a political party. Internal conflicts between moderates in the leadership and some of the more militant members had also come to a head in the spring, and at a meeting of the UHU's Coordinating Council on 7 May Vasyl Sichko and Ivan Makar had been expelled from the organization. Under criticism from radical nationalists, both in Ukraine and in the West, however, the UHU had, at the same meeting, amended its Declaration of Principles to get around the problem of the compromise over the issue of independence. The change accentuated the UHU's commitment to Ukrainian statehood and to upholding the right of individuals or civic groups to 'promote their ideas regarding statehood in a

constitutional manner, [whether] in the form of a federation, confederation with other nations of the USSR or Europe, as well as full state independence'.<sup>13</sup>

The Ukrainian Party leader was a little less scathing in his condemnation of Rukh, which he described as a 'new political structure', which sought mass support and saw itself as being in opposition to the Communist Party. Rukh's draft programme, he warned, was 'imbued with essentially separatist' and 'destructive' goals and it was no coincidence that 'the UHU and formations similar to it' had 'hurried to announce' that they were joining the Popular Movement. All the same, acknowledging that there were 'reasonable people' among the founders and leaders of Rukh who perhaps had not fully realized the dangers of uniting with 'nationalist and extremist elements', Shcherbytsky implicitly called on the moderates and Party members in the Popular Movement to break with the 'extremists'. In something of a departure for him, he conceded that the CPU could not simply remain deaf to the myriad of unofficial associations and that it ought to conduct a dialogue with them with the aim of 'winning over to its side healthy forces, [and] directing their initiative into healthy channels'.

Apart from calling on the CPU to close ranks, learn from its mistakes, and improve its ideological work, especially in the mass media, the Ukrainian Party leader had little else to say to reassure the CPU's formidable force of 3,304,000 members and candidate members. What he did stress, however, was that the CPU had to ensure that it would be ready for the next stage of the political struggle — the elections in the near future to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR and the regional and district councils. Party committees at all levels were instructed to 'approach this exceptionally important political campaign with a clear understanding of their tasks and the methods' to be employed. As the first stage in the preparations, Shcherbytsky announced that the drafting of a new republican election law had been placed at the top of the CPU's political agenda.<sup>14</sup>

A few days later, *Pravda Ukrainy* published the text of an interview which Shcherbytsky had given to the Associated Press over a month

<sup>13</sup> UPA Press Release, no. 63, 12 May 1989.

<sup>14</sup> *Radyanska Ukraina*, 17 May 1989.

earlier. In it, having had adequate time to prepare the answers, he provided a spirited defence of his stewardship in Ukraine and of the supposed progress which restructuring and democratization were making there. As for Rukh, he claimed that the republic's workers had not supported its creation and that this had been demonstrated in the extensive debate in the press about its draft programme.<sup>15</sup>

On 21 May, the final run-off elections brought further blows to the CPU. In Kyiv, two more prominent Rukh supporters, Yavorivsky and Chernyak, were elected, as well as a liberal Communist university lecturer, Valerii Hryshchuk. Furthermore, the following day in the Ukrainian capital, blue and yellow flags first appeared in the crowd during an official outdoor meeting in honour of Shevchenko. Pavlychko, who was on the tribune, recounts that the crowd tried to prevent the police from seizing the students who had raised the national colours and eventually succeeded in securing their release. That memorable day, he says, senior Communist officials throughout Kyiv were stricken by panic as if they were expecting a revolution.<sup>16</sup>

All in all, then, the drawn-out election struggle contributed significantly to the politicization of society and resulted in a psychological and political breakthrough. The size of the protest vote revealed the level of dissatisfaction in the republic not only with declining social and economic conditions but also with the Shcherbytsky regime and what it represented. Although the old order had demonstrated that it still remained powerful, the victories scored by the democratic opposition showed what could be achieved with united action. Democratic candidates had triumphed in Kyiv, while in Lviv resurgent national democratic forces had demonstrated their strength and advanced the national cause. Lviv, moreover, had given its weighty support to Rukh, providing it with a large new and dynamic regional section, and thereby stimulated the symbiosis between Western and central Ukraine. And of course, the elections had resulted in the election of a number of democratic and nationally minded deputies, including Rukh supporters, who, enjoying the authority, exposure and relative

<sup>15</sup> *Pravda Ukrainy*, 21 May 1989.

Author's interview with Pavlychko. For a fuller account of this demonstration see the letter from Teren and five other writers defending the action of the young people who had unfurled the blue and yellow flags in *Vechimii Kyiv*, 27 May 1989.

immunity that went their new positions, could more effectively carry the fight to their reactionary adversary and publicize the grievances and demands of their compatriots.

*The national democratic opposition consolidates*

When the Congress of People's Deputies convened on 25 May, it gradually emerged that the size of the reformist contingent from Ukraine was larger than originally thought and not limited to deputies elected in Kyiv and Lviv. Among the new radical or liberal figures were Sergei Konev, a young ethnic Russian doctor from Dnipropetrovsk (elected in Dniprodzerzhynsk), Mykola Kutsenko, a legal specialist from Kremenchuk (elected in Poltava), Vilen Martyrosyan, an ethnic Armenian Red Army colonel based in Rivne, and Yurii Sorochyk, a young veteran of the war in Afghanistan, who had defeated Kotyk in Lviv. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of the 262 representatives from Ukraine were nominees of the CPU and, with the division of the deputies at the Congress into republican delegations so as to simplify procedure, the Ukrainian reformists were to find themselves blocked from Teaching the rostrum (Bratun voiced a complaint about this on 30 May, but to no avail) and from nomination to the new bicameral Supreme Soviet, the members of which the Congress formally elected. It also turned out that, despite the headway which the reformist forces had made in different parts of the Soviet Union in the elections, most of the deputies elected to the Congress were conservatives who formed, as the radical Moscow historian and deputy Yurii Afanasev labelled them, an 'aggressively obedient' majority representing 'the Brezhnevite-Stalinist apparatus'. Nevertheless, the reformists succeeded in having the proceedings televised live, thereby allowing the population of the Soviet Union to watch events which in fact proved to be even more dramatic than at the Nineteenth Party Conference.

Before leaving for Moscow, the reformist deputies from the Ukrainian capital formed a 'Kyiv's Deputies' Club' along the lines of the analogous 'Moscow Group'. At the Congress, according to Yavorivsky, he, Chernyak, Hryshchuk and other democratically minded deputies from Ukraine immediately found they had common ground with the Lithuanian representatives, next to whom they had been seated, and also some of the reformist deputies from

Moscow. In fact, Konev, who represented a district in the heart of the traditional Brezhnev-Shcherbytsky political stronghold — the Dnipropetrovsk region — made a striking debut on 27 May in which he spoke out in support of Afanasev and the Baltic delegates. During the four years of restructuring, he claimed, the backbone of the administrative-command system had been 'very carefully preserved' and the reforms had been only 'half measures'. The Baltic representatives were being accused of 'separatism and self-isolation' when all they were doing was speaking about republican sovereignty and, despite the opposition of the 'centre', developing their own approach to economic reform. Konev proposed that instead of attacking the Baltic delegates, they should be encouraged to share their ideas with the deputies from the other parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> A group of Ukrainian deputies, including Honchar, also addressed a note to the presidium of the Congress condemning the killings of the demonstrators in Tbilisi and expressing sympathy to the Georgian people.<sup>18</sup>

Disappointed by the conservative attitude of the majority, the reformist Ukrainian deputies were forced to watch in disgust as, for instance, on 2 June a delegate from Ukraine, Serhii Chervonopysky, a Komsomol official and Afghan war veteran, launched into a diatribe against Sakharov for daring to criticize the role of the Red Army in Afghanistan, and also when a week later Gorbachev (who had been elected chairman of the new Supreme Soviet on the first day of the Congress) cut short Sakharov's speech just as the latter was about to deal with the nationalities problem. Subsequently, when a new radical faction headed by Sakharov (who had been nominated by the USSR Academy of Sciences) and Yeltsin — the Interregional Group — began to form, the Ukrainian reformists supported it.<sup>19</sup>

Still, quite a few radical deputies, mainly Russians and Baits, did manage to get to the rostrum and to raise a host of sensitive issues, including the question of responsibility for the bloody crackdown

<sup>17</sup> *Izvestiya*, 29 May 1989.

Honchar included the text in his article about the Congress in *Litcratuma Ukraina*, 29 June 1989.

Author's telephone interview from Munich with Yavorivsky on 14 June 1989 for Radio Liberty's Ukrainian Service (broadcast on 16 June 1989). A sign of the times, this was the first interview given by a Ukrainian deputy to Radio Liberty, which the official media in Ukraine were still depicting as subversive and nefarious.

in Tbilisi, the role of the CPSU, the powers of the KGB, the violation of democratic norms during the elections, and the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (a special commission was established to study this problem). Indeed, with protests going on at this time in Georgia, Moldova and Uzbekistan, and the Baltic deputies, including for instance the Lithuanian Party leader Algirdas Brazauskas, and the chairman of the Latvian Supreme Soviet, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, who had been the Latvian Communist Party's ideological secretary, pressing for the fullest degree of sovereignty for their republics, the nationalities, problem figure as one of the main themes in the debates.

From among the Ukrainian delegation, Oliinyk was the only representative who took advantage of his opportunity to address the Congress to raise questions of concern to Ukrainian patriots. After starting by describing Ukraine as 'the most docile and loyal republic', he went on to call for a strengthening of the sovereignty of the republics, for Ukrainian to be made the state language in his republic and for the inauguration of a broad programme of Ukrainization. Stressing that the Ukrainian state should simultaneously encourage the development of the languages of the national minorities, he strongly opposed the idea that Russian should also be made a state language in Ukraine. Just two weeks after he had staunchly defended the good name of the Communist Party at the plenum of the CPU Central Committee, he complained publicly that members of the Ukrainian Language Society were being persecuted by 'bureaucrats actively opposed to restructuring in the sphere of national relations'. Oliinyk also protested against the unchecked powers of all-Union ministries which, he said, were continuing to get away with their abject disregard for the protection of the environment and, in particular, he called for the closure of the Chornobyl nuclear power station.

But the most significant feature about Oliinyk's speech was the important new argument which he presented. As if to emphasize that he was no nationalist, he made it clear that the desire for genuine sovereign statehood was not something that only the non-Russians ought to be thinking about. The Russians, he reminded the Congress, did not have their own Communist Party, Academy of Sciences, or separate seat in the United Nations. This theme was taken up three days later by the Latvian Janis Peters who asked: 'Why is Russia afraid of becoming independent of the

all-Union *diktat*.<sup>20</sup>) The Estonian deputy Klara Hallik was to go further still and argue that the Russian nation had lost out as a result of the blurring of the distinction between the Russian identity and the all-Union one, and that its national revival was impeded by the perpetuation of 'habits of imperial thinking' and the idea that Russia and Moscow were necessarily somehow not only political and economic, but also cultural, linguistic and religious 'centres' for the USSR's diverse Slavic, Baltic, Turkic, Finno-Ugric and other peoples.<sup>21</sup>

Although the reformist Ukrainians allied themselves with like-minded Russian deputies, some of them were disappointed to discover that their new Russian colleagues did not have much understanding for, or even interest in, the issues connected with nationalities policy which they wanted to raise. Fedoriv, for instance, told a Lviv newspaper that Yeltsin 'practically pays no attention to nationalities' problems' and 'supports [Russian-native-language] bilingualism, not understanding what this means in practice in the republics'.<sup>22</sup> Sakharov was one of the few exceptions, though. In his speech on 9 June he described the USSR as an imperial edifice, the victims of which included both the non-Russian and Russian nations alike, and called for its replacement by a genuine federation of equal states based on a new freely negotiated Union treaty. Although he was forced to break off his address before reaching this section, the full text of his speech was reproduced in numerous independent publications.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Sakharov was to develop his views on this matter in a interview which *Ogonek* published the following month. By then he was calling for the dismantling of the Soviet Union's 'imperial' structures and the creation of a voluntary confederation in which the non-Russians would be given 'independence to the maximum degree'.<sup>24</sup>

While the Congress was meeting, a group of Ukrainian Catholics who had recently begun a hunger strike on Moscow's Arbat drew the attention of the foreign and Russian press to the continuing lack of religious freedom in Ukraine. The authorities in Ukraine had

<sup>20</sup> Moscow television, 30 May, and *Izvestiya*, 2 June 1989.

<sup>21</sup> *Pmvda*, 7 June 1989.

<sup>22</sup> *Leninska Molod*, 3 June 1989.

<sup>23</sup> *Holos*, no. 1, 6 August 1989, pp. 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ogonek*, no. 31, July 1989, pp. 26-7.



remained hostile to the Ukrainian Catholics and, apart from continuing to harass Ukrainian Catholic priests, had exacerbated tensions in Western Ukraine by starting to transfer 'closed' former Uniate churches to Orthodox believers. The preparation of a new Soviet law on freedom of conscience had nevertheless raised hopes that both the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Churches would finally be allowed to exist legally. Speaking at a press conference in Lviv on 10 May in St George's Cathedral and in the presence of senior officials responsible for religious policy in Ukraine, Metropolitan Filaret had, however, dashed them: stressing the need to preserve not only religious 'unity', but also, as he put it, unity 'among all our nations', he had reiterated the Russian Orthodox Church's opposition to the restoration of the two Ukrainian national churches. The legalization of the Uniate Church would lead to religious and inter-ethnic conflict, he maintained and proposed that Ukrainian Catholics who did not want to attend Orthodox services should worship in Roman Catholic (which in practice usually meant Polish) churches. He also claimed that the movement for the restoration of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was inspired by individuals who wanted to exploit religion for political purposes — 'the separation of Ukraine from the Soviet state.'<sup>25</sup> To protest this attitude, a few days later a delegation of Ukrainian Catholic bishops and clergy travelled to Moscow to hand over to the Soviet authorities yet another petition for the legalization of their church. After their visit, groups of volunteers began the hunger strike protest in the centre of Moscow which was to last for four months.

The Ukrainian Catholics protesting in Moscow received support from sympathetic Ukrainian deputies, including Honchar and the Western Ukrainian representatives, Bratun, Fedoriv and Sorochyk, who raised their case in the pages of the Ukrainian press. A number of liberal Russian Orthodox activists also responded sympathetically, and Sakharov included a call for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in his above-mentioned speech. What was also encouraging for the protesters was that on 11 June *Moskovskie novosti*, which had become one of the flagships of *ofglasnost*, reported on their hunger strike. This publicity elicited an angry reaction from Metropolitan Filaret, prompting the newspaper to provide more

<sup>25</sup> Radio Kyiv, 10 May 1989.

detailed coverage of the issue. At the end of July it was to publish a commentary which for the first time ever in a Soviet newspaper not only told the truth about how the Ukrainian Catholic Church had been forcibly incorporated in the Russian Orthodox Church and its members repressed, but also called for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the restitution of its property, including the Cathedral of St George.<sup>26</sup>

Back in Lviv, the Ukrainian Catholics, and for that matter, the activists seeking to revive the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, received support from the Lviv regional section of Memorial, which held its inaugural conference in the city on 27 May. This gathering, which was followed the next day by a huge public meeting, complete with national flags and a religious service conducted by a Ukrainian Catholic priest, once again attested to the growing civil and national assertiveness in Western Ukraine. Among other things, the resolutions adopted by the conference rejected the distorted official history of the region; supported the Baits in their condemnation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences; recognized the union proclaimed by the U N R and Z U N R in January 1919 as 'the actual legal basis' of Ukraine's unification, as opposed to the 'liberation' of Western Ukraine by Soviet troops in 1939 following the Nazi-Soviet agreement; and denounced the bloody repression in Tbilisi as a 'manifestation of Stalinist methods to deal with complex problems of inter-ethnic relations'.<sup>27</sup> Yukhnovsky was elected head of the organization and Chornovil to its council.

In the short period since the founding conference of the republican Memorial organization, the authorities and the official press had been forced to begin acknowledging some of the crimes of the Stalin era that had either been covered up, as in Bykivnya, or blamed on the Nazis, as in Vinnytsya, where, as in Katyn, the German invaders had uncovered the mass graves of thousands of victims of Stalinist terror. More and more such sites were being discovered throughout the republic and the press was providing new information about the liquidation of Ukrainian political and cultural

See Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, 'The Ukrainian Catholic Church in the USSR Under Gorbachev', *Problems of Communism*, no. 6 (November-December 1990), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Postup*, no. 6, July 1989, p. 5.

figures and the famine of 1932-3. As far as Western Ukraine was concerned, the emergence of the gruesome details about the scale of Soviet repression in the region, not to mention the now widespread denunciations of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, was not only complicating official preparations for the celebration in September of the fiftieth anniversary of Western Ukraine's incorporation into the Ukrainian SSR, but also making it difficult to dismiss the UPA's and OUN's resistance fighters as fascists and bandits, which the official newspapers were still endeavouring to do.

The authorities were also being forced to respond to the mounting pressure, in Western Ukraine and Kyiv at any rate, for the restoration of Ukrainian national symbols. Towards the end of June, the Supreme Soviet's commission on patriotic and internationalist education and inter-ethnic relations held a special hearing to discuss this issue at which a number of official historians and experts were asked to speak, presumably to give the meeting some semblance of objectivity. In fact, in his concluding remarks, the chairman of the commission, Kravchuk, agreed that the history of Ukraine's national symbols needed further study but stressed that the entire issue was first and foremost a political and ideological one. There was no basis, he declared, for changing the existing state symbols of the Ukrainian SSR, which reflected the socialist choice which the workers of the republic had supposedly made once and for all, that is, the red and sky blue flag, the star and the hammer and sickle. He also reaffirmed the traditional Soviet line on the blue and yellow flag and trident: these 'dirty and bloody symbols' had always been identified with enemies of the Ukrainian people and exploitation. The forces which sought to restore them were nostalgic 'for an independent . . . Ukraine' and by 'choosing the blue and yellow flag' were 'saying openly that they are for breaking away from the Soviet Union'.<sup>28</sup> The commission duly laid down the law and the official press was used to amplify the message: the national symbols were to remain prohibited and more attention was to be devoted to inculcating the youth with socialist and internationalist values.<sup>29</sup>

Yelchenko and Kravchuk also advised the CPU's Politburo not to yield on the issue of the legislation of the Ukrainian Catholic

See the official account of the meeting issued by the Ukrainian state news agency RATAU in *Litentuma Ukraina*, 6 July 1989.

*Radyanska Ukraina*, 7 July 1989.

Church. In a report submitted at the end of June, they supported the position espoused by Metropolitan Filaret, maintaining that the regularization of the Church would provide a legal basis for anti-Soviet and nationalist activity. Revealing the extent of official Kyiv's increased support for the Russian Orthodox Church, they noted that during 1988-9 more than 1,300 religious communities belonging to it had been registered in Ukraine, and close to 1,000 churches and several monasteries in Kyiv, Chernihiv and the Ivano-Frankivsk region transferred to it.<sup>30</sup>

Also at the end of June, the month in which Solidarity had gained 65% of the votes cast in the Polish elections, the CPU Central Committee's ideological commission met to discuss policy towards Rukh and its allies. Although it was chaired by Yelchenko, the tone was set by Kravchuk. His remarks appeared to reflect a certain adjustment to the changing political climate in the USSR as a whole, as demonstrated in the debates at the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow. Indeed, on 24 June, the CPU's organ *Radyanska Ukraina* had even called its interview about the Congress with Shcherbytsky's new deputy, Ivashko, 'Twelve Days Which Made Us Different'; and, on 1 July, against the background of a new wave of ethnic unrest, this time in Central Asia, Gorbachev was to appear on Soviet television with a warning about the 'tremendous danger' threatening 'the very unity' of the USSR.

Kravchuk emphasized that the main threat facing the CPU was the attempts being made by 'politicized' and 'extremist' groups to 'consolidate' their forces 'under the umbrella' of Rukh. There was danger that 'anti-Soviet' elements might even begin to take control of the Popular Movement. The Party machine, therefore, had to do everything possible to prevent this process. On the one hand, Party committees were to be instructed to cooperate with moderates in Rukh and other independent organizations, and if possible 'steer' them in the right direction, and on the other, to continue exposing and denouncing 'extremist elements'. Outlining the CPU's modified approach to Rukh, Kravchuk announced that the ideological commission had decided that the Party's representatives at all levels should 'explain' to the population that the CPU was not against the Popular Movement as such, but against attempts by anti-Soviet forces to hijack it.<sup>31</sup>

The CPU's enduring conservative attitude was a far cry from what was happening in the Baltic republics (or, for that matter, Poland), which were continuing to serve as sources of inspiration for the Ukrainian democratic opposition. In June, the Lithuanian Komsomol declared its independence from the all-Union body and a plenum of the leadership of the Lithuanian Communist Party revealed that the spirit of independence had also taken hold of this organization.

By now, the Baltic republics had also begun to provide valuable technical assistance to the Ukrainian and other national democratic movements. Quite a few of the numerous new independent publications which appeared in Ukraine during the spring and summer of 1989 were printed in the Baltic republics. The Russian-language newspaper of the Latvian Popular Front, *Atmoda*, not only provided sympathetic coverage of the Ukrainian national movement but also served as an invaluable source of information at this time about events in other parts of the Soviet Union. The Baltic republics also served as a haven for non-Russian movements and organizations which were being blocked from holding founding congresses in their own republics by the local authorities. On 24-5 June, for instance, the Belarusian Popular Front held its founding congress in Vilnius and that same weekend the UPDL did likewise in Riga. This set a useful precedent for Rukh and afforded the Ukrainian Popular Movement some leverage with the Party authorities.

On 1 July, the inaugural conference of the Kyiv regional organization of Rukh was finally held. Although spurred on by more radical activists, Popovych and Bryukhovetsky had waited for the right moment. Indeed, Popovych acknowledged that the meeting could have been held sooner in Vilnius, but argued that this would not have had the same effect as convening it in the Ukrainian capital. The two leaders had also rejected the temptation to 'rush things' by turning the inaugural conference of the Kyiv regional organization into the founding congress of the republican organization of Rukh.<sup>32</sup>

What seems to have made the conference possible was the softening in official policy towards Rukh. Whether chastened by the recent election results or simply displaying greater political realism and flexibility, Kravchuk not only attended the conference

" *Radyanska Ukraina*, 5 July 1989.

" Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 41.

but also even declared in his speech that he and Drach had 'mutually acknowledged . . . mistakes' they had made in the enduring stand-off between the CPU leadership and Rukh and had now 'found a common language'.<sup>33</sup>

From what went on at the conference, however, there was not much sign of any closer understanding. In essence, Kravchuk again called on Rukh's leadership not to align their movement with 'extremist' organizations. For their part, Drach, Pavlychko, Yavorivsky and other Rukh leaders kept up the attack against the Shcherbytsky regime and its record on a broad range of issues, accusing it, as before, of being anti-democratic, hostile towards restructuring and the Ukrainian national revival, and indifferent to public concern about protection of the environment. Describing the attitude of the Kyiv authorities, Pavlychko, for instance, asserted that they were

....trying in all possible ways to salvage the administrative-corn-  
mand system; stir up dissatisfaction with the changes under  
*perestroika*; frighten the people with the chimera of raging  
nationalism among the creative intelligentsia; and portray the  
initiators of Rukh, who are without a doubt honest and brave  
citizens, as adventurers who are trying to seize power.

Although no new variant of Rukh's draft programme was unveiled at the conference, it was clear that the radicalization of the movement was continuing. Speakers included former political prisoners, UHU leaders and national democratic activists, such as Chornovil, Mykhailo Horyn, Badzo, Naboka and Yehven Sverstyuk, and several UHU members were elected to the organization's new coordinating council. Chornovil, who was given a standing ovation, used the opportunity to reject the label of extremism which the authorities were seeking to pin on the UHU and to denounce the attempts to split Rukh into moderates and radicals. He reminded the delegates of the pioneering work which the UHU had carried out in less auspicious conditions in laying the groundwork for a democratic opposition movement and called on them to oppose the recognition of any 'leading role' for a party which had 'oppressed Ukraine for seventy years'.

Two of the newly elected radical deputies, Yavorivsky and

<sup>33</sup> *Robitnycha hazeta*, 8 July 1989.

Konev, delivered outspoken speeches and emerged as Rukh's up and coming new figures. Yavorivsky began his speech, tongue in cheek, with the words, 'Dear extremists', and asked 'what kind of a people' were the Ukrainians if they had to beg 'Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk, a Ukrainian from Volhynia', that their native language be made the state language of the republic, or deprived themselves of a future by meekly allowing such ecological disasters as Chornobyl and Chernivtsi. The whole problem boiled down to one thing, he argued: the Ukrainians did not have a real state or government of their own. As for the CPU, he added sarcastically, it had demonstrated its independence long ago by lagging so far behind with the implementation of restructuring. For his part, Konev drew the delegates' attention to the need for the democratic forces to be well prepared and organized for the elections to the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet and local councils—which he described as 'the decisive stage in the struggle against totalitarianism, conservatism and national nihilism' — which were scheduled for the following spring. He also called for changes in Rukh's draft programme, which he said was obsolete and too ambivalent, adding that he, for one, could not contemplate joining a movement which still reverentially recognized the leading role of the Communist Party. Other speakers, too, many of whom were still members of the Communist Party, supported the calls for the abandonment of the clause in the draft programme recognizing the leading role of the Party and for the establishment of genuine Ukrainian statehood.

Representatives of Sajudis and the Latvian Popular Front were given an especially warm welcome. When the latter declared that the Latvians and Ukrainians shared the common goal of achieving 'genuine democracy, a law-governed state and . . . independence' by following the Polish and Hungarian examples, the delegates responded with tumultuous applause.

Drach himself seemed eager to infuse his colleagues with the revived national spirit he had encountered during the election struggle in Lviv. He spoke forcefully in defence of Ukraine's national symbols and countered the arguments which had been advanced by Kravchuk's Supreme Soviet commission that the blue and yellow colours were associated with enemies of the Soviet state and should therefore remain banned. Should not then the red Soviet flag be rejected, Drach asked, because 'so many millions of Ukrainian were murdered when it was held in the hands of Stalin and Beria'.

Contrasting the CPU's hard-line position with that of the Baltic Communist parties, the fiery poet expressed regret that the CPU had not produced a Brazauskas.

Drach, as well as Chornovil, also raised an issue which had recently galvanized the patriotically minded public. On learning that on 5-9 July 'Rossiya Molodaya,' or 'Young Russia,' the youth branch of the Russian ultra-nationalist organization *Pamyat*, as well as several Soviet 'patriotic' organizations under the aegis of the all-Union Komsomol, were planning to celebrate the 280th anniversary of Peter the Great's victory at Poltava on the site of the battlefield, Rukh and U H U leaders had sought to block this action. They not only urged their supporters to converge on Poltava on that day but also called on the republican authorities not to permit the 'insult' to Ukrainian national feeling. At the conference, both Drach and Chornovil warned, as the former put it, about 'the vitality of great-state chauvinism', and stepped up the pressure on the republican authorities to ban the celebrations. Kravchuk managed to cool emotions somewhat by reassuring the delegates that official Kyiv had 'approached the appropriate Union authorities with a request not to permit the celebration of the 280th anniversary of the Battle of Poltava on Ukrainian territory'.

The conference demonstrated the strong appeal and rapid growth of Rukh. Donchyk informed the delegates that the Kyiv regional organization now had almost 200 groups and thousands of members.<sup>34</sup> Coordinating Councils had also been established in Lviv, Kharkiv, Vinnytsya and Ternopil, and new groups were being formed throughout the republic. The strength of Rukh in the Ukrainian capital was also manifested by the mass rally which the organization held in Kyiv at the end of the conference: it drew over 10,000 people and blue and yellow flags abounded. Accentuating Rukh's recognition of the need to prepare to ensure that democratically minded candidates did well at the next round of elections, the meeting's main slogan was: 'All power to the [popularly elected] councils'. Within a few days, the Coordinating Coun-

" *Literaturna Ukraina* of 13 July 1989 cites him as giving an improbably high figure of 'not less than 200,000'. But perhaps this was a typo as Serhii Naboka, reporting on the conference for *Atmoda*, gave the more realistic figure of 20,000. See *Atmoda*, 7 August 1989.



cil met and elected an organizing committee headed by Yavorivsky to prepare for the republican inaugural conference of Rukh.<sup>35</sup>

In the meantime, despite Kravchuk's assurances, a new battle of Poltava was fought. On 5 July, a group of about 300 members of 'military-patriotic clubs' arrived in the city from Moscow and after laying wreaths at the graves of Peter the Great's soldiers were sent back home by the police. Groups of Ukrainian activists from various parts of the republic also began arriving, and in most cases, after attempting to stage demonstrations, distribute leaflets, or lay wreaths at the graves of Mazepa's and Swedish soldiers, were detained and expelled from the city. This went on for four days, with groups of Ukrainian activists arriving from Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Vinnytsya and Dnipropetrovsk. The outcome was that no significant official, or semi-official, celebrations of Peter the Great's victory were held and that, despite their harassment by the police, Ukrainian patriotic activists were able to present a different interpretation of the Battle of Poltava from the officially prescribed one. Although Memorial was to complain to the authorities about the rough treatment of the Ukrainian demonstrators, overall the action resulted in an important symbolic victory for the Ukrainian national movement.<sup>36</sup>

Another significant success achieved by Ukrainian patriotic forces at this time was the formal acknowledgement by the republican Procuracy and KGB that the case of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine had been fabricated and that leading members of the national intelligentsia who had been convicted at the subsequent show trial in 1930 ought to be fully rehabilitated.<sup>37</sup>

### *The miners' revolt*

Despite this progress, Rukh and its allies were soon reminded of how much remained to be done. When, in the second half of

On the conference, see Roman Solchanyk, 'Constituent Conference of Kyiv Regional Popular Front', *Report on the USSR*, no. 32 (11 August 1989); Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, pp. 41-2; *Attnoda*, 7 August 1989; and Kaminsky, *In a Transitional Stage*, pp. 183-5 and 191-215.

For very different accounts of what occurred, see *Vilne Slovo* (a Rukh newsletter published in Kyiv), no. 3, July 1989, p. 4, and the diatribe against the Ukrainian activists in *Pravda Ukrainy*, 23 July 1989.

<sup>37</sup> *Pravda Ukrainy*, 23 July 1989.

July, a wave of miners' strikes spread from the Kuzbass in Siberia to the Donbas, the national democratic moment saw just how little influence it had among the workers in the eastern and central regions of Ukraine. The miners treated what few local representatives of the UHU, UPDL or Rukh there were, or who came from other regions of Ukraine to talk to them, with suspicion or hostility; they appeared to have little interest in matters other than the improvement of their social, economic and working conditions. Nevertheless, from the very outset, the authorities both in Kyiv and in Moscow betrayed their concern that the strikes in the Donbas might take on a political dimension: in the very first official report about the start of strikes in this region, TASS conjured up the image of UHU 'extremists' from Western Ukraine stirring up trouble among the miners.<sup>38</sup>

The situation was different, though, in Western Ukraine. Here, some of the miners in the Chervonohrad area, close to the Polish border, were reported to have come out with political demands, including the establishment of an independent trade union of mineworkers with the proposed name of 'Solidarity'. In Pavlohrad, in central Ukraine, the miners also apparently supported the idea of independent trade unions, though here the UHU and Rukh did not play a role.<sup>39</sup>

For ten tense days from 18 to 28 July, strike committees were in control of the Ukrainian coalfields; the miners did not begin returning to work until the Soviet government gave in and agreed to all of their demands, including a considerable degree of autonomy and self-management for the mines. Even then the miners did not disband their strike committees but sought to build regional and an all-Union organizations.

Throughout the main phase of the protests, the strike committees ignored Shcherbytsky and the Ukrainian government and addressed their demands and appeals directly to the Kremlin. In fact, Shcherbytsky's team seems to have been at a loss how to respond to the strikes. Soviet television even implicitly criticized its inaction by asking on 18 July why the Ukrainian government had not begun any negotiations with the miners. Perhaps one of the reasons for this passivity was the fact that Kyiv in reality had very little control over

TASS, 17 July 1989.

See UPA Press Release, no. 109, 29 July 1989.

conditions in the Donbas and that the miners in the region had made a perennial source of friction in relations between Moscow and Kyiv their key demand: the allocation of additional funds for the development of the Donbas.

The miners' strikes revealed that the workers, or at any rate the coalminers, were more disciplined and politically resourceful than had been thought and were potentially a very powerful force. Furthermore, the strikes, on the one hand, exposed a fundamental weakness of the Ukrainian national democratic movement — the lack of support, and frequently even of understanding, for it in the heavily Russified, industrialized, south-east, and, on the other, highlighted the disaffection of the working class with the Party which claimed to rule in its name. For Rukh's leaders, who admired the example which Solidarity had set in Poland, this was a missed opportunity to follow the Polish path and reach out to the workers. No attempt seems to have been made to form a body similar to the Polish intellectuals' Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), or even to adopt a clear position on the strikes.<sup>41</sup> The UPDL did produce a leaflet backing the miners, but even if it had been widely distributed among them, the text was probably too radical.<sup>41</sup>

The strikes also showed once again how highly centralized the Soviet economy remained and that, as local officials explained to the strikers, decisions on such matters as the allocation of funds, food supplies and the availability of consumer goods, were still made in Moscow. Hardly surprisingly, therefore, the miners' protests influenced attitudes on the issues of republican economic sovereignty and greater local control of economic decision-making.

Initially, at the Congress of People's Deputies, the Baltic proposals

When asked by the auditor about this on 6 October 1989 during a discussion recorded in the Munich studios of Radio Liberty, Drach replied: 'As for "Solidarity" and the overall situation in Poland, it is generally understood that this is a link-up of Poland's intelligentsia and workers. It was made possible by the years and years of, perhaps thousand-year-long, nurturing by the Church of this single ethnos, this one Polish stream, and so on. In the current Ukrainian situation, we do not have a comparable variant. We have *on the one* hand, this plundered, mutilated, downtrodden, chemicalized village that is rising to its feet under very difficult conditions. On the other hand, we have the workers, who in most of Ukraine are Russian-speaking ... Therefore, the problem of relations with the working people ... is for us especially complicated and particularly important.' See in Solchanyk, *Ukraine: From Chernobyl' to Sovereignty*, pp. 49-50.

For the text, see *Soviet Ukrainian Affairs*, no. 2 (summer 1989), pp. 28-9.

for economic autonomy had come under heavy fire from the central planners and conservatives. On 8 July, the Western Ukrainian representative Bratun had spoken out in defence of the Baltic scheme. But once the strikes got under way, on 26 July, Anatolii Saunin, a deputy from the Donbas who had been delegated by miners to represent them, hailed the Baltic plan for economic autonomy and republican cost-accounting as a 'revolutionary step in the restructuring of the country's economic mechanism'. When, on 27 July, the Baltic scheme was finally approved, Shcherbak called it a 'historic day'. He told the Congress that he regretted that it had not been Ukraine that had initiated the breakthrough.<sup>42</sup> During the next few weeks, the Party leaders in the Donetsk, Voroshylovhrad and Lviv regions were all, in their way, to call for a review of the relations between Moscow and the regions and for economic decentralization.<sup>43</sup>

### *Cracks in the empire*

As the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact approached, developments in the Baltic republics continued to reverberate in other parts of the USSR. On 29 July, Latvia joined Estonia and Lithuania in declaring its sovereignty. A few days later, the Estonian Supreme Soviet approved a controversial new election law setting minimum residence requirements for voters and candidates (two and five years respectively), which triggered off protests by the republic's Russian-speaking population.

Although, as far as the struggle for democracy and national self-determination was concerned, Ukraine still lagged far behind the Baltic republics, Shcherbytsky's team was increasingly anxious about the way things were going in their own republic and sought a firmer approach from the Soviet leadership. On 8 August, Shcherbytsky sent a report on the situation in Ukraine, which had been prepared jointly with Yelchenko and Kravchuk, to the Central Committee of the CPSU. It presented an alarming picture of growing ferment, widespread mass meetings and protests, increasing anti-Russian

<sup>42</sup> Radio Moscow, 8, 26 and 27 July 1989.

On the miners' strike in Ukraine and its consequences, see Bohdan Czajkowsky, "'We Want To Live as Human Beings": The Miners' Strike in Ukraine', *Soviet Ukrainian Affairs*, no. 3-4 (1989), pp. 10-16.

sentiment and trouble with Crimean Tatars returning to Crimea and with some of Ukraine's national minorities. 'Nationalists' and 'extremists' were drawing support especially from the creative and scientific intelligentsia and the students, and unless tougher measures were taken the political unrest would increase. Shcherbytsky noted that the republic's capacity to deal with these problems had been weakened because a large contingent of republican MVD troops and militia had been dispatched to trouble spots in other parts of the USSR. He requested that at least half of this contingent be returned to Ukraine, 'first and foremost to the Lviv region'. The Ukrainian Party leader also noted that 'the development of events in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova and several other regions of the country is creating a dangerous precedent for the further activation of anti-Socialist forces in our republic as well'.<sup>44</sup>

While Shcherbytsky waited for a response and *Pravda* was accusing the Baits of 'nationalist hysteria', the Kremlin on 17 August published its 'Platform', 'for improving inter-ethnic relations . . . and renewing nationalities policy', which was to be discussed at a forthcoming special plenum of the CPSU Central Committee. Although the Platform recognized the need to revamp the Soviet federation, the idea of renegotiating the Union treaty was rejected as was that of transforming the existing quasi-federation into a confederation. For all the talk of broadening the rights of the republics, not only was Moscow's predominance over them re-asserted but also the Russian nation was described as the 'consolidating basis of our entire Union', and the concept of a 'Soviet people' was again invoked. Whereas this document recognized the need to bolster the sense of Russian statehood by creating new Russian political, economic, scientific and other institutions, apart from conceding a measure of economic autonomy to the republics via self-accounting and self-financing, it offered little encouragement for non-Russians seeking genuine sovereignty and qualitatively different relations with Moscow. Besides, the principle that each nation of the USSR should have 'the right and real possibility of preserving its independence, uniqueness, culture, traditions and language' was something that had been promised throughout the Soviet period.<sup>45</sup>

Although it was becoming increasingly clear that democratization

Lytvyn, *Political Arena*, pp. 151-2.

See *Pravda*, 16 and 17 August 1989.

and the preservation of empire, however disguised, were incompatible, Gorbachev was determined to hold the Soviet Union together and seemed to underestimate the power of the pent-up centrifugal forces which had been released. For all his reformism in other spheres, his dunking on the nationalities question differed little from that of Brezhnev, Suslov and other proponents of the concept of the Soviet people with its Russianized Slavonic core. The chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers at this time, Masol, has given a poignant description of what Gorbachev's real attitude was at this delicate moment.

I remember how during one of the customary visits of Gorbachev and his family to Crimea for a holiday (it was in the summer of 1989), a discussion started up during dinner about events in the Baltic republics. Mikhail Sergeevich said the following: 'Just think, a group of loudmouths have got together in Lithuania — they'll let off steam for a while and then disperse. The main thing is that Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are united. Then nothing frightens us. We can get by without the Baltic republics or Georgia.'<sup>46</sup>

In fact, events in the Baltic republics were to continue to reverberate far beyond their borders. On the eve of the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a commission of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet declared the Nazi-Soviet agreement illegal and invalid and the popular fronts of all three Baltic republics issued a joint statement calling on Moscow to do likewise. On 23 August, some one million Baits marked the anniversary by forming a human chain stretching 600 kilometres from Tallinn to Riga and Vilnius. There was also a major demonstration that day by Moldovans in Kishinev (Chisinau). It took place against the background of strikes by Russian-speaking workers who were protesting against moves to make Moldovan the state language in the republic and restore the Latin alphabet. In Kyiv, on 21 August, the UHU and the UPDL organized a demonstration in solidarity with the Baits and Moldovans, the main Ukrainian protests against the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact having been planned for the following month.

While this was going on, the strike committees of the Donetsk, Voroshylovhrad, Dnipropetrovsk and Rostov (in the RSFSR)

regions convened a meeting on 17 August in Horlivka in the Donbas and set up the Regional Union of Strike Committees of the Donbas. It not only began to sweep aside some of the local Party committees, but also issued a call for a new strike on 1 October because, as it put it, the authorities were not honouring all of their promises and were distorting the miners' demands in the media.<sup>47</sup>

As the summer progressed, the Kyiv Deputies' Group gradually developed into a Ukrainian 'Republican Deputies' Club'. This loose coalition, which was formally established on 12 August, had a nucleus of about twenty-five, but, depending on the issue, could draw on the support of a further two dozen deputies. Its leadership consisted of four joint heads: Yavorivsky, Chernyak, Talanchuk and Arnold Nazarenko, an engineer from Dnipropetrovsk. The group published its own information bulletin, *Hobs* (Voice), the first issue of which had been put out by the Kyiv Deputies' Club on 6 August. Among the first priorities of the Republican Deputies' Club was to ensure that the forthcoming elections to the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Soviet and local councils would take place in more democratic conditions than to the Congress of People's Deputies. In fact, the first issue of *Holos* carried a declaration issued by Kyiv independent groups proposing the following basic principles: one man, one vote; direct elections of deputies to the Supreme Soviet on the basis of proportional representation; direct elections of the president of the republic; and multiple candidacies.

The proposed draft law on elections published on 6 August retained a number of undemocratic features favouring the Party apparatus, including the allocation of 25% of the seats to representatives of 'public organizations'. Only three other republics attempted to preserve this conservative prerogative of the ruling party. As before, the proposed law also left the Party-controlled electoral commissions with the power to accept or reject candidates if, in their view, the programmes of the candidates did not accord with the provisions of the constitution of the Ukrainian SSR.

The Republican Deputies' Club responded by issuing a statement signed by thirty-eight members, including two from the Donbas, addressed to all deputies of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet and representing Ukraine in the Congress of People's Deputies in which

<sup>4</sup> See David Marples, 'Increased Militancy in the Donetsk Coal Basin', *Report on the USSR*, no. 49 (8 December 1989), pp. 11-12.

it described the draft law on elections as anti-democratic and urged that it adhere to the above-mentioned democratic principles, with the addition of depriving the electoral commissions of their political screening role. The reformist Deputies' Club also announced that it would prepare an alternative draft law on elections, and called on the population to demonstrate on 2 September against the officially proposed draft law. It urged the authorities to put the question of the election law to a referendum and warned that in the event of an 'anti-democratic' law being adopted, the Club would call for a boycott of the elections and other forms of civil protest.<sup>48</sup> This outright challenge to the CPU coincided with the formation of a Solidarity-led government in Poland — the first of the Eastern and Central European Communist dominoes to fall.

On the day of protest, tens of thousands turned out in Kyiv, Lviv, Zhytomyr and other cities to support the call by the Republican Deputies' Club, but in many cities and towns, such as Simferopol and Vinnytsya, the authorities banned public meetings. The demonstrators in Lviv, who were supported by the local Komsomol organization, threatened strike action if the alternative draft election law was not published in the press. In Donetsk, the participants in a large public meeting adopted a resolution expressing their 'lack of confidence' in Shcherbytsky and Valentyna Shevchenko, the chairman of the republican Supreme Soviet, for having supervised the preparation of the 'undemocratic' draft election law and also threatening protest action if the Supreme Soviet approved 'anti-democratic' election laws. Moreover, they also called for Article 6 of the USSR Constitution recognizing the leading role of the CPSU to be repealed.<sup>49</sup> With the strike committees consolidating their organization in the Donbas and surrounding areas and beginning to call for new and democratic elections to the local councils, the authorities were thus faced with the prospect that the disaffected workers might give their backing to the campaign which the Republican Deputies' Club had launched. On 7 September, the alternative draft election law appeared in the Lviv Komsomol newspaper *Leninska Molod*, and a week later *Literatuma Ukraina* published it.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Hobs*, no. 2, 20 August 1989, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Holos*, no. 3, 3 September 1989, pp. 1 and 7, and Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 47.



All this, however, was nowhere near as dramatic as developments in some of the other republics. On 27 August, the Central Committee of the CPSU had issued a stinging attack on the Baltic popular fronts, warning that 'the fate of the Baltic peoples is in serious danger'. In Moldova, the adoption on 1 September of the law making Moldovan the state language further inflamed the situation and intensified the protests in Tiraspol by the 'Edinstvo' (Unity) movement, which like the 'Intermovement' in Estonia, the 'Interfront' in Latvia and the 'Edinstvo' movement in Lithuania, claimed to represent the interests of Russian-speaking residents, but in fact acted as an ultra-loyalist defender of the status quo. And in Azerbaijan, the local popular front had successfully called a general strike, which began on 4 September.

With the Kremlin continuing to issue warnings but seemingly unwilling or unable to do more to control things, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Shcherbytsky's regime to hold the line. The political change emanating from Moscow itself, the continuing pressure on the centre from some of the republics, and the growing strength of democratic opposition and national feeling in Ukraine<sup>51</sup> were forcing official Kyiv to make adjustments, which compared to the official position of only six months or a year before, represented significant concessions. On 5 September TASS reported that the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet had finally published the text of a draft law on languages designating Ukrainian as the state language of the republic. Shortly afterwards, the press also published the draft of a proposed law 'On the General Principles of the Economic Independence of the Ukrainian SSR'.<sup>52</sup> These developments, however, failed to overshadow news of the really critical breakthrough in the republic: behind the scenes, the leadership of Rukh had secured permission to convene its inaugural congress in Kyiv on 8-10 September.

Forced into making this concession by the growing strength of Rukh, threats from its leaders that they would hold their inaugural congress in one of the Baltic republics, and the absence of a firm line

<sup>50</sup> *Literaturna Ukmina*, 14 September 1989.

<sup>51</sup> According to the republican Ministry of Internal Affairs, during the first nine months of 1989 there were 724 mass meetings or demonstrations in Ukraine, 388 of which were not officially sanctioned. *Radyanska Ukraina*, 5 November 1989.

" *Pravda Ukrainy*, 1 September 1989.

in Moscow, the CPU leadership still hoped that it could upset this event and exploit it. Briefing the CPU's Politburo on the eve of the congress, Kravchuk emphasized that the CPU was determined to discredit Rukh's meeting. Its plan was to ensure the presence at the congress of representatives from various industrial enterprises, who although they were not delegates, would demand the right to speak and would disrupt proceedings by criticizing Rukh and calling into question the right of those present to represent the population of Ukraine. It was expected that the congress would take place under 'nationalist and separatist slogans', and therefore the official media would be mobilized to attack Rukh for its 'extremism'. Meetings were to be organized throughout the republic to protest against the congress, leading to a statement condemning Rukh issued by the Central Committee of the CPU.<sup>53</sup>