

# **BECOMING SOVIET: LOST CULTURAL ALTERNATIVES IN UKRAINE, 1917-1933**

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## **Abstract**

This doctoral thesis investigates the complex and multi-faceted process of the cultural sovietisation of Ukraine. The study argues that different political and cultural projects of a Soviet Ukraine were put to the test during the 1920s. These projects were developed and executed by representatives of two ideological factions within the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Ukraine: one originating in the pre-war Ukrainian socialist and communist movements, and another with a clear centripetal orientation towards Moscow. The representatives of these two ideological horizons endorsed different approaches to defining Soviet culture. The unified Soviet canon in Ukraine was an amalgamation of at least two different Soviet cultural projects: Soviet Ukrainian culture and Soviet culture in the Ukrainian language. These two visions of Soviet culture are examined through a biographical study of two literary protagonists: the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tychyna (1891-1967) and the writer Mykola Khvyl'ovyi (1893-1933). Overall, three equally important components, contributing to Ukraine's sovietisation, are discussed: the power struggle among the Ukrainian communist elites; the manipulation of the tastes and expectations of the audience; and the ideological and aesthetic evolution of Ukraine's writers in view of the first two components. At the same time, the study explores those cultural, and often political, alternatives which Soviet Ukraine had lost once the interaction between local political actors and art creators was constrained by a strictly defined channel, fully determined by a centralist cultural strategy. It also examines the rationale for the Soviet nationalities policy and identifies the determinant role of the Ukrainian communists in implementing and adjusting all-Soviet policies within the republic. Ultimately, this study of cultural sovietisation significantly enhances our understanding of the complex process of establishing and consolidating the Soviet regime in Ukraine.

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## **Note on Transliteration and Translation**

In this thesis, I follow the Library of Congress system of transliterating Ukrainian and Russian texts and proper names, except for the cases where a commonly accepted English translation exists (for example, Gorky and Mayakovsky). I have used the Ukrainian transliteration of Ukrainian names and geographical places (e.g., Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa and Donbas) for the sake of consistency.

I have given quotations in the English translation. I have used the Michael M. Naydan's translations of the poems by Tychyna (Pavlo Tychyna, *The Complete Early Poetry Collections of Pavlo Tychyna*. (Lviv: Litopys, 2002). The translations of the poems not included in this collection are my own. The English translation is followed by the original Ukrainian in the footnotes. As for Khvyl'ovyi's prose, all the quotes are from

- Mykola Khvylovy, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*. Translated by Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: CIUS, 1986);

- Mykola Khvylovy, *Stories From the Ukraine*. Translated by George S. N. Luckyj (New York: Philosophical library, 1960);

- Mykola Khvylovy, "Woodcocks." Translated by Yuri Tkacz in *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986).

The quotations of the short stories not included in these collections are my own.

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## The List of Abbreviations

***Cheka*** – *Chrezvychnaia Komissia po Bor'be s Kontrrevoliutsiei i Sabotazhem*,  
Extraordinary Committee for combating Counter-revolution, Sabotage, and  
Speculation

***DVU*** – *Derzhavne Vydavnytstvo Ukraïny*, the State Publishing House of Ukraine

***Gosplan*** – *Gosudarstvennyi Planovyi Komitet*, the State Planning Commission

***GPU*** - *Gosudarstvennoie Politicheskoe Upravleniie*, State Political Directorate

***KGB*** – *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti*, the Committee of State Security

***Komsomol*** – *Komunistychynyi Soiuz Molodi* (Ukr.), *Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodiozhi*  
(Rus.) Young Communist League

***KP(b)U*** – *Komunistychna Partii Bil'shovykiv Ukraïny*, the Communist Party of  
Bolsheviks of Ukraine

***Liknep*** (Ukr., *likbez* in Russian) – eradication of illiteracy

***Narkompros*** – *Narodnyi Komisariat Prosvity* (Ukr.), *Narodnyi Komissariat*  
*Prosveshcheniia* (Rus.), Peoples Commissariat for Education

***NEP*** - *Novaia Ekonomicheskaia Politika*, New Economic Policy

***Prolitfront*** – *Proletars'kyi Literaturnyi Front*, Proletarian Literary Front

***Radnarkom*** (Ukr., ***Sovnarkom*** in Russian) – *Rada Narodnykh Komisariv*, Council of  
Peoples Commissars

***RKP(b)*** (***VKP(b)*** in 1925-1952) - *Rossiiskaia Komunisticheskaia Partii Bol'shevikov*, the  
Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks

***RSDRP*** – *Rossiiskaia Sotsial-Demokraticheskaia Rabochaia Partii*, Social-Democratic  
Labour Party

***RSFSR*** – *Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia Federativnaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*, Russian  
Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

***SBU*** – *Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukraïny*, the Security Service of Ukraine

**Sovnarkom** (Rus., **Radnarkom** in Ukrainian) – *Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov*, Council of Peoples Commissars

**SVU** – *Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukraïny*, the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine

**TsDAHO** – *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromads'kykh Ob'iednan' Ukraïny*, Central State Archives of Public Organisations of Ukraine)

**TsDAMLM** – *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv-Musei Literatury i Mystetstva Ukraïny*, the Central State Archive of Literature and Arts of Ukraine

**TsDAVO** – *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Vyshchykh orhaniv Vlady ta Upravlinnia Ukraïny*, Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine

**Tsentrevkom** – *Tsentral'nyi Revoliutsiynyi Komitet*, All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee

**TsK KP(b)U** - *Tsentral'nyi Komitet Komunistychnoi Partii Bil'shovykiv Ukraïny*, the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Ukraine

**TsK RKP(b)** - *Tsentral'nyi Komitet Vserossiiskoi Komunisticheskoi Partii Bol'shevikov*, Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks

**UAPTs** – *Ukraïns'ka Avtokefal'na Pravoslavna Tserkva*, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church

**UKP** – *Ukraïns'ka Komunistychna Partiia*, the Ukrainian Communist Party

**UNIK** – *Ukraïns'kyi Naukovyi Instytut Knyhoznavstva*, Ukrainian Scholarly Institute of Book Studies

**UNR** – *Ukraïns'ka Narodna Respublika*, the Ukrainian People's Republic

**UNTs** – *Ukraïns'kyi Natsional'nyi Tsent*, the Ukrainian National Centre

**UPA** – *Ukraïns'ka Povstans'ka Armiia*, Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

**UPLSR** – *Ukraïnis'ka Partiia Livykh Sotsialistiv-Revoliutsioneriv*, the Ukrainian Party of Left Socialist-Revolutionists

**UPSR** – *Ukraïnis'ka Partiia Sotsialistiv-Revoliutsioneriv*, the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries

**USDRP** – *Ukrainis'ka Sotsial-Demokratychyna Robitnycha Partiia*, the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Labour Party

**USSR** (*Ukrainian SSR*) – *Ukrains'ka Sotsialistychyna Radians'ka Respublika*, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (1919- 1937); *Ukrains'ka Radians'ka Sotsialistychyna Respublika*, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1937 – 1991)

**UVO** – *Ukrains'ka Viis'kova Organisatsiia*, the Ukrainian Military Organisation

**VAPLITE** – *Vil'na Akademiia Proletars'koï Literatury*, Free Academy of Proletarian Literature

**VAPP** – *Vserossiiskaia Assotsiatsiia Proletarskikh Pisetelei*, the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers

**VBU** - *Vsenarodnia Biblioteka Ukraïny*, the National Library of Ukraine

**Vseukrlitkom** – *Vseukraïns'kyi Literaturnyi Komitet*, the All-Ukrainian Literary Committee

**Vsevydav** – *Vseukraïns'ke Vydavnytstvo*, the State Publishing House of Ukraine

**VUAN** – *Vseukraïns'ka Akademiia Nauk*, the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences

**VUAPP** – *Vseukraïns'ka Assotsiatsiia Proletars'kykh Pys'mennykiv*, the All-Ukrainian Association of Proletarian Writers

**VUFKU** – *Vse-Ukraïns'ke Foto-kino Upravlinnia*, The All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration

**VUSPP** – *Vseukraïns'ka Spilka Proletars'kyh Pys'mennykiv*, All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers

**VUTsVK** - *Vseukraïns'kyi Tsentral'nyi Vykonavchyi Komitet*, the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee

**ZUNR** – *Zakhidno-Ukraïnis'ka Narodna Respublika*, the Western Ukrainian National Republic

## Introduction

*The whole question is — who will overtake whom?*

Lenin, 1921

*Should I, too, kiss the slipper of the Pope?*

Tychyna, *Instead of Sonnets and Octaves*, 1920

*But how must Dmytrii Karamazov have felt when, finding himself in the so-called 'socialist' environment, he saw that nothing had emerged from that stage and that very quietly and gradually his Communist Party was being transformed into an ordinary 'gatherer of the Russian land'.*

Khvyl'ovyi, *Val'dshnepy*, 1927

### *Context of the Study*

The February Revolution marked the starting point in the process of the complicated social, political and economic transformation of the former Russian Empire. The subsequent October Revolution and the civil wars put to the test different projects of national state-building. On the territory of Ukraine, the rivalry between different forms of statehood became especially severe. Until 1921, constant political and military reversals brought a succession of governments: the Ukrainian Central Rada (March 1917 to April 1918); The Provisional Workers-Peasant Government of Ukraine (formed in November 1918; later the Bolshevik Council of People's Commissars); the Ukrainian State (April to December 1918); the Directory (December 1918 to November 1919); the Whites and the anarchists. Some of these governments acted in parallel and claimed authority over the same territory. The first post-revolutionary years were defined by the rivalry between the Ukrainian People's Republic (*Ukrains'ka Narodna Respublika, UNR*), formed on 20 November 1917

and proclaimed independent on 22 January 1918, and the Soviet Republic in Ukraine, which existed under various names from December 1917.<sup>1</sup> The opposition between these two forms of statehood, known as the Ukrainian-Soviet Wars, lasted with varied success until November 1921, when the Red Army succeeded in occupying almost the entire territory of Ukraine, where the Soviet regime was established.<sup>2</sup> Their defeated political opponents were forced either to emigrate or to come to terms with the Soviet regime and support the Bolshevik state-building project.

The retreat of the Ukrainian People's Republic did not, however, mean the ideological victory of the Bolsheviks in Ukraine. The Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Ukraine (*Komunistychna Partiiia Bil'shovykiv Ukraïny, KP(b)U*) simply did not possess the monopoly in representing the republic's working class, in whose name the party claimed to exercise its dictatorship.<sup>3</sup> The Ukrainian communists (members of the non-Bolshevik communist parties) claimed their right to represent the Ukraine's toiling masses, composed of the republic's proletariat and the peasantry, and sought an independent communist Ukraine. In the first post-revolutionary years, the communist camp in Ukraine, besides the Bolsheviks, was represented by the *Borot'bysty* (the former left-wing members of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (UPSR)); the *Nezalezhnyky* (the left-wing

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the Soviet Republic in Ukraine changed from Ukrainian People's Republic of Soviets (adopted by the First All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in December 1917), Ukrainian Soviet Republic, proclaimed on 19 March 1918 and Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, declared on 10 March 1919.

<sup>2</sup> On the Ukrainian-Soviet War: O. Udovychenko, *Ukraïna u Viini za Derzhavnist'* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1995); Pavlo Mirchuk, *Ukraïns'ko-Moskovs'ka Viina 1917-1919* (Toronto: Liha Vyzvolennia Ukraïny, 1957); Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, *Komunizm v Ukraïni; Pershe Desiatylittia (1919-1928)* (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1996); I. Mazepa, "Ukraine under Bolshevik Rule," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 12, 35 (1934): 323-346; Jurij Borys, *The Russian Communist Party and the Sovietization of Ukraine: a Study in the Communist Doctrine of the Self-Determination of Nations* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1960); Arthur Adams, *The Bolsheviks in the Ukraine: The Second Campaign, 1918-1919* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> On the history of the KP(b)U see: Vsevolod Holubnychy, "Outline History of the Communist Party of Ukraine," in *Soviet Regional Economics. Selected works of Vsevolod Holubnychy*, ed. Iwan S. Koropeckyj (Edmonton: CIUS, 1982); Moisei Ravich-Cherkasskii, *Istoria Kommunisticheskoi Partii (bov) Ukraïny* (Kharkov: Gosizdat Ukrainy, 1923); Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia Komunistychnoi Partii Ukraïny* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1979); Mykola Popov, *Narys Istorii Komunistychnoi Partii (Bil'shovykiv) Ukraïny* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1928).

members of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Labour Party (USDRP); the *Bor'bisty* (the members of the Ukrainian Party of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries (UPLSR) and the *Ukapisty* (the members of the Ukrainian Communist Party, UKP).<sup>4</sup> These ideological and political rivals were mostly neutralised by 1920, when the merger of the above mentioned parties with the KP(b)U was orchestrated.<sup>5</sup> After the merger, the former members of these communist parties played an important part in adjusting and implementing the all-Soviet policies in Ukraine, especially the nationalities policy of *korenizatsiia*, launched in 1923.

Victory in the civil wars presented the Bolshevik leadership with a number of challenges. The economic and political system of War Communism, a set of radical measures introduced between 1918 and 1921 in order to, among other things, aid the Red Army, led to overall economic degradation, the famine of 1921-22, urban depopulation and frequent social disturbances. As a result, the Bolsheviks found themselves in complete social isolation, when neither the old-line intelligentsia, nor peasantry and scant proletariat provided the Bolsheviks with their fully-fledged support.<sup>6</sup> In view of all these predicaments, the Tenth RKP(b) Congress, held in March 1921, introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP). The adoption of this economic policy, considered by many as a retreat from revolutionary goals, initiated drastic changes in political, social, and economic domains. Similarly, crucial changes occurred in the cultural sphere.

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<sup>4</sup> On Ukrainian national communism see: James Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983); Valerii Soldatenko, *U Poshukah Sotsial'noi ta Natsional'noi Garmonii: Eskizy do Istorii Ukraïns'koho Komunizmu* (Kyiv: IPIEND, 2006); Olena Liubovets', *Ukraïns'ki Partii i Politychni Al'ternatyvy, 1917-1920* (Kyiv, Osnovy, 2005); Stephen Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism And Nationalism Red: The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule In Ukraine, 1918-1925* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2015); Olena Palko, "Ukrainian National Communism: Challenging History, *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 22:1 (2014): 27-48.

<sup>5</sup> The Ukrainian Communist Party voted its self-dissolution only in 1925.

<sup>6</sup> Moshe Lewin, "The Social Background of Stalinism," in *Stalinism. Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. R. Tucker (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 112; Kul'chyts'kyi, *Komunizm v Ukraïni*, 21-161.

The importance of culture (the arts), erroneously neglected by the Bolsheviks during the civil war years, became obvious, when alternative cultural projects, promoted by the Proletkult (in the all-Soviet scope) and the Borot'bysty (in Ukraine), gained strength and came into direct opposition with the centralist tendencies of the Communist party. To compensate, the Bolsheviks initiated the implementation of a unified mainstream cultural strategy, aimed at sovietisation of intellectual, social and cultural life. Katerina Clark dubbed this latent state interference as a 'quiet revolution'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in 1921 the Bolsheviks took culture under their direct control, admitting it as a 'third front,' a locus of struggle, "an arena in which power (hegemony) could be won or lost."<sup>8</sup> In this way, from the early 1920s, culture and art become weapons of class struggle.

To overcome the social and political alienation in the peripheries, the leadership centrally initiated a preferential nationalities policy, known as *korenizatsiia*. Adopted at the Twelfth RKP(b) Congress in April 1923, *korenizatsiia* called for reorganising the Soviet Union "in such a way as fully to reflect not only the common needs and requirements of all the nationalities of the Union, but also the special needs and requirements of each individual nationality."<sup>9</sup> The rationale behind the new nationalities policy was that by (1) engaging and promoting national cadres into local party organs (party entrenchment) and (2) facilitating the development of national cultures and languages, the Communist party would be able to curb any manifestation of 'bourgeois' local nationalism and transform those national sentiments into a state-controlled principle of all-Union integration.

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<sup>7</sup> Katerina Clark, "The 'Quiet Revolution' in Soviet Intellectual Life," in *Russia in the Era of NEP*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick et al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991), 211.

<sup>8</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca; London: Cornell UP, 1992), 2.

<sup>9</sup> J. Stalin, "National Factors in Party and State Affairs: Theses for the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)," in J. Stalin, *Works*, Vol.5 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 193.

Subsequently, the Bolsheviks helped create preconditions for the fully-fledged cultural flourishing in Soviet Ukraine by means of linguistic and cultural korenizatsiia. For the first time, the Ukrainian intelligentsia gained direct access to a large Ukrainian-speaking audience (or audience with the necessary command of the language), which, in turn, gained the right to be heard and taken into account. However, what was the product of this cultural revival? According to conventional narratives, the Ukrainian twenties became known as the “executed renaissance” (*rozstriliane vidroshennia*).<sup>10</sup> This paradigm rests on the view that the decade was marked by a unique period of cultural flowering in Ukraine, which was violently interrupted by Stalin’s terror. Seen from this perspective, the generation of the 1920s is defined by its inherently anti-Soviet stand and strong national orientation. Not undermining the determinant role of this artistic milieu in establishing Ukrainian culture, this study argues that during the 1920s the same artists in large part contributed to another important current, Soviet culture. This culture was Soviet, created by artists with a strong ideological position and in accordance with the party line; Ukrainian, to embrace the korenizatsiia objectives; and mass-oriented, tasked to reach the republic’s working class and engage it in cultural production.

In this thesis, three equally important components, contributing to Ukraine’s cultural sovietisation are examined: (1) the Ukrainian communist elites, developing a separatist vision of a Soviet Ukraine; (2) the manipulation of the tastes and expectations of the audience; and (3) ideological and aesthetic evolution of Ukraine’s writers in view of the first two components. It will be argued that the precursors to cultural sovietisation in Ukraine were gradually developing throughout the 1920s. Hence, the evolution of socialist

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<sup>10</sup> The paradigm was introduced by the survivors of the Stalin purges who ended up in the emigration after the World War Two. See: Iu. Lavrinenko *Rozstriliane Vidrodzhennia. Antolohiia 1917-1933*. (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2007); Halyna Hryn, “The ‘Executed Renaissance’ Paradigm Revisited,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 27 (2004–5): 67-96.

realism, the quintessence of cultural sovietisation, was a complex process, which was accomplished by a single party decree in 1932 centrally and endorsed by the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934. The study of cultural sovietisation inevitably leads to better understanding of the complex process of establishing and consolidating the Soviet regime in Ukraine.

### *Focus of the Study*

The purpose of the study is to investigate the complex and multi-faceted process of the cultural sovietisation of Ukraine. During the 1920s different political projects of a Soviet Ukraine were put to the test. The first one was developed and executed by the Ukrainian communist movement, especially the Borot'bysty, who after their merger with the KP(b)U in 1920 had contributed greatly to strengthening a separatist political culture and Ukraine's autonomy in political, economic and cultural matters. Another project was executed by the KP(b)U members with a clear centripetal orientation towards Moscow, advocating in favour of preserving the historically established relations between centre and periphery and constructing the all-Russian (all-Soviet) political and cultural space. Consequently, these two political cultures, or ideological horizons in the KP(b)U endorsed different cultural projects in Soviet Ukraine. Firstly, there was a distinct project of Soviet Ukrainian culture curated from Kharkiv by the cultural wing of the Borot'bysty and Ukraine-minded communists in the KP(b)U. Secondly, the project of all-Union Soviet culture was promoted, to which Ukraine's cultural figures would contribute equally with the representatives from other Soviet republics. The main difference between the two visions of Soviet culture was the way the artistic map of the Soviet Union was perceived. Whereas the first group aimed at a decentralised artistic map with numerous cultural centres in the

peripheries, the second approach saw Moscow as the only centre and the peripheries as provincial.

This thesis supports the view that until the end of the 1920s, the artistic map of Soviet culture remained relatively decentralised, when Moscow, Kharkiv or Tiflis could each boast opportunities for artists and new elites.<sup>11</sup> In Ukraine, however, the two Soviet cultural projects, developed in parallel in Kharkiv and Moscow, were often implemented simultaneously by different interest groups and came into direct confrontation with each other. In addition, their promoters and creators similarly used the Ukrainian language as their medium. There was a difference, however. Whereas the first group saw the Ukrainian language as a prerequisite for creating a modern urban Ukrainian culture with equal appreciation of the traditional social structure (Ukrainian-speaking peasantry) and the nineteenth-century cultural trends, the second group used the Ukrainian language (the language of the largest ethnic group in the republic) as a necessary concession in order to achieve certain strategic goals. Linguistic *Ukrainizatsiia* was the key component of *korenizatsiia*, the party entrenchment in Ukraine. The use of Ukrainian also possessed a strong ideological value. The creation of Soviet culture in the Ukrainian language was seen as a method to weaken the appeal of the national emigration and dissent groups in the KP(b)U. In 1925, the key Soviet Ukrainian party ideologist Volodymyr Koriak explicitly stated that Ukraine's Soviet writers were tasked with putting an end to "Ukrainian

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<sup>11</sup> Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001); Michael Hamm, *Kiev: A Portrait, 1800–1917* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993); Serhiy Bilenky, *Imperial Urbanism in The Borderlands: Kyiv, 1800 – 1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London, Reaktion Books, 2012); Tõnu Parming and Elmar Järvesoo (eds.), *A Case Study of a Soviet Republic: the Estonian SSR*. (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1978).

literature” and “Ukrainian poets” and to create a universal “proletarian culture in the Ukrainian language.”<sup>12</sup>

Hence, the unified Soviet canon in Ukraine, finally cemented in the early 1930s, was an amalgamation of at least two different Soviet cultural projects: Soviet Ukrainian culture and Soviet culture in the Ukrainian language. The on-going debates and negotiations between the two political and cultural orientations in the KP(b)U, among public intellectuals and artists are the focus of this thesis. At the same time, the thesis explores those cultural, and often political, alternatives which Soviet Ukraine had lost once the interaction between local political actors and art creators was squeezed into a strictly defined channel, fully determined by a centralist cultural strategy.

In the 1920s, the framework of Soviet Ukrainian culture exposed the potential of the young artistic generation to produce high-class cultural products. The five masters of the decade included Mykola Khvyly'ovyi in prose, Pavlo Tychyna in poetry, Mykola Kulish in drama, Les' (Oleksandr) Kurbas in theatre and Oleksandr Dovzhenko in film. The unprecedented cultural flowering of the 1920s was the result of a fusion of the modernist tradition of the past and the new revolutionary ethos of the present, promoted by the strong Ukrainian establishment both in the KP(b)U and in the cultural management. The eventual merger of the two cultural projects occurred both “naturally”, through the weakening and diffusion of the Soviet Ukrainian cultural strategy and “unnaturally”, due to external pressure. The centralisation drive of the first Five-Year Plan changed the cultural topography of the Soviet Union; the “axe of cultural exchange”<sup>13</sup> had shifted to Moscow

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<sup>12</sup> V. Koriak, “Ukrains'ka Literature za P'iat' Rokiv Proletars'koï Revoliutsii,” in Koriak, *Orhanizatsiia Zhovtnevoï Literatury* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1925), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Philipp Ther, “The Transnational Paradigm of Historiography and Its Potential for Ukrainian History,” in *Ukraine: Laboratory of Transnational History*, Georgiy Kasianov and Ther (eds.) (Budapest: CEU Press, 2009), 100.

and the all-Soviet cultural project was imposed on the Soviet republics. As a result, Ukraine's provincial status was cemented. So, the 1920s became a transitional period of realigning the centre-periphery relationship in the Soviet Union.

The separate Soviet Ukrainian cultural project was enabled by many internal and external factors. First of all, young writers and artists embraced the potential of the revolutions, which took place in Russia and in Ukraine. The revolutionary years exposed the urgency of both national and social questions, which often coexisted in the programs of different political actors of the time. Amidst revolutionary upheavals, a new generation of artists and writers was born, whose orientation towards the future and critical attitude towards the past initiated a new chapter of revolutionary and proletarian culture. This new artistic and literary corpus in the first post-revolutionary decade existed side by side with the old-line intellectuals, trying to adapt to the new realities. The wealth of the national literature of the decade resulted mainly from the creative cooperation between these two groups: young utopians and 'old' classics.

Secondly, accelerated modernisation created conditions for developing urban culture. Combined with broad education campaigns and a programme for tackling illiteracy, it had provided writers with the audience for new proletarian literature. The potency of Soviet Ukrainian culture was attributed in large part to *korenizatsiia*, and *Ukrainizatsiia* as its local variant. *Ukrainizatsiia* triggered publishing in the Ukrainian language, producing art works national in their content and form; contributed to the creation of a total Ukrainian urban environment. Besides, during the 1920s, this central Bolshevik policy led to constructing ethnic and national identities in Ukraine, contributing to the wealth of cultural flowering in the republic. Overall, Kharkiv, the former provincial city and the new capital of Soviet Ukraine, attracted many young artists from all over Ukraine. Like Moscow, the Ukrainian

capital experienced its own cultural renaissance, producing innovative, modern, original cultural products.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, a separatist vision of Soviet culture was enabled by relative pluralism in the political sphere. During the 1920s, there were on-going negotiations between central and local elites about the sovereignty of Soviet Ukraine, and the status of the KP(b)U. Not surprisingly, it led to separatist claims in the cultural sphere, when the new generation of artists, inspired by the revolution and emboldened by the strong Ukrainian voices in the party leadership, provocatively demanded to break the eternal dependency on Russian cultural patterns. Many public intellectuals and party leaders, who were both Ukrainians and communists, in the mid-1920s voiced their objections towards the “colonial status” of Ukraine, either in political, economic, or cultural matters.

Last but not least, the existence and strength of the separate project of Soviet Ukrainian culture was enabled by the ambiguity and the confusion of the Soviet policies centrally. While the Soviet Ukrainian cultural project was gradually developing by trial and error, so was the Soviet one. The prominence of the all-Soviet cultural canon in the 1930s onwards can be explained by an enormous centralisation drive in the Soviet Union, initiated with the Stalin “Great Break” and completed during the first Five-Year Plan. The dominance of Soviet culture was achieved by centralising cultural management and relocating cultural and promotion opportunities to Moscow. In the 1930s, Ukraine, despite all the previous attempts, became provincial: with the decline of the Ukrainian fraction in the KP(b)U, numerous artists moved to Moscow in search for better opportunities and many of those who remained, were purged in 1937-38.

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<sup>14</sup> Myroslav Shkandrij, “U Poshukakh Novoho: Revoliutsiia v Ukraïns'komu Mystetstvi 1920-kh,” *Suchasnist'* 25.1 (1986): 41-51; 25.2 (1986): 42-58.

Having defined Soviet Ukrainian culture as the focus of the study, this thesis concentrates mainly on literature. Primarily this choice is dependent on the role of literature as an ideological premium, originating in the great tradition of the so-called Russian (same as Ukrainian) ‘literature-centrism’ (*literaturotsentrizm*). In this tradition, deeply rooted in the Russian Empire, literature was seen as a medium, a communicator of the *vox populi* to the authorities and vice versa. In the Russian Empire, where opportunities for political expression and opposition were limited, literature enjoyed great social prominence and became the only channel for shaping, voicing and delivering political messages.<sup>15</sup> The value of literature during the Soviet times had changed little since the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, in the 1920s there were other channels for expressing dissent, including a relative degree of political opposition in the KP(b)U. Nonetheless, literature preserved its role in delivering political messages due to the activist position of Ukrainian writers, which they occupied throughout the 1920s as public speakers, opinion makers, political activists and party functionaries. The Literary Discussion of 1925-1928 became the best example of how politics and literature were intertwined at the time. This last free debate in Soviet Ukraine, which had started as a discussion of mere cultural issues, developed into a political declaration against the republic’s “colonial status” and calls for independence.

The role of literature was, however, not strictly about representing voices of dissent, or about writers and creative intellectuals assuming social responsibility. The Bolsheviks from very early on discerned the great potential of engaging prominent literary figures for

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<sup>15</sup> On the social role of intelligentsia in Russia in the nineteenth century see: I. Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London: Hogarth, 1979); N. Berdyaev, “The Power and Psychology of the Intelligentsia,” in Berdyaev, *Collected Works*, Vol. IV (Paris: YMCA Press, 1990): 198-206; Richard Pipes (ed.) *The Russian Intelligentsia* (New York: Columbia UP, 1961); Inna Kochetkova, *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia: Old Intellectuals in the New Russia* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010); Robert V. Daniels, “Intellectuals and the Russian Revolution,” *American Slavic and East European Review* 20, 2 (1961): 270-278. On Ukrainian intelligentsia Georhii Kasianov, *Ukraïns'ka Intelihentsiia na Rubezhi XIX-XX Stolit': Sotsial'no-Politychnyi Portret* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1993); Nadezhda Shyp, *Intelligentsiia na Ukraine (XIX vek): Istoriko-Sotsiologicheskii Ocherk* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1991).

their benefit. A writer as a mouthpiece of political propaganda was cherished by the Bolshevik authorities. In the precarious situation that the Bolsheviks found themselves after the revolution, expedient methods to mould popular values, to reach audiences and to censure alien ideals were needed. Literature became the best means for “internalising Socialism”.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the possibility of promoting politically correct messages on the Party’s behalf, the engagement of authoritative figures was encouraged for their value in gaining public support and creating a positive outlook of the new authorities. So, during the 1920s, two parallel processes occurred simultaneously: while one group of writers struggled to defend the autonomy of the cultural sphere, another contributed significantly to the state appropriation of literature. It is noteworthy, moreover, that some artists were equally engaged in both projects.

It must be highlighted that during the 1920s, there was hardly any unified view on what Soviet Ukrainian literature should comprise of. As the following chapters will show, there were different literary currents in Soviet Ukraine, which, despite their acknowledged adherence to the revolution and/or proletarian orientation, differed in their views on artistic orientation, the purpose of literature, the question of audience, engagement with current affairs, and the limits of party intervention. All these differences were reflected in the institutional diversity of the letters in Ukraine. In addition, the vision of Soviet Ukrainian literature varied depending on the generation, ideological preferences, language and ethnic origin of its contributors. Hence, the formation of Soviet Ukrainian literature required compromises and assimilation, achieved during the decade-long intensive debates. Not surprisingly, many of the cultural alternatives were lost in the process of these negotiations.

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<sup>16</sup> See: Introduction in James von Geldern, and Richard Stites (eds.) *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995).

In the following chapters two different aspects of the developing Soviet Ukrainian literature are examined. Firstly, with the Bolshevik victory in Ukraine, the previous national projects of Ukrainian culture needed to be assimilated. Here, I am interested in the ways the so-called fellow-travellers (pre-revolutionary intelligentsia who stopped openly opposing the Soviet regime and tacitly accepted it) adopted the Soviet paradigm. In other words, the first aspect deals with the trajectory of Ukrainian writers becoming Soviet writers (the self-sovietisation<sup>17</sup>). Secondly, the Bolshevik regime in Ukraine, as will be shown in Section One, had two manifestations: communists oriented towards Moscow and those Ukraine-centred. So, the second aspect of the debate concerns the process of negotiating and reconciling the two horizons within the communist camp in literature. In other words, I will examine a vision of Soviet Ukrainian literature, anticipated by the Ukrainian communists, as opposed to Soviet literature in Ukrainian language, the one promoted by the Moscow-oriented literary forces.

### Methodology

#### *Theoretical framework*

Most studies of Soviet culture assume a model of diffusion, according to which Moscow was the centre of cultural trends, which were copied by, or brought down to other Soviet republics.<sup>18</sup> This model cements the centre-periphery vision, according to which the Russian cultural trends were superior and political decisions centrally determined cultural

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<sup>17</sup> The distinction between sovietisation and self-sovietisation is borrowed from Balázs Apor, Péter Apor (eds.) *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Katerina Clark, *Moscow the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011); *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard UP, 1995); Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: a Cultural History of Russia* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 2002).

development in the periphery. However, Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s experienced an extraordinary cultural flowering in its own right, when numerous artists voiced the need to abandon artistic orientation towards Moscow. Hence, the present study challenges this diffusion model and emphasises the separate trajectory of Soviet Ukrainian cultural development, which ran parallel to the Russian one, centred in Moscow. At the same time, the study challenges the Ukraine-centred model, according to which the artistic flowering of the 1920s was crushed solely by the Moscow centralisation drive. This Ukraine-centred perspective leads to a partial assessment of the 1920s and rejects those internal developments in Soviet Ukraine, which eventually contributed to artistic and institutional unification of the 1930s.

The study builds on the paradigm of internal transnationalism, introduced by Mayhill S. Fowler.<sup>19</sup> The scholar applied this model to studying different manifestations of Soviet culture in the Soviet Union. Accordingly, there were different, yet interrelated cultural processes unfolding simultaneously in different regions of the Soviet Union. Hence, the cultural development in Soviet Ukraine, at least until the introduction of the first Five-Year Plan, occurred parallel to the one in Moscow. This thesis argues, however, that throughout the 1920s there was hardly a single unified view on what the Soviet Ukrainian cultural project was about. In addition, during the decade the Soviet cultural project was putting down roots in Ukraine. The two cultural projects were therefore interrelated not only transnationally, but also within the borders of Soviet Ukraine. The contradictions and opposing visions of Soviet culture (Soviet Ukrainian culture and Soviet culture in the Ukrainian language) are at the centre of the thesis.

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<sup>19</sup> Mayhill Fowler, "Mikhail Bulgakov, Mykola Kulish, and Soviet Theater: How Internal Transnationalism Remade Center and Periphery," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 16, 2 (2015): 263-290; Mayhill C. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine* (Toronto, Toronto UP, 2017).

In general, the same conventional framework used to study the Bolshevik decade-long project of radical social transformation in the 1920s, aiming at ultimate ‘cultural revolution’,<sup>20</sup> can be applied to Ukraine. Along the continuum of the Bolshevik cultural project, several successive periods in the relationship between power and art can be distinguished: the civil war enabling contestant projects of revolutionary culture; the NEP years launching the process of the sovietisation of intellectual life; and the period of the first Five-Year Plan, waging class war in cultural affairs.<sup>21</sup> This periodisation helps to see how gradual the party intervention in the cultural sphere was. In Ukraine, however, this process was mitigated by a significant Ukrainian faction in the party and the specifics of the korenizatsiia policy, which did not apply to Russia. This is why the course towards the centralisation of power, launched alongside industrialisation and collectivisation campaigns, was more tangible in Ukraine; it started to be implemented earlier (as early as 1926) and with much more rigour, than in Russia.<sup>22</sup>

This study takes a bottom-up perspective to examining the process of sovietisation of Ukraine. It focuses on the internal factors that eventually enabled the dominance of the all-Soviet cultural canon (socialist realism) in Ukraine. The victory of the centralist perspective on culture was enabled by a combination of, firstly, the decade-long manipulation with the republic’s social structure; and, secondly, various artistic pursuits, which promoted an

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<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Stefan Plaggenborg, *Revolutionskultur: Menschenbilder und Kulturelle Praxis in Sowjetrußland zwischen Oktoberrevolution und Stalinismus* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996); William G. Rosenberg, “Introduction,” in *Russia in the Era of NEP*, 1-12; David Joravsky, “Cultural Revolution and the Fortress Mentality,” in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Abbott Gleason et al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985), 93-113; Clark, *Petersburg*; Michael David-Fox, “What Is Cultural Revolution?,” *Russian Review*, 58, 2 (1999): 181-201.

<sup>21</sup> E. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928-1932* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971); Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Cultural Revolution of the First Five Year Plan,” in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, ed. S. Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978); Sheila Fitzpatrick et al. *Russia in the Era of NEP*; Gleason, et al. *Bolshevik Culture*.

<sup>22</sup> Iurii Shapoval, “‘On Ukrainian Separatism’ A GPU Circular of 1926,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, XVIII, 3/4 (1994): 275-302; Bertelsen, Olga, and Myroslav Shkandrij. “The Secret Police and the Campaign against Galicians in Soviet Ukraine, 1929–34.” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 42.1 (2014): 37–62.

instrumentalist vision of the arts (an approach which regarded socialist realism as a continuation and pinnacle of modernism, especially of the avant-garde<sup>23</sup>). In this thesis, this bottom-up perspective is enhanced by bringing into the discussion different visions of Soviet culture, competing in Ukraine at the time.

The study of the internal contradictions within the cultural sphere in Soviet Ukraine builds upon the conclusions of the Russian art historian Vladimir Paperny, drawn from his study of early Soviet architecture.<sup>24</sup> The scholar made an attempt to explain the cultural transformation at the turn of the 1920s by investigating the relationship between two ideal types: *kul'tura odin* (culture one) and *kul'tura dva* (culture two). According to Paperny, the radical change in artistic style and method occurred not due to a *causa prima* (often seen as an evil Soviet Leviathan or Stalin's caprice), but as a result of the decisive triumph of *kul'tura dva* over *kul'tura odin*. In this approach, *kul'tura odin* corresponds to the avant-garde and revolutionary romanticism of the early 1920s and is characterised by its horizontality (when values of the periphery prevail over the centre; and artists are dispersed), and activism (a conscious drive away from the centre with its regulations). In contrast, *kul'tura dva* is defined by its centripetal value system, moving from the margins towards a single unified centre of power; this is a passive culture with a solidified and obedient society, fully exemplified by socialist realism. Paperny presented these two distinct cultural types as constantly in opposition, replacing each other in a cyclical fashion. In this thesis, Paperny's model is modified, however: it is believed that during the 1920s-early 1930s, *kul'tura nol'* (culture zero) or pre-revolutionary culture retained its importance in society and cultural life. Secondly, the model is challenged to emphasise the difficult

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<sup>23</sup> Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton UP, 1992); P. Petrov, *Automatic for the Masses: Authorship and Agency in Early Soviet Culture* (Toronto UP, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Vladimir Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

internal adjustments in each of the cultural types, leading consequently not to the replacement but rather to the transformation of *kul'tura odin* into *kul'tura dva*. Overall, Paperny's approach is applied to investigate the complex evolution towards socialist realism of the two Ukrainian writers, Pavlo Tychyna (1891-1967) and Mykola Khvyl'ovyi (1893-1933), and is utilised in the study of the biographies of these two protagonists.

### *Case studies and biographical approach*

In this thesis, two different aspects of developing Soviet Ukrainian culture are examined. Firstly, I examine the position of fellow-travellers in Soviet Ukraine and the possible ways for them to accept Soviet culture. As it will be shown through the case study of the Ukrainian poet Tychyna, the tangled process of their self-sovietisation did not live up to the expectations of the Soviet Ukrainian cultural managers. Some fellow-travellers settled for Soviet Ukrainian culture, whereas others from the very beginning oriented towards the Moscow project and contributed to the all-Soviet cultural canon. Secondly, the process of defining the category of "Soviet Ukrainian culture" among the communist faction of Ukraine's literary corpus will be explored. The case study of the prose writer and the public intellectual Khvyl'ovyi exposes the heterogeneity of the proletarian front in the republic and suggests the reasons for the eventual decline of the separatist Ukrainian project. These two men of letters have been chosen due to their high creative merit and importance for Ukrainian literature and cultural politics of the time. Through the study of their literary and public activity, the entangled relationship between the arts and politics as well as between the centre and provinces is examined.

The cases of Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna present different examples of artistic pursuits and forms of political engagement. Khvyl'ovyi was a communist by conviction. A card-

carrying Communist since 1919, he fully embodied revolutionary literature in Ukraine and elaborated the artistic current of revolutionary romanticism. In his early prose, he developed a glorious myth of the revolution and the civil wars. Later on, however, he went through a painful process of negotiating his 'revolutionary romanticism' with the centralising tendencies of the RKP(b) and KP(b)U. In his pamphlets, written during the Literary Discussion of 1925-28, Khvyl'ovyi elaborated the autonomist cultural position, which soon assumed a clear political aspect. On the other hand, Tychyna had established himself as a poet of the Ukrainian People's Republic and fully represented Ukrainian Modernism. During the civil war years, the poet occasionally supported different sides, and eventually agreed to side with the Soviet cultural paradigm, became a Party eulogist and held a number of important state offices (including the Minister of Education, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament etc.). The year 1933 was decisive for both protagonists: on May, 13 Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide to dissociate himself from the policies of the Communist party, whereas Tychyna on November, 21 ascended to the heights of Soviet literature and politics with his eulogy "*Partiia Vede*" [The Party Leads], published in Moscow *Pravda* on the occasion of the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution.

Although different, the study of the two protagonists offers insights into the process of developing Soviet Ukrainian culture and its inner contradictions. To a certain extent Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi exemplify Paperny's binary of ideal cultural types. As will be proven, the relationship between *kul'tura odin* and *kul'tura dva* cannot be seen as a mere replacement of one model by another. *Kul'tura odin*, represented by Khvyl'ovyi and his revolutionary romanticism, was trying to adapt and fit into the newly-emerging state-oriented culture during the 1920s. He became a symbol of Soviet Ukrainian culture and could not accept its total subjugation to the Soviet canon. In turn, Tychyna with his post-

1933 poetic contributions embodied *kul'tura dva*. His complicated and painful evolution towards socialist realism demonstrates how much this model was rooted in and dependent upon the entire experience of the 1920s.

This study uses a biographical approach to discuss the process of the cultural sovietisation in Ukraine. The thesis is not, however, intended as a historical portrayal of the individual lives of the two protagonists. While recognising the limitations of the biographical perspective (especially the impossibility of examining a life of an individual as a coherent thread unrolling in logical and chronological order, defined by Pierre Bourdieu as a “biographical illusion”<sup>25</sup>), this approach is used as a window to examine the complex problem of reciprocal accommodation and negotiation between local intellectuals and the party officials, literature and politics. Rather than offering a personal account of the ideological and artistic evolution of the writers, the study provides a starting point for considering the larger questions of interrelation of the Soviet Ukrainian and Soviet cultural projects. More broadly, it suggests how the interaction between literature and politics influenced the consolidation of the Soviet regime and its legitimation in Ukraine. Chronologically, the study focuses on the period between 1917 (the year of both national and Bolshevik revolutions in Ukraine) and 1933, the key year for both protagonists, symbolising the ultimate loss of cultural alternatives and adoption of socialist realism as a single artistic method. Their life stories beyond this time frame are sketched to provide the background to their ideological evolution or to explore legacy of these intellectuals in Soviet and independent Ukraine.

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<sup>25</sup> Pierre Bourdieu. L'illusion Biographique. In: *Actes de la Recherche en Science Sociales*. 62/62 (1986) 69-72; In Russian: Biograficheskaia Illiuziia, *Inter*, 2002, 1, 75-83.

### Use of Primary Sources

There are a number of challenges regarding the use of primary sources for this biographical study. The most important obstacle or constraint is the restricted access to primary sources in the archives, and their overall objectivity. On 9 April 2015 the Ukrainian Parliament passed the so-called “package of bills on decommunisation”. One of the laws (No 2540 “On access to Archives of Repressive Agencies of Totalitarian Communist Regime of 1917-1991”) envisaged open access to all archives of the Soviet repressive organs, designated digitising and online access to the archive documents and provided for the creation of a consolidated archive of all the repressive organs.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, this law promised more than it delivered for historians interested in the Soviet past in Ukraine. The fact that these archives are open, however, does not necessarily mean that their collections are accessible. For instance, the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (*Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukraïny*, SBU Archive), a former KGB archive, has been open to public since the early 1990s. But the SBU archive has no comprehensive catalogue of its holdings, which makes researchers almost entirely dependent on the good will and diligence of the archivists, responsible for responding to requests and selecting relevant materials. Research on important political and cultural figures at the SBU Archive is also impeded by nepotism and favouritism, a selective approach in being granted access to its holdings.

### *Sources for the Biographical Study*

#### Personal Collections and Correspondence

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<sup>26</sup> “On access to Archives of Repressive Agencies of Totalitarian Communist Regime of 1917-1991” <http://www.memory.gov.ua/laws/law-ukraine-access-archives-repressive-agencies-totalitarian-communist-regime-1917-1991> (Accessed 16 November 2016).

The biographical approach, chosen to answer the main research question, defines the focus on sources regarding individual lives of the two protagonists. However, there is a lack of trustworthy documents in the archives. The question of objectivity of those documents available in the archives arises due to the pointed policy of the regime to eliminate the name of Khvyl'ovyi from public remembrance after 1933 and to erase/modify Tychyna's pre-1933 activities. The way the protagonists were evaluated during the Soviet times also defines the amount of available documents. For example, in the Central State Archive of Literature and Arts of Ukraine (*Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv-Musei Literaturny i Mystetstva Ukraïny, TsDAMLM*) there is only one file, consisting of 21 *arkushy* on Khvyl'ovyi, which includes several copies from newspapers, photographs and documents, mainly connected to the writers' suicide and his funeral in May 1933. In comparison, the Archive holds the multivolume personal collection of Tychyna, consisting of autographs of his verses and poems, personal and official correspondence, diaries, drafts of his speeches and papers, photographs etc. (148,000 documents in total). Despite the abundance of sources, there is little of interest (due to censorship and self-censorship) on the period under study.

The personal correspondence of Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi is another important source for the thesis. The letters, often preserved in the personal collections of their addressees, shed light on the writers' genuine beliefs, doubts, concerns and attitudes. Of great value for this study were the private collections of Mykola Zerov and Mykola Mohylians'kyi, held at the Institute of Manuscripts (*Institut Rukopysu*) of the Vernads'kyi National Library of Ukraine. Many archival sources have been published in various document collections. The most comprehensive selection of personal documents, diaries and correspondence by Tychyna is presented in the twelve-volume set of his selected works (published in 1983-

1990).<sup>27</sup> Valuable documents on Khvyl'ovyi can be found in the five-volume collection of his selected works (published in 1978-1986)<sup>28</sup> and in the two-volume collection (published in 1990-1991).<sup>29</sup>

### Autobiographical Writings

Autobiographical writings, including those produced for job applications or party membership, regular party inspections, and purges of party ranks; party questionnaires (*ankety*), and diaries, constitute another valuable group of primary sources. The overarching characteristic of these documents is defined by their intentional character. These pieces contributed to creating an unblemished image of a revolutionary, a Bolshevik, and a state official, and were composed, arguably, to fit one's life story to this 'ideal' image. Most autobiographical writings of the period represented a gradual process of shaping the protagonists' revolutionary personas, and were used to excuse any possible 'defects' in their pre-Bolshevik/Soviet lives.<sup>30</sup> There are two frequently cited documents on Khvyl'ovyi's early revolutionary years: a fragment from an autobiography and a short autobiographical note written for a *troika* during a regular KP(b)U purge in 1924.<sup>31</sup> These sources reflect the process of fashioning Khvyl'ovyi's Bolshevik persona and the struggle with his ideological inconsistencies. As for Tychyna, the archives abound in numerous autobiographical writings, prepared mostly for party membership applications or career promotions. These official accounts of Tychyna's life present a polished image of a

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<sup>27</sup> Tychyna Pavlo, *Tvory u Dvokh Tomakh* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1983-1990).

<sup>28</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u P'iat'okh Tomakh* (New York-Baltimore-Toronto: Smoloskyp, 1978-1986).

<sup>29</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u Dvokh Tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990-1991).

<sup>30</sup> Based on works of Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006); Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul. Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, spr.1852, ark.73-80; Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, "Uryvok z avtobiohrafii," *Vitchyzna*, 12 (1987): 106-108; 'Kratkaia Biografiia Chlena KP(b)U Nikolaia Grigor'ievicha Fitileva,' in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u Dvokh Tomakh*, vol. 2, 830-837.

spotless state functionary and a Communist party member.<sup>32</sup> The main challenge in using autobiographies is the question of how to regard these sources: do they present the true ‘inside’ and aspirations of their authors or, conversely, do they tell us more about the power and ideology, which compel a person to write with a censor in mind?<sup>33</sup>

### Creative writing

This research embraces ‘the linguistic turn,’ paying attention to the role of language (and literature) in shaping the mentality of the period.<sup>34</sup> It focuses on the fiction, imaginative narratives, political and social essays, and poetry from the 1920s to explain what their authors believed or felt about the society they lived in and contributed towards. Using works of fiction and poetry as a primary source allows to build upon and to particularise the meaning of non-fictional sources. Besides, imaginative literature can be used to trace the ideological evolution of the writers towards the Communist regime. In this respect, Tychyna’s intimate poetry and poetry with social content (*hromadians'ka liryka*) and Khvyl'ovyi’s self-referential, ‘autothematic’<sup>35</sup> creative writings are used to fill the blank spots in the writers’ biographies. Tychyna’s early poetry in full reflected the perturbations of the civil war years, whereas Khvyl'ovyi’s prose (especially “*Vstupna Novela*” [The Introductory Novel] (1927), “*Redaktor Kark*” [Editor Kark] (1923), “*Na Oзера*” [To the Lakes] (1926), and “*Arabesky*” [Arabesques] (1927)) recounted the writer’s negative attitude towards the ideological shifts of the post-revolutionary years. Nonetheless, prose

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<sup>32</sup> M. Zhulyn'skyi (ed.) *Z Arkhivu P. Tychyny* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990).

<sup>33</sup> E. Naiman, “On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them,” *Russian Review* 60, 3 (2001), 307-315.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., V. Depkat, The ‘Cultural Turn’ in German and American Historiography, *Amerikastudien /American Studies*, 54, 3 (2009), 425-450; Naiman, *On Soviet Subjects*.

<sup>35</sup> The term is borrowed from Grabowicz. See: George Grabowicz, “Symbolic Autobiography in the Prose of Mykola Khvyl'ovyi (Some Preliminary Observations),” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 22 (1998): 165-180.

and poetry as a primary source are used with caution to avoid speculations around the lives of their authors. They complement and help to verify the existing sources and enrich our understanding of the protagonists.

### Party documents

Party documents constitute another important group of primary sources for the biographical study. This includes interrogation and surveillance files, *svodki*, speeches, and official correspondence. Of the greatest importance for the biographical part of the thesis is a recently declassified collection of documents on Khvyl'ovyi, published in 2009.<sup>36</sup> This collection contains secret service reports and informers' messages to the State Political Directorate (GPU) of the Ukrainian SSR, anonymous evaluations emphasising the alleged nationalistic and anti-Soviet content of Khvyl'ovyi's writings, evidence from contemporaries and close acquaintances, messages reporting the death of the author, etc. gathered between 1930 and 1933. This document collection can be set alongside other recently published documents on the relationship between the central party leadership and the Ukrainian SSR. Another recently declassified collection "Ukrainian Intellectuals and the Authorities: Summaries of the Secret Department of the State Political Administration of Ukrainian SSR for 1927-1929,"<sup>37</sup> features weekly top secret reports (*svodki*) to the GPU, based on the operative sources and informers' reports collected during 1927 and 1929.

These collections, whose value for scholarship on Ukrainian intelligentsia is beyond doubt, nonetheless bring up the question of the veracity of primary sources compiled by the secret services. The main question is how reliable and objective those sources are for

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<sup>36</sup> Iurii Shapoval and Volodymyr Panchenko (eds.) *Poliuvannia na "Val'dshnepa". Rozsekrechenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Vasyl' Danylenko, ed. *Ukrains'ka Inteligentsia i Vlada: Zvedennia Sekretnoho Viddilu DPU USRR 1927-1929 rr.* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2012).

researchers. As with the autobiographical writings, the very nature of *svodki*, which, according to Andrea Graziosi, are compilations of compilations with all sorts of distortions and biases,<sup>38</sup> casts doubts on the accuracy of information included as well as the events and people reported. The overall question here is whether the party documents tell us more about the intelligentsia or about the intention of the party instigating the compiling, selecting and filing these primary sources in order to create and cement a required image of those under surveillance. One may agree with István Rév in that the documents in the archives are “largely fabrications: misinformation, blatant lies, overdramatization, or their opposite: trivialisations of dramatic events”.<sup>39</sup> Using these sources uncritically makes a historian a ‘collaborator’ of those untrustworthy secret agents and results in “reading totalitarianism the way totalitarianism, itself, would “want” to be read?”<sup>40</sup> In view of their limitations, all the above types of the primary sources are used and checked against other sources.

### *Methods of Social History and Sociology of Reading*

Soviet Ukrainian literature was undoubtedly created with the reader in mind. However, the “ideal” reader of the authorities and writers often did not correspond to the “real” reader, studied by sociologists in Soviet Ukraine. Section Three of the thesis is dedicated to the study of readership in Soviet Ukraine and its evolution during the decade. It is based on the reports of the regional and national library surveys undertaken in the second half of the 1920s. There were a number of surveys conducted in the second half of the 1920s. Regional library surveys were undertaken by the central bureau of political education in Odessa

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<sup>38</sup> A. Graziosi, “The New Soviet Archival Sources. Hypotheses for a Critical Assessment,” *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 40 (1999), 56.

<sup>39</sup> István Rév, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-Communism* (Redwood City: Stanford UP, 2005) 1-3.

<sup>40</sup> Naiman, *On Soviet Subjects*, 311

(October 1926-February 1927)<sup>41</sup> and Kharkiv (in 1928 focusing on the working youth in Kharkiv, Mariupol', Luhansk, Odessa, Kremenchuh, Mykolaiv<sup>42</sup>). Separate studies took place in Kyiv libraries of political education (1926-27),<sup>43</sup> in the National Library of Ukraine (1927)<sup>44</sup>, in Kharkiv Korolenko Central State Library, 1928-29, and in Kyiv libraries (three months in 1929).<sup>45</sup> Also, there were two major all-Ukrainian studies. In January-April 1928 (a sample of 6 days throughout the period), a study of all the republic's libraries was conducted by the special Department of Reading and Readership Studies [*Kabinet vvychennia knyhy i chytacha*] of the Ukrainian Scientific Institute of Book Studies [*Ukrains'kyi naukovi instytut knyhoznavstva*]. The report of the Department was based on the data from 22 *okruha*<sup>46</sup> libraries, which constituted 54 per cent of all the *okruhy* in the republic, with broad all-republican representation.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in March-April 1928 the Central Bureau of Political and Educational Work under the Narkompros [*Tsentral'nyi Kabinet Politrosvitroboty*] carried its own survey of the peasant readers in 58 libraries in 12 *okruhy*.<sup>48</sup> The library reports are used to evaluate the working class readership in Soviet Ukraine and their reading appetites: language in which literary works were preferably read, origin of the authors and types of books requested, topics and themes of fiction books most liked.

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<sup>41</sup> L. Kogan, "Shcho Chytaiut' Seliany," *Politosvita*, 2-3 (1927), 59-66; "Chto Chytaiut Zhenshchiny," *Krasnyi Bibliotekar'*, 6 (1927), 18-28; "Robitnychi Chytach i Khudozhnia Literatura," *Politosvita*, 4 (1927), 59-68.

<sup>42</sup> In the archive, results for Mykolaiv only can be found.

<sup>43</sup> N. Frid'ieva, "Tsentral'ni i Okruhovi Biblioteky Ukraïny," in *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni* (Kharkiv; Kyiv: DVU, 1930), 61-82; Dovgan', "Ukraïns'ka Literatura i Masovi Chytach," *Krytyka*, 8 (1928), 35-46.

<sup>44</sup> D. Balyka, O. Karpins'ka, "Interesy Chytachiv-Ukraïntsiv Zahal'noi Chytal'ni VBU," *Zhyttia i Revoliutsiia*, 3 (1927): 334-344.

<sup>45</sup> *Instytut Rukopysu*, F. 74, od. zv. 214.: "Ia. Kerekez, *Robitnycha Molod' i Khudozhnia Literatura*".

<sup>46</sup> Administrative division in 1923-1930

<sup>47</sup> *Instytut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od. zb. 210; 291; *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni*.

<sup>48</sup> TsDAHO, F. 166, op. 8, spr. 81; spr. 352, 344, 345.

## Historiography

The study of the Soviet Union for a long time has been restricted by a dominant “top-down approach”, paying little attention to the complex local-level developments in the border Soviet republics.<sup>49</sup> 1991 brought about a major shift, when the Soviet republics entered the limelight of Western scholarship on the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup> Soviet Ukraine represents one of the most fruitful cases due to the central role it occupied in the evolution of the Soviet nationalities policy. The Ukrainians were the largest national minority in the Soviet Union, comprising in 1926 45.6% of the entire Soviet non-Russian population. Secondly, the republic was a crucial agricultural and industrial region. Most importantly, Ukraine’s contiguous border with Poland made the republic an outpost of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>51</sup> All these factors made the success of the Bolshevik party in Ukraine crucial for the central party leadership and every means was used in order to secure Soviet rule. This study contributes to the scholarship that looks at the influence of local actors in the process of Ukraine’s sovietisation in the 1920s, with particular focus on nationalities policies and the relationship between arts and politics.<sup>52</sup>

During the 1920s, Soviet Ukraine experienced an unprecedented cultural revival, enabled largely by the all-Soviet nationalities policy of *korenizatsiia*, introduced in 1923,

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<sup>49</sup> The exception in this totalitarian school is Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union. Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923*. (New York: Atheneum, 1980).

<sup>50</sup> Per A. Rudling, *The Fall and Rise of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906-1931* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh UP, 2015); Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: the Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006); Grigol Ubiria, *Soviet Nation-Building in Central Asia. The Making of the Kazakh and Uzbek Nations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016); G. Hosking, *Rulers and Victims: the Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: London: Belknap Press; Harvard UP, 2006); Donald J. Raleigh, (ed.) *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917-1953* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh UP, 2001). A comprehensive review on the post-1991 Soviet scholarship: Stephen Kotkin, “1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 70, 2 (1998), 384-425.

<sup>51</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist’s Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Heaven: Yale UP, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Similar approach to look at local actors executed in the study on the Soviet Republics in Central Asia, Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2003). The example of negating the role of local elites: Ubiria, *Soviet Nation-Building*.

and Ukrainizatsiia known as its local variant. Korenizatsiia contributed significantly to increasing the number of ethnic Ukrainians in the party rank-and-file, introducing the Ukrainian language into all spheres of public life, institutionalising Ukrainian culture, and finally creating a habit for the Ukrainian language in urban centres. In turn, this preferential policy led to strengthening the national opposition in the KP(b)U. Nonetheless, this period merited relatively little attention from scholars of the Soviet Union;<sup>53</sup> whereas for national historians (both in Ukraine and émigré) this decade became one of the most significant periods of Ukrainian history, discussed, however, retrospectively in connection with Stalin's terror of the 1930s.<sup>54</sup>

There are different approaches to studying the early Soviet nationalities policy. Western Soviet, East European, and native Ukrainian and Russian historiographies highlight different domestic and international issues leading to the introduction of korenizatsiia. In the Western scholarship, the discussion of the establishment of Soviet Ukraine, with its unique cultural revival during the interwar period, was regarded as a by-product either of an intentional Soviet strategy to present an affirmative national outlook of the Soviet Union or of the “state-sponsored evolutionism” and sovietisation by means of “double assimilation”.<sup>55</sup> Korenizatsiia was also studied through Bolshevik ethnic

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<sup>53</sup> The only comprehensive account of Ukrainizatsiia in Western Historiography is Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 2001). Scholarships dealing with separate aspects of Ukrainizatsiia: J. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983); Matthew Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934*. (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2014); George Liber, “Language, Literacy, and Book Publishing in the Ukrainian SSR,” 1923-1928, *Slavic Review*, 41, 4 (1982): 673-685; *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR 1923-1934*, (Cambridge UP, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Iurii Shapoval, *Ukraïna 20-50-h Rokiv (Storinky Nenapysanoi Istorii)* (Kyiv, Naukova Dumka, 1993); Kul'chyt's'kyi, *Komunizm v Ukraïni*; Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Stalinism v Ukraïni: Henesa i Naslidky* (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005).

particularism.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, within native Ukrainian historiography, the 1920s are discussed as a product of the internal evolution of the national elite towards cooperation with the Bolshevik party as an attempt to continue a nation-building project, initiated by the UNR.<sup>57</sup>

The limitations of these two approaches are obvious: the first approach disregards the active role of the local intellectuals in establishing Soviet Ukraine, seeing local party leaders mostly as executors of the central directives. The national approach ignores the all-Union character of Bolshevik nationalities policy, placing the emphasis on grassroots cultural revival and its subsequent repression by the party's order. From the popular perspective of victimhood, the experience of the 1920s is seen only as a stage leading to 'the Ukrainian tragedy of *holodomor*' [the famine of 1932-33] and the final violent suppression of Ukrainian statehood. An attempt to bridge the gap between Western scholarship and native Ukrainian historiographies was made by a Russian historian, Elena Borisenok, in 2006.<sup>58</sup> The historian claimed that the study of the nationalities policy should go hand in hand with an examination of Soviet geopolitical goals, design to ensure the national outlook of Soviet republics.<sup>59</sup> Borisenok also brought into discussion the active role of the Ukrainian communists in the implementation of Soviet policies in the republic.

The present study highlights a number of problematic issues which Soviet Ukraine experienced during the 1920s and which were directly linked to the implementation of korenizatsiia. Firstly, as it will be shown in Section One, there were constant disagreements between the party elites centrally and in the KP(b)U about defining the scope and rationale

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<sup>56</sup> Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, 53, 2 (1994): 414–52; Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Redwood City: Stanford UP, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> E.g., Valerii Smolii, et al. *Ukrainizatsiia 1920-30-kh rokiv: Peremodumovy, Zdobutky, Uroky*. (Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> Elena Borisenok, *Fenomen Sovetskoi Ukrainizatsii, 1920-30-e gody*. (Moscow: Evropa, 2006).

<sup>59</sup> Borisenok, *Fenomen*, 83.

of the nationalities policy. The implementation of korenizatsiia had therefore always been impeded by the constant rivalry between the elites. Secondly, various Soviet policies in Ukraine were often contradictory to each other, resulting in their limited implementation. As it will be shown, the national based persecutions were launched as early as 1926, the year when Ukrainizatsiia only started to gain momentum. Thirdly, for Ukrainizatsiia to be successful, the Ukrainians as an ethno-national category needed to be constructed first. Hence, the 1920s experienced not only the development of national languages and cultures, but the creation of the audience, people who would identify themselves as Ukrainians and demand the cultural product in their language. Needless to say, the construction of the Ukrainian nation often adversely affected other ethnic groups in this multi-ethnic republic.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, Ukrainizatsiia had a direct link to sovietisation and cementing the provincial status of Soviet Ukraine. As discussed in Section Three, one of the outcomes of Ukrainizatsiia, which had been neglected in the historiography, was the creation of Soviet Ukrainian mass culture, contributing to provincialism and the subservient role of the Ukrainian language in the republic.<sup>61</sup>

Another important aspect for the thesis is the relationship between power and art, especially the evolution of literary politics in Soviet Ukraine. Ukrainian literature during the 1920s arguably underwent the same metamorphoses as Russian literature, gradually moving towards the unification of various utopian revolutionary projects into a single

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<sup>60</sup> Mayhill Fowler, "Yiddish Theater in Soviet Ukraine: Reevaluating Ukrainian–Jewish Relations in the Arts." *Ab Imperio*, 3 (2011): 167-188; Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine* (Bloomington; Indianapolis, Indiana UP, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> On the aspect of readership: Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader. Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the exception of Soviet Literature* (Redwood City: Stanford UP, 1997); Shkandrij, Myroslav, "The Ukrainian Reading Public in the 1920s: Real, Implied and Ideal," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/ Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 2 5 (2016), 160-183.

socialist realism.<sup>62</sup> Literary life in Ukraine was subjected to the same all-Union directives and regulations, with the Resolutions “On Party Policy in the Sphere of Literature” from 1925 and ‘On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations’ from 1932 being its milestones.<sup>63</sup> Broad scholarship on Russian literature of the period, however, can only provide a partial framework for the present study.<sup>64</sup> In line with the argument, Soviet Ukrainian literature presents a separate case and should be studied with regards to the specifics of political and cultural development in Soviet Ukraine.

The present study builds upon George S. N. Luckyi’s *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (1956)<sup>65</sup> and Myroslav Shkandrij’s *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: the Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (1992).<sup>66</sup> However, these studies of literary politics in Soviet Ukraine rest on a rather exclusive approach towards Ukrainian writers and cultural tendencies of that time. The studies execute the “either ...or” paradigm to evaluating literature in Ukraine, according to which the writers with a genuine pro-Ukrainian orientation are set against those with a pro-centralist, pro-Moscow one. This approach does not identify the category of Soviet Ukrainian culture. Other currents in Ukrainian literature in the 1920s were studied by Oleh S. Ilnytskyi (the study of Ukrainian

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<sup>62</sup> M. Golubkov, *Utrachennyie Al'ternativy. Formirovanie Monisticheskoi Kontseptsii Sovetskoi Literatury. 20-30 Gody* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1992).

<sup>63</sup> Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko (eds.), *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007).

<sup>64</sup> E.g., Mark Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature. Writers and Problems* (New York: Oxford UP, 1964); Evgeny Dobrenko, *Aesthetics of Alienation: Reassessment of Early Soviet Cultural Theories* (Evanston, Ill.: North-Western UP, 2005); *The Making of the State Reader*; “The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste, or, Who ‘Invented’ Socialist Realism?” In *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen et.al. (London; Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1997), 135-164; Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 37-98; Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago; London: Chicago UP, 1981); Boris Thomson, *The Premature Revolution, Russian Literature and Society, 1917-1946* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972).

<sup>65</sup> George Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (Durham-London: Duke UP, [1956] 1990).

<sup>66</sup> Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: the Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*, (Edmonton: CIUS, 1992).

Futurism)<sup>67</sup> and Valentyna Harhun (the reappraisal of socialist realism in Ukrainian literature).<sup>68</sup> The present study aims to enrich our understanding of different currents and undercurrents in Ukrainian literature during the 1920s by power and its rivalry with the all-Soviet cultural model.

The existing secondary literature on Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna offers a variety of ideologically loaded assessments of their personas, literary activity or public engagement. Often, the way the writers are evaluated depended on the personal convictions of the interpreter, or an uncritical interpretation of the entire period of the 1920s both in the Soviet, diaspora and in the national historiography. Khvyl'ovyi, acclaimed in the early 1920s as “one of the most outstanding writers of the proletarian age,”<sup>69</sup> fell out of the narrative of Soviet culture after his suicide in 1933.<sup>70</sup> In the Soviet Union, within a short period of time, his life-long activity was labelled counter-revolutionary, his writings were removed from libraries, and his name disappeared from official literary criticism. Until the early 1980s, Khvyl'ovyi's name in the Soviet Union could only be used in connection with ‘*khvyl'ovizm*’ – a general term to define class enemies. The same approach was used for the entry on the writer in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1935).<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the image of a leader of a “national deviationist group of writers” was introduced outside the Soviet

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<sup>67</sup> Oleh S. Ihnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930. A Historical and Critical Study*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998).

<sup>68</sup> Valentyna Harkhun, *Sotsrealistychnyi Kanon v Ukraïns'kii Literaturi: Henesa, Rozvytok, Modyfikatsii* (Nizhyn: Hidromaks, 2009).

<sup>69</sup> Oleksander Doroshkevych, *Pidruchnyk Istorii Ukraïns'koi Literatury* (Kyiv: Knyhospilka, 1927), 304.

<sup>70</sup> See: Olena Palko, “Between Two Powers: a Soviet Ukrainian Writer Mykola Khvyl'ovyi,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 4 (2016): 575-598

<sup>71</sup> Khvylevoi Mykola in *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, vol. 59 (Moscow: Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1935), 488.

Ukraine: in the English edition of a reference volume about the Soviet Ukraine (1969) Khvyl'ovyi was mentioned only through his “manifestation of local nationalism.”<sup>72</sup>

Tychyna, in contrast, became a part of the Soviet literary canon and was abundantly studied in Soviet Ukraine. From the late 1920s onwards the poet was the focus of critics' attention, who in eager rivalry lauded Tychyna's joining the ranks of Soviet poets.<sup>73</sup> Among the major scholars of the later period were Leonid Novychynko, Semen Shakhovs'kyi and Stanislav Tel'niuk, whose studies combined a biographical approach with literary criticism.<sup>74</sup> Needless to say, the scholarship of the period portrayed Tychyna as a staunch communist poet and a devoted state official. The reappraisal of Tychyna's literary and ideological evolution was first attempted by Vasyl' Stus in his censored study “*Fenomen Doby (Skhodzhennia na Holhofu Slavy)*” [The Phenomenon of the Age (Ascending to the Golgotha of Fame)], 1970-71. According to Stus, himself a poet at odds with the regime, “in the history of world literature perhaps there is no other example of a poet who devoted half of his life to high poetry and another half – to a relentless fight with his own genius.”<sup>75</sup>

Both protagonists yet merited varied receptions among the Ukrainian diaspora. The debates about the writers' contribution to Ukrainian literature and politics flourished since the early 1930s. Not surprisingly, the main discussion point became their collaboration with the Bolshevik party, which was presented either as 1) something they were compelled to do

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<sup>72</sup> *Soviet Ukraine* (Kiev: Editorial office of the Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian S.S.R., 1969), 469.

<sup>73</sup> Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, *Dvadtsiat' Rokiv Novoï Ukraïns'koi Liryky* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1924); Koriak, *Ukraïns'ka Literatura*; “Pershe Desiatyrichchia,” in Koriak, *V Boïah: Statti i Vystupy, 1925-1930* (Kharkiv: Literatura i Mysterstvo, 1933); Volodymyr Iurynets', *Pavlo Tychyna. Sproba Krytychnoi Analisy*. (Kharkiv: Knyhospilka, 1928).

<sup>74</sup> Leonid Novychenko, *Poeziia i Revoliutsiia. Tvorchist' P.Tychyny v Pershi Pisliazhovtmevi Roky*. (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1968); Semen Shakhovs'kyi, *Pavlo Tychyna* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1968); Stanislav Tel'niuk, *Pavlo Tychyna. Bibliografichna Povist'* (Kyiv: Molod', 1979).

<sup>75</sup> Vasyl' Stus, *Fenomen Doby (Skhodzhennia na Holhofu Slavy)* (Kyiv: Znannia Ukraïny, 1993), 91.

in order to pursue their literary activity, or 2) a voluntary one with all of the negative connotations of their betrayal and cooperation with the enemy. The way these writers were evaluated within the diaspora depended significantly on the ideological background of the observer. For some émigrés, the Bolsheviks represented the enemy who had crushed the idea of Ukrainian independence by a military offensive. However, there were many others who, due to their earlier socialist orientation as well as successful political and cultural shifts in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s, tended towards reconciliation with the Bolsheviks, seeing the latter as defenders of the idea of a sovereign Ukraine (the so-called *zminovikhivtsi*).<sup>76</sup>

The writers earned differing appraisals by Ukrainian right-wing groups abroad. In their eyes, Khvyl'ovyi represented an on-going national opposition to the Bolshevik authorities. One such evaluation was voiced by the leader of the Ukrainian nationalists in Western Ukraine Dmytro Dontsov, who claimed that Khvyl'ovyi was one of those “divided souls that were unable to cope with the problem: to what extent they are Ukrainians, and to what extent they are subject to Russia.”<sup>77</sup> In particular, Khvyl'ovyi was praised for his repeated calls to distance Ukraine from the Russian Communist party and Moscow. As a result of this, he was seen as a leader of a “modern nationalism of the 1930s”,<sup>78</sup> as *khvyl'ovizm* was defined. On the contrary, Tychyna’s post-1933 literary and political activity was seen as a definite and, more importantly, sudden break with his literary genius;<sup>79</sup> a betrayal of his earlier beliefs and a disreputable surrender to the Party. At

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<sup>76</sup> Christopher Gilley, *The 'Change of Signposts' in the Ukrainian Emigration. A Contribution to the History of Sovietophilism in the 1920s* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2009).

<sup>77</sup> Roman Rahmannyi, *Dmytro Dontsov i Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, 1923-1933* (London: Ukraïns'ka Vydavnycha Spilka), 1984), 23.

<sup>78</sup> Introduction to Dmytro Dontsov, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*, ([s.l.], 1947) II.

<sup>79</sup> E.g., Ivan Koshelivets', *Suchasna Literatura v URSR* (New York: Proloh, 1964); Vasyl' Barka, *Khliborobs'kyi Orfei, abo Kliarnetyzm* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1961).

around the same time, attempts were made to excuse Tychyna's degeneration into a "grapho-maniac" and a "party fool" by introducing the idea of his histrionic "shields" and "masks", put on by the poet in order to rescue himself from terror and purges. Consequently, an attempt was made to re-read Tychyna's post-1933 poetic contribution to discern "grains of truth" behind alleged allegories and metaphors.<sup>80</sup>

Appraisals of the Ukrainian communists also depended heavily on the general ideological orientation of Ukrainian emigrants. The third post-World War II wave of Ukrainian emigration strengthened the nationalistic attitude of the diaspora. This ideological "turn to the right"<sup>81</sup> consolidated the idea of a united, independent Ukrainian state as the ultimate goal of the national struggle, which, consequently, rejected leftist sentiments of any kind. The re-orientation of the way in which the whole generation of the 1920s was regarded had, nevertheless, a dual outcome. On the one hand, Ukrainian communists or artists who cooperated with the regime after the October revolution were seen as definite and inexcusable traitors to the nationalist cause, leading to an undermining of their overall contribution to Ukraine's history, politics and culture.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, this reorientation brought about a significant development in the historiography of the 1920s. A new paradigm of the 'executed renaissance,' was introduced, according to which the 1920s were a unique period of cultural flourishing in Ukraine, which, if it had not been violently interrupted by the Stalinist terror, would have evolved into the highest levels of national cultural development. This approach was applied

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<sup>80</sup> E.g., Iurii Lavrinenko, *Pavlo Tychyna i Ioho Poema "Skovoroda" na Tli Epokhy* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1980); Presentation by G. Grabowicz at the international conference *Ukrainian Modernism in Context, 1910-1930*, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (2007).

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsjyf1hxRmWo> (Accessed 16 November 2015)

<sup>81</sup> For the intellectual development within the Ukrainian immigration in the interwar period see: Alexander J. Motyl "*The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929*" (Boulder; New York: Columbia UP, 1980).

<sup>82</sup> E.g., Vasyl' Pliushch, *Pravda pro Khvyl'ovizm* (Munich: Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukraïny: 1954); Roman Zadesnians'kyi, *Shcho nam dav Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*, ([s.l.]: 1979).

perhaps for the first time by Viktor Petrov, pen-name Domontovych, a prominent writer, scholar and literary critic, in his manuscript *Ukraïns'ka Intelihentsiia - Zhertva Bol'shevyts'koho Teroru* [Ukrainian intelligentsia – a martyr of the Bolshevik terror], first published in 1949.<sup>83</sup> The paradigm was later refined by Iurii Lavrinenko in the late 1950s.<sup>84</sup>

Undoubtedly, the post-revolutionary decade revealed the greatest creative potential of Ukrainian artists. Years of the revolutions, the civil wars, political instability, and the ideological pluralism of the early Soviet years along with the policy of Ukrainizatsiia encouraged unprecedented developments in all spheres of national cultural life. Nonetheless, this approach of lumping together the entire generation of the 1920s is doubtful. Firstly, the main problem of such a martyrological cast, according to Halyna Hryn, was the idea that “national and moral criteria can be brought to bear in the evaluation of authors and their works.”<sup>85</sup> Those who chose to view the entire generation of Ukrainian artists and cultural workers of the 1920s-1930s as martyrs of the Soviet regime basically praised intellectuals based not on their merit but on the year of their death. Secondly, the moral right of those Ukrainian intellectuals, who one way or another survived the terror, to continue their creative or public activity after the majority of their peers had been executed was questioned. For example, Tychyna or Maksym Ryl's'kyi, who not only survived the terror but also attained privileged positions in Soviet cultural and political life, became targets for this sort of criticism for decades to come.

After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the ‘executed renaissance’ paradigm, along with the national communist perspective, merged with another approach - to “nationalise” Ukrainian early Soviet intellectuals, and present them as part of a national

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<sup>83</sup> Viktor Petrov, *Ukraïns'ki Kul'turni Diiachi URSR 1920-1940 Zherty Bil'shovyt'skoho Teroru* (New York: Proloh, 1959).

<sup>84</sup> Lavrinenko, *Rozstriliane Vidrodzhennia*.

<sup>85</sup> Hryn, 68.

opposition to the Communist regime.<sup>86</sup> This contributed to the utopian view that the whole history of Ukraine should be seen as a struggle to build an independent and united country. As Mark von Hagen put it,<sup>87</sup> the narrative of history in independent Ukraine replaced the familiar dogmatic approach of Marxism-Leninism and dialectical materialism with a national teleology. Accordingly, the intellectual and political history of Ukraine was rewritten in a way that made nationalists and separatists out of nearly all prominent Ukrainians. Among modern Ukrainian historians and literary scholars, Khvyl'ovyi has become one of the most researched Ukrainian writers, whose life and writings have been adjusted to the “new dogma of an eternal and unchained nation, whose history was defined by the struggle against a ‘national oppressor’ for Ukrainian independence and unity.”<sup>88</sup>

This nationalistic approach attempts to rehabilitate and to excuse both protagonists for being communists by finding reasons for their decisions to serve the party. In order to cope with the obvious dilemma of Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi being a talented poet and writer in spite of their affiliation with the party, an attempt was made to push the concept of Khvyl'ovyi's “permanent inner ambivalence”, which originated partly from his romantic nature and partly from his idealistic belief in Bolshevik populism;<sup>89</sup> and Tychyna's “genius histrionics.”<sup>90</sup> Native Ukrainian historiography and literary criticism, thereby, promotes

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<sup>86</sup> On the dangers of national narrative in history writing see: Kasianov, G., and Tolochko, O. “Natsional'ni Istorii ta Suchasna Istoriohrafii: Vykylyky i Nebezpeky pry Napysani Novoï Istorii Ukrainy,” *Ukrains'kyi Istorychnyi Zhurnal* 6 (2012): 4-21; Andreas Kappeler, Guido Hausmann, Olena Petrenko and Frank Golczewski, “Diskussion: Wie soll man ukrainische Geschichte betreiben?,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 4 (2016), 626-645.

<sup>87</sup> Mark von Hagen, “Does Ukraine Have a History?” *Slavic Review* 54, 3 (1995): 658-673.

<sup>88</sup> Gilley, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Iurii Shapoval, “Fatal'na Ambivalentnist' (Mykola Khvyl'ovyi u Svitli Dokumentiv GPU),” in *Poliuvannia na “Val'dshnepa” Rozsekrenchenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*, ed. Iurii Shapoval et al. (Kyiv: Tempora, 2010), 12-45; Volodymyr Panchenko, “Khvyl'ovyi: Istoriiia Iliuzii i Prozrin”, in *Poliuvannia na “Val'dshnepa”*, 46-81; Their analysis in Mayhill C. Fowler, Review of “Poliuvannia na “Val'dshnepa”. Rozsekrenchenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 13, 2 (2012): 491-500.

<sup>90</sup> E.g., Stanislav Tel'niuk, “Mistyfikatsiia Poeta v Totalitarnomu Pekli,” *Dnipro*, 1 (1991): 181-197; O. Iarovi, “Poet na Perehresti Pohliadiv: Krytyka Riznykh Rokiv pro Tychynu,” *Ukrains'ka Mova ta Literatura*, 18 (1997): 1-3; O. Tarnavs'kyi, “T. S. Eliot i Pavlo Tychyna,” *Vsesvit*, 6 (1990): 130-136; L. Novychenko,

further the “either... or” paradigm, with little or no reference to the complicated process of inner ideological evolution, which each and every representative of the 1920s generation underwent.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, there is no attempt to trace the evolution of Ukrainian modernism (the most important literary current since the end of the nineteenth century) into socialist realism.

### Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of four main sections, dedicated to different aspects, as well as different actors, of the gradual sovietisation of Ukraine. Section One examines the political debates between the representatives of different communist parties in Ukraine in the early 1920s. Different projects of a Soviet Ukraine, elaborated by various communist forces, are in the centre of the discussion. After the merger with the KP(b)U, the former members of the Ukrainian communist parties contributed to the strength of the Ukrainian horizon in the Bolshevik party. It is argued that the nationalities policy of korenizatsiia, the cultural-political relationship and the literary politics of the time were significantly shaped or altered due to the power struggle between the local and central elites. Much attention is paid to korenizatsiia, seen as a result of the amalgamation of different agendas of different interest groups in the republic. Korenizatsiia, as seen from the party centrally, aimed primarily at indigenisation and party entrenchment (korenizatsiia literary means “rooting itself”). At the same time, for national intellectuals and Ukraine-minded communists in the party, korenizatsiia predominantly meant Ukrainizatsiia, the continuation of the pre-

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“Tychyna i Ioho Chas: Nezaivi Dopovnennia,” in Novychenko, *Dvadtsiati Roky: Literaturni Dyskusii, Polemiky. Literaturno-Krytychni Stati*. (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1991), 314-366.

<sup>91</sup> The exception is Grabowicz, G. Tychyna’s Chernihiv, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, I, 1 (1977): 79-114; Also his paper “Modernism in Ukrainian Poetry: The Paradigm of Pavlo Tychyna”, presented at the international conference “Ukrainian Modernism in Context, 1910–1930”, Harvard University, Center for Government and International Studies (CGIS), 14–15 April 2007.

revolutionary initiative of a forced nation-building. For both groups, linguistic Ukrainizatsiia, aimed at accelerated de-Russification of the population, became a necessary and yet subordinate objective. Section One sets the scene for the discussion of the project of Soviet Ukrainian culture and the cultural alternatives lost by the decade's end.

Section Two of the thesis explores the concept of Soviet Ukrainian culture. Two aspects of this separatist cultural project are discussed based on the two case studies of Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi. This is the most substantial section of the thesis; it comprises of two chapters and four subchapters. Chapter 2.1 is dedicated to the poet Tychyna, discussing his gradual submission to the Soviet cultural canon after being widely recognised as a poet of the Ukrainian People's Republic. His poetry (especially, his 1920 collection "*Zamist' Sonetiv i Oktav*" [Instead of Sonnets and Octaves]) is analysed to pinpoint the poet's ideological shifts towards accepting the new cultural orientation and political authorities. Through the example of Tychyna, the link between Ukrainian Modernism and socialist realism is highlighted. Tychyna exemplifies the lost alternatives of Modernism in Soviet literature.

Based on a case study of Khvyl'ovyi, Chapter 2.2 investigates the complex process of elaborating and implementing the project of Soviet Ukrainian culture. In two subchapters, the writer's early prose is discussed to show the potential of revolutionary literature and Soviet Ukrainian culture. His numerous contributions during the Literary Discussion in 1925-28 highlight the political aspect of the separatist cultural project. The Discussion exposed different sides in the debates around Soviet Ukrainian literature and its orientation. The case study of Khvyl'ovyi presents those alternative visions of revolutionary, proletarian and Soviet culture lost during the 1920s. The Literary Discussion also suggests the reasons for the decline of political autonomism and cultural nationalism in Soviet Ukraine.

Section Three investigates the audience of Soviet Ukrainian literature. Studied from this angle, the potential of Soviet Ukrainian literature is juxtaposed with the readers' demands for and expectations from the literary products. The analysis of the readership allows to evaluate the ability of Soviet Ukrainian writers to satisfy their audience. Hence, readers' reports and reviews offer important insight into the writers' trajectory towards a simplification of their style and manner since the mid-1920s. In addition, social conservatism suggests another possible reason for the languishing of the separatist cultural project. This chapter also highlights another important aspect of korenizatsiia: the creation of mass audience with a clear demand for literature in the Ukrainian language.

Section Four brings together three main factors of the sovietisation of Ukrainian literature during the years of the first Five-Year Plan (1928-32): the political centralisation, readers' aesthetic expectations and writers' own evolution. The period of the "cultural revolution" became decisive in defining the future vision of Soviet culture in Ukraine. It is argued that between 1928 and 1932 the artistic map of the Soviet Union had been changed and Ukraine became politically peripheral and culturally provincial. Social and political changes in the republic during 1928-32 are highlighted to present the impact of the 'class war' on intellectual life in Ukraine. Through the activities of Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi, the last attempts of Ukrainian intellectuals to preserve the autonomy of Soviet Ukrainian culture are analysed. The chapter also gives an account of the creative and political role of the protagonists in the 1930s, leading to the year 1933, the pinnacle of the decade-long political battle on the cultural front in Soviet Ukraine.

## **Section One: Debating the Projects of a Soviet Ukraine: Political Alternatives in 1917-1926**

During the revolutionary period 1917–1920 Ukraine found itself in an ideological and political cauldron. Through a series of revolutionary movements of different political orientations, Ukrainian elites started to develop and implement various, often contradictory and mutually exclusive, projects of state-building. These opposing visions often manifested under the same socialist banner and the Ukraine’s political history since the revolutionary event of 1905-1907 was defined by a socialist orientation. The socialist movement in Ukraine became significantly diversified after the February Revolution of 1917, when national aspirations and political separatist currents gained strength at the margins of the Russian Empire.<sup>92</sup> Parallel projects of a socialist Ukraine had been developed. The main difference between these competing visions was the attitude towards Ukraine’s sovereignty and political autonomy. Based on this, two different political cultures can be distinguished. For the first group, pan-imperial attitudes remained dominant even after the downfall of the Romanovs. Ideologists and members of the RSDRP(b) (and later the RKP(b) and partially the KP(b)U), the Mensheviks, and the Russian SRs supported the idea of unchanged

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<sup>92</sup> On Revolution: Marko Bojcun, “Approaches to the Study of the Ukrainian Revolution,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 24:1 (1999): 21-38; John-Paul Himka, “The National and Social in the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-20: The Historiographical Agenda,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 34 (1994): 95-110; Chris Ford, “Reconsidering the Ukrainian Revolution 1917–1921: The Dialectics of National Liberation and Social Emancipation,” *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 15, 3 (2007): 279-306; John Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1920: A Study in Nationalism* (New York: Princeton UP, 1972); Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia Natsii*. 3 vols. (Kyiv: Dzvyn, 1920); Stepan Velychenko, *State-Building in Revolutionary Ukraine: A Comparative Study of Governments and Bureaucrats, 1917-22* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2011); Taras Hunczak (ed.), *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge, MA.: HURI, 1977); Pavlo Khrystiuk, *Zamitky i Materiialy do Istorii Ukraïns’koi Revoliutsii 1917–1920* (New York: Vydavnytstvo Chartoryis’kykh, 1969); Valerii Soldatenko, *Ukraïna v Revoliutsiinu Dobu*. 4 vols. (Kyiv: Svitohliad, 2010); Dmytro Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukraïny 1917–1923 rr.* (New York: Bulava, 1954); Theophil Hornykiewicz, (ed.), *Ereignisse in der Ukraine, 1914–1922*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: W.K. Lypynsky East European Research Institute, 1966–69).

political borders and, as before, a centralist government.<sup>93</sup> Another group of socialists, consisting of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Working Party (USDRP), the Ukrainian SRs (UPSR), and later the *Borot'bysty* and the *Nezalezhnyky*, adopted a separatist orientation, advocating Ukraine's autonomy in political, economic and cultural matters. During the civil wars the boundaries between these two political cultures became fluid. None of the above mentioned parties could claim to have a rigid political agenda at the time, so adherents of the Marxist ideas in Ukraine often easily changed their institutional affiliation, bringing their attitudes and beliefs with them. This ideological and institutional fluidness makes it hard to differentiate separate ideological currents or political movements of the time. Instead, one can talk about two different horizons within the Ukrainian socialist movement: the centralist one, with clear orientation towards an all-Russian political space, and a separatist Ukrainian one, focusing on the rebirth of the Ukrainian nation within its ethnic boundaries.

### *A National and/or Social Revolution: the Civil War in Ukraine, 1917-1921*

In the aftermath of the February Revolution, a national legislative authority – the Ukrainian Central Council (*Tsentral'na Rada*) was formed with Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, a famous Ukrainian academic and public activist as a president of the presidium of the Rada. During the first months, the demands of the Rada leaders did not go beyond Ukraine's autonomy and its loose cooperation with other democratic republics within the Russian Empire. On 23 (O.S. 10) June 1917<sup>94</sup> the Rada issued its First Universal, a legal act-declaration, proclaiming Ukraine's autonomy: “without seceding from all of Russia [...] let the

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<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth White, “The Socialist Revolutionary Party, Ukraine, and Russian National Identity in the 1920s,” *Russian Review*, 66, 4 (2007): 549-567.

<sup>94</sup> Here and hereafter the dates in brackets are old style (O.S.).

Ukrainian people have the right to manage its own life on its own soil”.<sup>95</sup> The First Universal also envisaged the creation of a democratically elected all-Ukrainian people’s assembly, which would have the sole right to draft laws to be confirmed later by the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. The Second Universal, issued on 16 (3) July 1917 reassured Ukraine’s non-separation from Russia “in order that we and all her peoples might jointly strive toward the development and welfare of all Russia and toward the unity of her democratic forces”.<sup>96</sup> Given such moderate demands, the establishment of the Rada was met with unprecedented enthusiasm. Important decisions for the newly proclaimed Ukrainian state were made at that time. Ukraine gained state authorities and governmental institutions; official national symbols were adopted; and the first steps in the international arena were taken. The Rada promised cultural autonomy to Jews, Poles, and Russians to encourage the representatives of these minorities to support Ukraine’s statehood. Nonetheless, the Rada had failed to establish a viable state apparatus or create reliable armed forces.<sup>97</sup>

The mainstream autonomous orientation was changed after the October Revolution, when the Bolsheviks took power in Petrograd and started elaborating plans on how to broaden their authority over the former Russian Empire. Quickly drawing their attention to Ukraine, Bolshevik activists on 8 November (26 October) 1917 attempted a workers’ uprising on the biggest Kyiv factory ‘Arsenal’, which, however, was promptly defeated by the supporters of the Provisional Government and the forces of the Tsentral'na Rada. These events instigated the local elites to take drastic measures in order to keep control in their hands: on 20 (7) November “without separating ourselves from the Russian Republic and

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<sup>95</sup> The First Universal in Hunczak, *Ukraine*, 382.

<sup>96</sup> The Second Universal, in Hunczak, *Ukraine*, 382.

<sup>97</sup> Serhii Plokyh, *the Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine*. (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 207.

maintaining its unity [...] in order that our strength may aid all of Russia, so that the whole Russian Republic may become a federation of equal and free peoples”,<sup>98</sup> the Rada established the Ukrainian People’s Republic (*Ukrains'ka Narodna Respublika, UNR*). The defeat of the Bolshevik coup in Kyiv exposed how little public support the Russian-led Communist party had in Ukraine at the time: according to the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly held on 25 (12) November 1917, the Bolshevik party gained 10% of votes (compared to 24% across the empire).<sup>99</sup> And yet, in less than a year, in April 1918 the regional organisation of the RSDRP(b), established in December 1917, was transformed into a self-standing separate Communist Party of the Bolsheviks of Ukraine (KP(b)U), and a Provisional Workers’-Peasants’ Government was formed, which proclaimed the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (10 March 1919).<sup>100</sup>

The UNR could not offer any feasible alternative. The Tsental'na Rada, being unable to resist the Red Army, turned to the Central Powers for military support. By the end of February 1918 there were 450,000 German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers on the territory of Ukraine, who by the end of April of the same year succeeded in occupying its entire territory. In return, the Ukrainian government took upon itself substantial liabilities, including deliveries of grain, food and raw materials.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, with the support of German commands, the *coup d'état* against the UNR was organised, replacing the Rada with the new Ukrainian State, the Hetmanate (*Het'manat*) headed by Pavlo

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<sup>98</sup> The Third Universal, in Hunczak, *Ukraine*, 382.

<sup>99</sup> Table 2.1: Votes for the Constituent Assembly, November 1917 (totals by region), in Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations. The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 23-24.

<sup>100</sup> The name was changed to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1937.

<sup>101</sup> Oleh Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1918* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 1971); Peter Borowsky, “Germany’s Ukrainian Policy during World War I and the Revolution of 1918–19,” in *German-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Hans-Joachim Torke and John-Paul Himka (Edmonton and Toronto: CIUS, 1994), 84–94.

Skoropads'kyi.<sup>102</sup> The new regime had a clear conservative and anti-Bolshevik orientation; all socialist oriented political parties were outlawed and continued their underground struggle against Hetman Skoropads'kyi. Subsequently, in late December 1918 the merged forces of the UNR and the Western Ukrainian National Republic (ZUNR, established in November 1918) overthrew the conservative government of Skoropads'kyi and once again consolidated their position in Kyiv, the period and government known as the Directory (*Dyrektoriiia*) of the UNR. The Dyrektoriiia could not control the capital for long, however: the Ukrainian government was forced to surrender Kyiv on 5 February 1919, when the Bolshevik troops entered the city during the second Bolshevik attempts to occupy Ukraine, known also as the Second Soviet-Ukrainian war.

The Bolshevik advance brought about a brief stabilisation of political matters in Ukraine. The expansion of Soviet Ukraine westwards initiated further debates within the Ukraine's socialist camp about possible cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Amidst constant political reversals, a large number of Ukrainian leftists regarded the Bolshevik regime as a possible framework for an independent Socialist Ukraine. Already in early 1918, the splinter group within the UPSR voiced their support to the Bolshevik project. The split was legalised during the IV Congress of the UPSR (13-16 May 1918), when the leftist wing of the party formed a new political organisation, later known as the party of *Borot'bysty*. Among its founders, and most famous representatives, were Hnat Mykhailychenko, Oleksandr Shums'kyi, Vasyl' Ellans'kyi (Blakytnyi), Andrii Zalyvchyi and Panas Liubchenko, all of whom would soon play a prominent part in the political life of Soviet Ukraine. The establishment of the Soviet regime in February 1919 opened the room for

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<sup>102</sup> Taras Hunczak, "The Ukraine under Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi," in *The Ukraine*, 61–81; Mark von Hagen, "'I Love Russia, and/but I Want Ukraine,' or How a Russian General Became Hetman of the Ukrainian State, 1917–1918," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 29, 1-2 (2004): 115-148.

cooperation between the Moscow-led Bolsheviks and Ukraine-minded communists. This cooperation had proven to be mutually beneficial: whereas the Bolsheviks were focused on consolidating their authority in Ukraine, the Borot'bysty concentrated mainly on promoting communist ideology among the peasantry and developing the cultural sphere, erroneously forgotten by the former.

Nonetheless, the Bolshevik stabilisation of political matters was once again interrupted, when General Denikin's White Army entered Kyiv on 31 August 1919.<sup>103</sup> The Soviet order was re-established on 16 December 1919, when the Red Army re-took Kyiv. However, the struggle for Ukraine did not finish. In May 1920, a united UNR-Polish Army entered Kyiv as a part of the offensive against Soviet Russia during the Soviet-Polish war, launched in February 1919. Yet, this military campaign did not gain significant public support, and the general anti-Bolshevik uprising failed despite the hopes and efforts of Symon Petliura, the head of the Ukrainian military units and the Directory.<sup>104</sup> By the end of 1921, the Soviet regime was established on almost entire territory of Ukraine. Although many Ukrainian historians argue that the Red Army played a decisive role in the establishment of the Soviet regime,<sup>105</sup> the process of sovietisation of Ukraine was far more complicated. It required the use of such methods as propaganda, engagement with local intellectuals and political activists, as well as readiness to compromises, especially in the national and agrarian questions.

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<sup>103</sup> Anna Procyk, *Russian Nationalism and Ukraine: The Nationality Policy of the Volunteer Army during the Civil War*. (Edmonton: CIUS, 1995); Aleksandr Ushakov, Vladimir Fediuk, "The Nationalities Policy of the Whites in the South of Russia in the Civil War Period," in *Ethnic and National Issues in Russian and East European History*, ed. John Morison (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 174-192.

<sup>104</sup> Michael Palij, *The Ukrainian-Polish Defensive Alliance, 1919-1921. An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Edmonton: CIUS, 1995).

<sup>105</sup> Borys, *The Russian Communist Party*, 294-295; Orest Subtelny, *The Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1988), 376-377.

By the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks, in contrast to the gradually weakening UNR, came forward with a clear social orientation and strong party organisation ('democratic centralism'). In addition, at the time the affiliation with Russia was seen temporary, needed to fight the "bourgeois influence" of Germany and Entente.<sup>106</sup> One of the first decrees passed by the Bolsheviks was the "Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia" which proclaimed the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, including secession and formation of a separate state.<sup>107</sup> This decree resumed the key points from the RSDRP program of 1903 and Stalin's essay "Marxism and the National question"<sup>108</sup> published in 1913. As Jurij Borys aptly noted, "the victory of the Soviet system in the Ukraine was a victory for the Russian solution of the Ukrainian national problem."<sup>109</sup> The main slogan, 'free federation of the democratic Socialist states' was the idea in which almost all Ukrainian socialists had believed. Yet, what was seen by the Ukrainian socialists as a long-awaited mechanism of gaining sovereignty, was used by its authors as a tactical move, suggested by the logic of political struggle. The early Bolshevik affirmative attitude towards a separate Soviet Ukraine was a necessary concession to secure support of the Ukrainian socialists in the Bolshevik struggle against the German army, which had occupied Ukraine since February 1918.

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<sup>106</sup> Stanislav Kulchytsky, "The Phenomenon of Soviet Statehood," in *Culture, Nation, and Identity: the Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600-1945*, ed. Andreas Kappeler et al. (Edmonton: CIUS, 2003). Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism*, 61-63.

<sup>107</sup> Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia. For English translation see URL <<http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/1917/11/02.htm>>. (Accessed 29 October 2014)

<sup>108</sup> The Bolshevik theory of the national question was influenced by the concept of national autonomy, developed by Austro-Marxists. D. Boersner, *The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question (1917 – 1928)* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1981); M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement: the Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (Pennsylvania: PenState UP, 1998); E. Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London: Pluto Press 1994).

<sup>109</sup> Jurij Borys, "Who Ruled the Soviet Ukraine in Stalins Time? (1917-1939)," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 14, 2 (1972), 213.

Similarly, there was no unanimity on the status of Ukraine in the Bolshevik party. In 1918, two different positions on the republican status of Ukraine were debated. On the one hand, the Katerynoslav group advocated the idea of numerous separate Soviet republics corresponding to social and economic conditions of Ukraine.<sup>110</sup> The Katerynoslav group's idea was to remove the Russified industrial areas from rural Ukrainian areas and to join them to central Russian provinces. The Kyiv group, on the other hand, argued that Ukraine's scant working class could not advance without the help of the peasantry, whose strong national aspirations must be taken into account. Despite advocated by the minority in the KP(b)U, the central leadership conceded to the Kyiv group and supported a unified Ukrainian republic. On 7 March 1918 during the Red Army retreat from Kyiv, Mykola Skrypnyk, Lenin's close ally, who was sent to Ukraine in December 1917 to help the Bolsheviks develop their organisation there, proclaimed the liquidation of all the independent Soviet republics on Ukraine's territory, i.e., "Donbas-Kryvyi Rih, Odesa and Crimean republics" and their unification with the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, the name for the first time used to define Soviet Ukraine.<sup>111</sup> This move was, however, a tactical one: the Russian Bolsheviks, bound by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, could not declare a war against Germany, an ally of Petliura in his anti-Bolshevik campaign. Hence, the declaration of the Ukrainian SSR at the All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets (March 1918), enabled the Bolsheviks to enter the open war with the German occupying armies through the Ukrainian Soviet government.

Nonetheless, the creation of the autonomous Soviet republic at the margins of the former Russian Empire was balanced by centralised and unified system of government. On

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<sup>110</sup> On 31 January 1918, the Odesa Soviet Republic was created, followed by the Donbas-Kryvyi Rih Soviet Republic established on 11 February 1918.

<sup>111</sup> Holubnychy, *Outline History*, 70.

19-20 April 1918 the creation of an All-Ukrainian Bolsheviks Party organisation was discussed in Taganrog. Emanuil Kviring, the leader of the Bolsheviks' Katerynoslav group, promoted the idea of a partially autonomous party with direct subordination to the TsK RKP(b). As opposed to this, a number of Ukrainian Bolsheviks, headed by Skrypnyk, defended the idea of a separate communist party, which would cooperate with the RKP(b) through the envisaged Third International. Skrypnyk's motion of an independent Bolshevik party was supported by 35 votes against 21. However, the separate status of the Ukraine's Bolshevik party, as adopted in April 1918, was significantly undermined by the fact that the organisational bureau of the KP(b)U was situated in Moscow. Eventually, the resolution of the Taganrog Conference on the independent status of the KP(b)U from April 1918 was cancelled by the First Congress of the KP(b)U, held in Moscow on 2-12 July 1918. At the Congress, another resolution was passed, which made the KP(b)U an integral, although autonomous, part of the RKP(b); the Central Committee of the KP(b)U acknowledged the authority of the Central Committee of the RKP(b).<sup>112</sup>

The program of the RKP(b), adopted by the Eighth Party Congress, held in Moscow on 18-23 March 1919, made the centralist claims of the central Bolshevik leadership unambiguous. It was stated that a separate status granted to the Soviet republics did not mean that the Party would as well be reorganised as a federation of independent Communist parties: "There must exist a *single* centralised Communist Party with a *single* Central Committee leading all the Party work in all sections of the RSFSR. All decisions of the RCP and its directing organs are un-conditionally binding on all branches of the party, regardless of their national composition. The Central Committees of the Ukrainian,

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<sup>112</sup> Ravich-Cherkasski, *Istoria*.

Latvian, and Lithuanian Communists enjoy the rights of the regional committees of the party, and are entirely subordinated to the Central Committee of the RKP.”<sup>113</sup>

Clearly, the actual sovereignty in all Soviet republics belonged to the TsK RKP(b). This subordinate status was also reflected in the composition of the Soviet government in Ukraine. The first Ukrainian Soviet government, the Provisional Workers-Peasants Government of Ukraine, formed on 28 November 1918 in Kursk, was headed by the Russian revolutionary Grigorii Piatakov and predominantly comprised of the Russian Bolsheviks. The second government led by Khrystian Rakovskiy (in place until July 1923) at later stages involved ethnic Ukrainian commissars taking posts in education, justice and communication.

The predominance of the Moscow-oriented vision gave impetus to shaping national deviations within the KP(b)U. Perhaps the earliest attempt to theorise a national opposition inside the Bolshevik Party belonged to the Ukrainian Bolshevik Vasyl' Shakhrai, Commissar for Military Affairs in the first Ukrainian Soviet government. In his pamphlet *Revoliutsiia na Ukraine* [The Revolution in Ukraine],<sup>114</sup> Shakhrai summarised the experience of Soviet state-building in Ukraine, highlighting the national component of the socialist revolution in the republic. In January 1919, Shakhrai in co-authorship with another KP(b)U member Serhii Mazlakh published a brochure *Do Khvyli: Shcho Diïet'sia na Ukraïni i z Ukraïnoi?* [Concerning the Moment: What is Happening in and to Ukraine], the contents of which soon became part of the Ukrainian national communist program.<sup>115</sup> Primarily, the pamphlet touched upon the discordance between Lenin's claims for nations'

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<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Pipes, *Formation*, 245.

<sup>114</sup> V. Skorovstans'kyi [Shakhrai] *Revoliutsiia na Ukraine* (Saratov, 1919). (Italysc in the original)

<sup>115</sup> Serhii Mazlakh, Vasyl Shakhrai, *Do Khvyli: Shcho Diïet'sia na Ukraïni i z Ukraïnoi?* (New York: Proloh, 1954); *On the Current Situation in the Ukraine*. (Michigan: Michigan UP, 1970).

right to self-determination (realised, as believed, in the creation of Soviet Ukraine) and the inferior position of the republic's Bolshevik party.

In *Do Khvyli*, the RKP(b)'s position towards Ukraine was scrutinised. The authors supported the idea of an independent Soviet Ukraine and a separate Communist party, equal in its authorities to the RKP(b). It is noteworthy that during the April 1918 Congress in Taganrog, Shakhrai advocated the creation of a Ukrainian Communist Party of Bolsheviks (UKP(b), modelled on the RKP(b), rather than KP(b)R (Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Russia as in KP(b)U). The idea was, however, declined at the Congress in order to avoid ambiguity: "Ukrainian" could both mean 'of Ukraine' and 'of Ukrainians'; the latter could hardly be used to characterise the Bolshevik party at the time<sup>116</sup>). For Shakhrai and Mazlakh, the socialist orientation of Ukraine was unchallengeable. The question of the republic's sovereignty, defined by the status of its leading party, remained, however, open. In this, the authors clearly made a reference to the decision of the First KP(b)U Congress (July 1918), according to which the status of the KP(b)U was reduced to a mere regional section. Instead, the pamphlet pushed forward the idea of establishing a self-standing independent Ukrainian Communist Party of Bolsheviks (UKP(b), which would affirm the Ukrainian language, culture and independent statehood.<sup>117</sup>

Shakhrai and Mazlakh concluded their pamphlet with a list of demands, addressed to "Comrade Lenin". These declarations encapsulated the key standpoints of the Ukrainian communists. The list included:

- Ukraine and Ukrainian people had defined themselves as a nation and proclaimed their independence;

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<sup>116</sup> Liubovets', *Ukrainis'ki Partii*, 244.

<sup>117</sup> Mazlakh, Shakhrai, *Do Khvyli*.

- Ukraine will fight for its independence till the end. Sooner or later, in a hard and bloody way by armed struggle, or in a democratic way by compromise with neighbouring countries, - but Ukraine will indeed be independent and sovereign;
- Ukrainian reunion with Russia is progressive only for Russian great-power. In practice, Ukrainian sovereignty benefits not only Ukraine. The fewer national struggles we have, the better it is for the economic, political, social and cultural life of Ukraine; the bigger contribution it will be for world culture;
- Unless the independence of Ukraine is assured, unless the Ukrainian worker is nationally discriminated, to be “nationalist” and “chauvinist” for Ukrainians is not only a historical right, but an obligation. Our “chauvinism” depends on your “internationalism”, but you hide behind words and we don’t want to hide any more.<sup>118</sup>

The demands, expressed in *Do Khvyli*, were indirectly answered by Lenin in his late 1919 resolution “On the question of the attitude towards the working people of Ukraine, now liberating themselves from temporary occupation by the Denikin bands”.<sup>119</sup> Lenin reassured that the RKP(b) had no intention to limit the independence of the Ukrainian SSR. As for relations between the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR, it was stated that it was “self-evident and generally recognised that only the Ukrainian workers and peasants themselves can and will decide at their All-Ukraine Congress of Soviets whether the Ukraine shall amalgamate with Russia, or whether she shall remain a separate and independent republic, and, in the latter case, what federal ties shall be established between that republic and Russia.”<sup>120</sup> In this evasive way, Lenin shifted the emphasis from national to class struggle (since it was the task of the national proletariat to decide on the republic’s sovereignty). There was yet another important implication of Lenin’s address to the Ukraine’s toiling masses: due to the precarious position of the Bolsheviks in Ukraine (the lack of public support in addition to the military threat from General Denikin’s army) and the lack of a well-developed plan as

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<sup>118</sup> Mazlakh, Shakhrai, *Do Khvyli*, 105.

<sup>119</sup> Source: Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol. 30 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 291-297.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

for Ukraine on Lenin's part, the activity of different socialist pro-soviet parties was tolerated and sanctioned.

1919-1925: Debating the Projects of a Socialist Ukraine

The major non-Bolshevik communist party in Ukraine was the Borot'bysty [derived from the party newspaper *Borot'ba*, Ukrainian for 'struggle']. The party was formed after the split in the UPSR in the summer of 1918. The newly-established party adopted the name of the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (Communists) (*Ukrainis'ka Partiiia Sotsialistiv-Revoliutsioneriv (Komunistiv)*), which was used parallel to the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (Communists-Borot'bysty) (*Ukrainis'ka Partiiia Sotsialistiv-Revoliutsioneriv (Komunistiv-Borot'bystiv)*). In August 1919, after the merger with the radical leftist faction of the USDRP (the *Nezalezhnyky* group), the party acquired its final name, the Ukrainian Communist Party (Borot'bysty) (*Ukrainis'ka Komunistychna Partiiia (Borot'bystiv)*). The evolution of the party name reflected the evolution of its ideology: from a socialist-revolutionary party to a communist one.<sup>121</sup>

At the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, the Borot'bysty changed their attitude towards the October Revolution: whereas earlier the revolution was seen as a reflection of deep social challenges and a preliminary step to socialism, in 1919 it was already regarded as a necessary constituent of the world communist revolution, to which the Ukrainian working class had contributed equally. From this perspective, although the Russian revolution was considered a useful example for Ukraine, it could not be copied blindly. The

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<sup>121</sup> Ivan Majstrenko, *Borot'bism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism* (New York: Research Program on the U. S. S. R., 1954); Olena Liubovets', *Partiia Borot'bystiv v Ukrainis'kii Revoliutsii 1917–1920 rr.* PhD thesis (Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, 1993); Tetiana Bevz, *Partiia Natsionalnykh Interesiv i Sotsial'nykh Perspektyv. Politychna Istoriiia UPSR* (Kyiv: IPIEND, 2008); Velychenko, *Painting Internationalism*

Borot'bysty, who enjoyed broad public support among the Ukrainian population, rejected the idea of a messianic role of the proletariat from one particular country. Instead, they advocated the need to “translate a revolutionary struggle into the language of local conditions”.<sup>122</sup> Hence, the revolution in Ukraine was both social and national, and had its own social bases: urban and rural proletariats along with semi-proletarian and poor peasantry. The latter was seen pivotal for the success of the socialist revolution in Ukraine.

The orientation towards the Ukrainian countryside defined the Borot'bysty's attitude to the Bolsheviks. The Moscow-led party - supported by Russified industrial workers in eastern Ukraine (those Ukrainian by origin but Russian speaking) - was regarded as an occupying force. Russian communists, according to the Borot'bysty, persistently neglected the social, economic and cultural peculiarities of Ukraine.<sup>123</sup> In addition, their exclusive class focus and disregard for national aspirations alienated the majority of the Ukrainian population. The Bolsheviks could therefore not deliver the concept of a world proletarian revolution to the Ukrainians. Overall, as seen from the Borot'bysty's perspective, the Bolshevik efforts to Russify the republic were detrimental for the entire communist endeavour in Ukraine.<sup>124</sup> It was argued that attempts to create a unified national working class would be doomed without recognising the national aspirations of the Ukrainian people. The sovietisation of Ukraine could only succeed if the persistent antagonism between urban Russian-speaking workers and the Ukrainian peasantry would be ceased. To achieve this goal, a new communist party was needed, one which could unify different social groups under a single ideology. The envisaged communist party would unite all local

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<sup>122</sup> “Do Nashoi Takyky”, *Borot'ba* (Kyiv), 1919, 13 August, 1.

<sup>123</sup> “Memorandum Ukraïns'koï Komunistychnoi partii (borot'bystiv) Vykonavchomu Komitetovi II-ho Komunistychnogo Internatsionaly (serpen' 1919 r.)” in *Ukraïns'ka Suspil'no-Polityhna Dumka v 20 Stolitti*, 3 vols., ed. Taras Hunchak, Roman Sol'chanyk (Munich: Suchasnist',1983), Vol. 1, 432; 435.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 437

communist forces, including the KP(b)U, and join the Third International as a separate territorial section.<sup>125</sup>

The national question was an intrinsic part of the Borot'bysty program. It was believed that “the best solution to the national question would be to reach socialism; thus the primary goal of each and every revolutionary socialist party [in Ukraine], despite their national affiliation, should be strengthening the achievements of the socialist revolution, which will necessarily result in national emancipation.”<sup>126</sup> Hence, social emancipation preceded a national one. Once achieved, national emancipation would lead to the creation of a national state, which eventually would become a part of the Universal Federation of Socialist Republics.<sup>127</sup> The future Federation would exist within the borders of the former Russian Empire and gradually expand by accepting new socialist republics. For the Borot'bysty, the independence of Ukraine, albeit considered only as a preliminary step before joining the Universal Federation, was immensely significant: Soviet Ukraine should join the Federation as an equal member and not through Russia, as suggested by the Moscow Bolsheviks.

In December 1918, a splinter group in the USDRP, the *Nezalezhnyky* (independentists) also declared their support to Soviet power.<sup>128</sup> The faction, officially named the Organising Committee of the USDRP *Nezalezhnyky*, included a number of prominent political figures of the time: its main theorists were Mykhailo Tkachenko, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Rada, and Andrii Richyts'kyi, one of the editors of the USDRP central organ *Robitnycha Gazeta*. The *Nezalezhnyky* did not form their own party,

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 435-36.

<sup>126</sup> “Iedyne Natsional'ne Vyzvolennia,” *Borot'ba* (Kyiv), 1919, 20 February, 1.

<sup>127</sup> Memorandum, in *Ukrains'ka Suspil'no-Politychna Dumka*, 434.

<sup>128</sup> Christopher Ford, “Outline History of the Ukrainian Communist Party (Independentists): An Emancipatory Communism 1918–1925,” *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*; 17, 2 (2009): 193-246.

nevertheless, they emphasised their difference from both the USDRP and the KP(b)U and elaborated a radical program of socio-economic and political transformation of Ukraine. The group argued the necessity of recognising the profound socio-economic character of the revolution in Ukraine with the proletariat and the toiling peasantry being its main engine. The group adopted a rather critical stand against any form of parliamentarianism (called ‘*demokratyzm*’<sup>129</sup>), which had failed to provide a strong organised power, a prerequisite of a socialist revolution. As it was stated in the Declaration of the Faction adopted on 12 January 1919, the Nezalezhnyky did not accept the “confused” USDRP position over the form of government through which to pursue the socialist revolution.<sup>130</sup> For the dissenters, soviets of workers’ and peasants’ deputies were the only possible form of governance. According to Richyts'kyi, the main features of soviets were their activity, combat-readiness, elasticity, mobility, and most importantly, close ties with the people.<sup>131</sup> The group as a part of the USDRP, participated in the Directory of the UNR and even entered the government. Nonetheless, as declared, they reserved the right to resign if their demands for giving power to the workers’ and peasants’ councils had not been met.

Similarly, the Declaration stated the unbridgeable differences between the Nezalezhnyky and the KP(b)U.<sup>132</sup> The latter were seen as subordinates of the RKP(b) and promoters of the imperialist Russian ideology. Like the Borot'bysty, the Nezalezhnyky rejected the Bolshevik idea of proletarian dictatorship which did not correspond to the Ukraine’s social structure. The Bolshevik party was seen as “a party that aims not for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry, but for the dictatorship of a

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<sup>129</sup> Andrii Richyts'kyi, *Od Demokratii do Komunizmu*. In: *Chervonyi prapor*, December, 1919 – January, 1920, 4 – 5. See also URL: <<http://vpered.wordpress.com/2010/09/06/richytsky-democracy-to-communism>>. (Accessed 28 October 2014)

<sup>130</sup> *Deklaratsiia Fraktsii Nesalezhnykh*, in *Chervonyi Prapor*, Kyiv, 1919, 22 January, 1.

<sup>131</sup> A. Pisots'kyi [Andrii Ruchyts'kyi], *Prohramovi Narysy*, *Chervonyi Prapor*, Kyiv, 1919, 22 January, 2.

<sup>132</sup> *Deklaratsiia Fraktsii*, 72.

section of the proletariat and of its own party. It is, therefore, profoundly violent and it will replace proletarian dictatorial violence against the bourgeois order with the violence of a small group.”<sup>133</sup> And yet the main reason for the disagreements with the Bolsheviks was their position in the national question. The Bolshevik party, according to the *Nezalezhnyky*, had proven itself “a hypocritical party which continually violates its own principles” and, therefore, “cannot be trusted until it is transformed organisationally and merges with the interests of the Ukrainian toiling people”.<sup>134</sup>

The *Nezalezhnyky* promoted the idea of Ukraine’s independence. For them, the success of the socialist revolution heavily depended on the right to form separate independent socialist republics. Their argumentation posited on the conviction that there was no national question in a sovereign state and, on the contrary, it was most urgent when a state’s independence was under threat. The national self-determination was similarly justified in class terms: “only in a sovereign national state, the struggle with bourgeoisie could not be overshadowed; under any other circumstances, this struggle automatically becomes the national struggle.”<sup>135</sup> Subsequently, at the Sixth Congress of the USDRP held on 10-12 January 1919 a motion was put forward to transform “the sovereign and independent Ukrainian People’s Republic into the sovereign and independent Ukrainian Socialist Republic”.<sup>136</sup>

The *Nezalezhnyky* admitted the possibility for their envisaged Ukrainian Socialist Republic to unite with other independent republics. The reasons for this could be fighting imperialism; supporting other socialist republics; and improving economic relations. This

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<sup>133</sup> *Resoliutsiia pro Vidnoshennia Fraktsii Nezalezhnykh do Rosiis'koï Komunistychnoï Partii i do Komunistychnoï Partii (bol'shevikiv)*, in Khrystiuk, Vol. IV, 55–56.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>135</sup> “Natsional'na Sprava i Sotsial'na Revol'itsiia,” *Chervonyi Prapor*, Kyiv, 1919, 25 February, 2-3.

<sup>136</sup> *Resoliutsiia Fraktsii Nezalezhnykh Kongresovi USDRP (sichen' 1919r.)*, in Khrystiuk, Vol. IV, 69.

cooperation, nonetheless, could only be temporary and mutually beneficial. Other forms of cooperation, especially with the RSFSR, were rejected: “The reconciliation with the Russian Soviet Republic was only possible on the basis of mutual recognition of the sovereignty of both socialist republics, complete and mutual non-interference in either’s internal affairs, the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic and the improvement of economic relations.”<sup>137</sup> The current state of the Ukrainian-Russian relationship was inadmissible. The Nezalezhnyky continued to oppose the Rakovskiy government, which, according to the group, was composed of “all sorts of Russian nationalist elements from the Black Hundreds to the revolutionary intelligentsia in Ukraine [...] joining forces with the Bolsheviks to help reconstruct a “united and indivisible Russia.”<sup>138</sup> They condemned the early Bolshevik practices in Ukraine, stating that there was neither true soviet power nor a dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead there was only “a dictatorship of the communist party”.<sup>139</sup>

Thus, since early 1919, the leaders of the Nezalezhnyky started discussing the possibility of forming a separate Ukrainian Communist Party to implement their vision of a socialist Ukraine. This idea was, however, forcedly crushed by the KP(b)U in spring 1919, when the Nezalezhnyky leaders were arrested and their organs of press (*Chervonyi Prapor* in Kyiv and *Kharkivs'kyi Proletar* in Kharkiv) were closed down.

In 1919, there was another pro-soviet party in place in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Party of Left Socialist-Revolutionists (*Ukrainis'ka Partiia Livykh Sotsialistiv-Revoliutsioneriv, UPLSR*). Initially, this was a left fraction of the All-Russian SR Party in Ukraine. Subsequently, the group united around the *Bor'ba* [Russian for ‘struggle’] newspaper,

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>138</sup> Tkachenko, *Borot'ba* (Vienna), 7-8 April 1920, 3; Quoted in Ford, *Outline History*, 214.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism*, 125.

acquiring the name the UPLSR (*Bor'bistiv*). The Bor'bisty at the time were the third (after the KP(b)U and the Borot'bysty) most influential pro-soviet party in Ukraine.<sup>140</sup> Its members supported the Bolshevik party and considered Soviet power to be “a pure form of proletarian dictatorship”.<sup>141</sup> Nonetheless, they conceded to Ukraine’s autonomy to help wage revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie and capitalism. The Bor'bisty anticipated the world socialist revolution and, therefore, saw a separate Ukraine only as a temporary stage in this process. Due to its Russian roots, pro-Russian orientation and internationalist position, other Ukrainian communist parties saw the Bor'bisty as a party which “only tries to become a national Ukrainian party”.<sup>142</sup>

The Borot'bysty, the Nezalezhnyky and the Bor'bisty demanded to be included in the Second Soviet Government in Ukraine. Nonetheless, the Third Congress of the KP(b)U held in Kharkiv (1-6 March 1919) confirmed the party stand against cooperation with other pro-soviet parties, and refused their representatives to hold responsible posts in the Ukrainian Soviet Government.<sup>143</sup> The Borot'bysty were allowed into secondary ministerial offices. Nonetheless, Lenin instructed his subordinates to rigorously control those “little shits” [*merzotnyky*].<sup>144</sup>

The dismissal led to the radicalisation of the non-Bolshevik communist parties. In summer 1919, the Borot'bysty established the Council of Chief Revolutionary Emissaries (*Rada Holovnykh Revoliutsiinykh Emisariv*) aimed to unite all leftist parties in the struggle against “the bourgeois-nationalistic power” of the *Dyrektoria*. The method was further used by the Nezalezhnyky in their struggle against both the Directory and the Soviet

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<sup>140</sup> For a short time in 1920, four communist parties existed in Ukraine: the Bolsheviks (33,480 members) the *Borot'bists* (15,000 members), and the *Nezalezhnyky* (3,000 members); and the UPLSR (around 3000).

<sup>141</sup> “Pobeda Sovetskoi Vlasti na Ukraine,” *Bor'ba* (Kyiv), 1919, 8 February, 1.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Liubovets', *Ukraïns'ki partii*, 255.

<sup>143</sup> Adams, *Bolsheviks*, 218-19.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Velychenko, *Painting Internationalism*, 68.

Government of Rakovskiy. The All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee (*Tsentrevkom*) opposed “the betrayers of the working masses”, the “occupation government of Rakovskiy” and the “traitorous Directory, which is negotiating with the French and other imperialists”.<sup>145</sup> The Tsentrevkom initiated the uprising against the Bolsheviks; and issue an ultimatum to the head of the Ukrainian Soviet Government. The ultimatum of 25 June 1919 read:

In the name of the insurgent Ukrainian working people I announce to you that the workers and peasants of Ukraine have risen in arms against you, as the government of the Russian conquerors, which, having draped itself in slogans that are sacred to us: 1. a government of soviets of workers and peasants, 2. The self-determination of nations, including secession, and 3. the struggle against imperialist conquerors and plunderers of the toiling masses, desecrates not only these sacred mottoes and ruining the true power of the workers and impoverished peasants of in the neighbouring country, but also uses them for aims that are remote from any socialist order.<sup>146</sup>

However, the Nezalezhnyky’s initiative was not supported by other political actors in Ukraine. Moreover, in view of the advancing Russian Volunteer Army of Denikin, the uprising was abandoned. Subsequently, the threat of Denikin’s Army encouraged the Ukrainian leftist parties to seek unification and to broaden their cooperation with the Bolshevik party. The same rationale was adopted by the Bolsheviks: the advance of Denikin, continuous uprisings led by atamans Matvii Hryhoriv and Nestor Makhno,<sup>147</sup> and the struggle with the Directory, forced the Bolsheviks to seek compromise with the pro-soviet Ukrainian parties and to invite their representatives to join the Soviet government.

On the VUTsVK Plenum on 12 May 1919, the leaders of the Borot'bysty and the Bor'bisty expressed their readiness to cooperate with the Bolsheviks and to share

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<sup>145</sup> Quoted in Ford, *Outline History*, 219.

<sup>146</sup> *Ul'tymatum* in Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia*, Vol.3, 346-347.

<sup>147</sup> Bohdan Nahaylo, “Ukrainian National Resistance in Soviet Ukraine during the 1920s,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 15, 2 (1990): 1-18.

government responsibilities.<sup>148</sup> In August 1919, the left wing of the Nezalezhnyky group joined the Borot'bysty to form a unified Ukrainian Communist Party (Borot'bystiv), affirming its allegiance to the KP(b)U. The Bolsheviks, in turn, did not trust these parties. The attitude towards the non-Bolshevik communists was expressed by Lenin in his Draft Resolution on the Ukrainian Borot'bysty Party, dated from 6 February 1920. In the draft resolution, the Borot'bysty were considered “as a party, which, by its propaganda aimed at splitting the military forces and supporting banditism, is violating the basic principles of communism, thereby playing directly into the hands of the Whites and of international imperialism.”<sup>149</sup> It was concluded that the KP(b)U “must be systematically and steadily aimed at the dissolution of the Borot'bysty in the near future. To this end, not a single misdeed on the part of the Borot'bysty should be allowed to pass without being immediately and strictly punished. In particular, information should be collected concerning the non-proletarian and most disloyal nature of the majority of their party members.”<sup>150</sup>

The last word in the conflict came from the Third International. At the beginning of August 1919, the Borot'bysty passed their Memorandum to the Executive Committee with demands to accept the party to the organisation based on their status of a leading communist party in Ukraine.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, at the end of October 1919, TsK UPLSR submitted their application for joining the Communist International. These parties naively regarded the Third International as an international forum for self-standing national communist parties and as an ultimate authority in questions of the future communist movement, whose decisions were decisive. However, this platform, established by the

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<sup>148</sup> Liubovets', *Ukraińs'ki Partii*, 275.

<sup>149</sup> Lenin, Draft Resolution on the Ukrainian Borot'bysty Party, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, 174-175.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid*

<sup>151</sup> Memorandum, in *Ukraińs'ka Suspil'no-Polityhna Dumka*, 427-437.

Bolsheviks to promote their own causes, had little autonomy in determining disputes between local communist parties. In January 1920, the session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International devoted to the Ukrainian question passed the resolution that “Ukraine was represented at the First Congress of the Communist International solely by the KPU (Bolshevik), which the Congress recognized as the authorized representative of the Ukrainian proletariat.”<sup>152</sup> As for the admission of the Borot'bysty party to the Communist International “the Executive Committee believes that it has the duty of raising the question of the unification of all communist forces in Ukraine in one party [...] in order to eliminate disagreements between both parties and to help them towards amalgamation.”<sup>153</sup> As for the UPLSR application, it had never even been discussed by the Executive Committee.<sup>154</sup>

The rejection of the Executive Committee of the Third International made it almost impossible for the Borot'bysty to function separately. Regarding themselves communists by conviction, the party members could barely disobey the Comintern. Moreover, the competition with the Bolsheviks was becoming much harder. The recommendation for merger, instead, was seen as a possibility to continue promoting the party’s vision within the KP(b)U. As a result, the party conference, held on 14-29 March 1920, voted for the self-liquidation of the Borot'bysty party and its merger with the Bolshevik party. Subsequently, 4000 former Borot'bysty, according to Skrypnyk’s account, were admitted to the KP(b)U in 1920.<sup>155</sup> Similar path was taken by the Bor'bisty, who after the Borot'bysty self-liquidation were constantly tackled as “a centre of legal counterrevolutionary

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<sup>152</sup> Quoted in Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, 184-185.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid*, 184-185.

<sup>154</sup> Serhii Hirik, “Bor'bysty, Borot'bysty i Komintern: Evoliutsiia Vzaemovidnosyn,” *Visnyk Kharkivs'koho Natsional'noho Universytetu im. Karazina*, (Istoriia), 48 (2014), 85.

<sup>155</sup> Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 74.

organisation”.<sup>156</sup> The Party Conference, held in Kharkiv on 16 July 1920, passed the resolution encouraging merger with the KP(b)U.

Open opposition to the Bolshevik party was not abandoned entirely, however. The right group of the *Nezalezhnyky* initiated the creation of a separate Ukrainian Communist Party (*Ukrains'ka Komunistychna Partii, UKP*). The first Congress of the UKP, held on 22-25 January 1920, adopted the program of the party, in which the urgency to unify all the communist parties in Ukraine was reiterated.<sup>157</sup> From the beginning, the UKP had a very small membership; right after its inaugural meeting, it numbered around 250 members. Nonetheless, the party discarded all offers for merger and even continued to grow in numbers at the expense of former Bolsheviks. In July 1920, the “federalist group” of the KP(b)U joined the KPU.

The organisational bureau of the federalist group in the KP(b)U was formed in summer 1919 by Hryhorii Lapchyns'kyi. The opposition to the KP(b)U was justified by the centralist attitude of the latter, which Lapchyns'kyi dubbed “*rusotiapstvo*”.<sup>158</sup> Lapchyns'kyi urged that a communist party could not be the same for Ukraine and Russia, since the two republics had different economic and social bases and, therefore, different interests and needs. Similarly, Ukraine should be connected to the other soviet republics only within a loose federation, established to provide cooperation in political and economic spheres. The RKP(b) was continuously criticised for its chauvinistic policy and its desire to conserve the Moscow dominant position and the annexation of Ukraine. Lapchyns'kyi, like other Ukrainian communists, envisaged the union of all Ukrainian communist parties into a

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<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Liubovets', *Ukrains'ki Partii*, 289.

<sup>157</sup> *Prohrama Ukrains'koi Komunistychnoi Partii*, Kyiv-Viden, 1920; Also in *Ukrains'ka Suspil'no-Polityhna Dumka*, 438-440.

<sup>158</sup> Soldatenko, *Ukraina*, Vol.III, 117-116; Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism*, 135-36.

separate body, which would become an equal member of the Communist International.<sup>159</sup> Not surprisingly, Lapchyns'kyi and his followers were soon expelled from the KP(b)U and joined the UKP in May, 1920.

Until 1925, the UKP remained the only legal opposition to the KP(b)U in Ukraine, but their activities remained marginal. Already after the first party congress in 1920, the UKP attempted to use the influence of the Third International to be recognised as a separate communist party of Ukraine; a Memorandum was sent to the Executive Committee of the Third Communist International, justifying the position of the UKP leadership.<sup>160</sup> In August 1924, the TsK UKP applied for admission again. This time, however, the Third International was used as a means to save the party face. The 1924 Memorandum stated that the Party would self-dissolve if the Executive Committee acknowledged the independence of the Ukrainian SSR and the right of Ukraine's communists to be represented in the Comintern by a separate party. Not surprisingly, the Executive Committee assured the UKP that the Ukrainian SSR was a sovereign state and that Ukrainian communists already had their own party, the KP(b)U.<sup>161</sup> Being unable to continue their separate activity, on 1 March 1925 the UKP Congress voted self-liquidation. Many of its members joined the KP(b)U.<sup>162</sup>

A number of factors enabled the political pluralism of the early 1920s. The unstable position of the KP(b)U was, however, a decisive one. Due to a lack of public support, low party membership and underrepresentation of locals within its ranks, the Bolsheviks were

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<sup>159</sup> *Chetverta Konferentsiia Komunistychnoi Partii (Bil'shovykiv) Ukraïny 17-23 bereznia 1920 r.* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim Al'ternatyvy, 2003), 173-177.

<sup>160</sup> Memorandum Ukraïns'koi Komunistychnoi Partii Kominternovi, in *Ukraïns'ka Suspil'no-Polityhna Dumka*, 441-456.

<sup>161</sup> "Resoliutsiia Prezydiï Vykonkomu Kominternu pro Rozpusk UKP, 24.12.1924," In *Natsional'ni Vidnosyny*, 120-122.

<sup>162</sup> A useful account for the UKP activity presented in: Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Ukraïnis'ka Komunistychna Partiiia (UKP) i Komunistychna Partiiia (Bol'shevikiv) Ukraïny (KP(b)U)* (Vienna, 1921).

still unable to impose their monopoly outright. At the end of 1918, out of a total membership of 4,364 only 7% of the KB(b)U's members were Ukrainian by origin.<sup>163</sup> This lack of political influence on the territory of Ukraine was substituted by the military force of the Red Army (the Ukrainian–Soviet war continued in Ukraine until November 1921), manipulation by the Communist International in order to unify the Ukrainian communist parties, and, what Martin called, an affirmative nationalities policy.<sup>164</sup> Undoubtedly, the most successful method to win over the representatives and supporters of the Ukrainian communist parties was the implementation of the Bolshevik's new nationalities policy, *korenizatsiia*, launched in April 1923.

The all-Soviet policy of *korenizatsiia*, with its Ukrainian variant known as *Ukrainizatsiia*, became one of the most successful yet ambiguous endeavours of the Bolshevik party in Soviet Ukraine. *Korenizatsiia*, as seen from the party centrally, was designed to break the isolation of the Bolsheviks in the border republics. It was aimed primarily at indigenisation, party entrenchment (*korenizatsiia* literary means “rooting itself”), and securing Soviet rule in the republic. At the same time, for national intellectuals and Ukraine-minded communists in the party, *korenizatsiia* predominantly meant *Ukrainizatsiia*, the continuation of the UNR initiative of forced nation-building. For both groups, linguistic *Ukrainizatsiia*, aimed at accelerated de-Russification of the population, became a necessary and yet subordinate objective. Whereas the central party leadership aimed to create a Ukrainian-speaking community as a step towards further assimilation of Ukrainians into a homogeneous Soviet people,<sup>165</sup> national intellectuals, including those in

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<sup>163</sup> M. Frolov, *Kompartiiino-Radians'ka Elita v USRR (1917-1922 rr): Stanovlennia i Funktsionuvannia* (Zaporizhzhia: Prem'ier, 2003), 30.

<sup>164</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

<sup>165</sup> In the debates about the objectives of the Bolshevik nationalities policy, I side with Hirsch, who maintains that the Soviet nationalities policy was a strategy for modernisation and development. In this perspective, the

the party, saw the formation of the Ukrainian nation as an end in itself. These two views on korenizatsiia are discussed below.

### *Korenizatsiia: the Centralist Perspective*

Korenizatsiia was adopted at the Twelfth RKP(b) Congress in April 1923. In his Theses entitled “National Factors in Party and State Affairs”, Stalin, the main speaker at the Congress, called for reorganising the Soviet Union “in such a way as fully to reflect not only the common needs and requirements of all the nationalities of the Union, but also the special needs and requirements of each individual nationality.”<sup>166</sup> In the Theses, Stalin condemned Great-Russian chauvinism, which, according to him, led to an underestimation of specifically national features and languages in the Party and to an arrogant and disdainful attitude towards those differences. The new nationalities policy, korenizatsiia, was designed, therefore, to fight both “Great-Russian chauvinism” and any manifestations of local nationalism.

The underlying motives of korenizatsiia were more complex: the need to root the predominantly Russian revolution at the margins of the former empire; to make the Bolshevik party, with its small percentage of locals in regional party organisations, the embodiment and the implementers of the revolutionary ideals for all Soviet republics; to overcome the tsarist legacy of alienation between the Russian centre and non-Russian peripheries; and to address the hostility between the cities (often Russified) and the countryside. The success of korenizatsiia in Ukraine had critical importance. Firstly, the

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Soviet regime’s modernisation program was “state-sponsored evolutionism”. Modernisation of backward borderland peoples was to be accomplished by organising them into nations within the context of a “unified state with a colonial type economy”. The goal was “double assimilation”. National identification was to develop within a more fundamental loyalty to the Soviet state. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

<sup>166</sup> Stalin, *National Factors*, 193.

Ukrainians composed the largest non-Russian group in the Soviet Union, accounting for nearly 29 million people out of a total of 147 million in 1926. Secondly, the Bolshevik experience of the civil war in Ukraine was particularly arduous, with numerous military reversals and withdrawals. In addition, the Bolsheviks were challenged not only by their political rivals, but also by the majority of the Ukraine's peasant population.<sup>167</sup> Finally, as discussed above, the Bolsheviks for some time did not possess a monopoly over the socialist movement in Ukraine and needed to compete with other socialist parties and groups for the right to represent Marxist ideas and proletarian values in Ukraine.

In the early 1920s, the difficulty for the Bolshevik party in Soviet Ukraine was not only the need to win acceptance for their urban-based revolution in predominantly agricultural regions (a common all-Union problem), but to legitimise an urban-based revolution nationally alien to the Ukrainian countryside.<sup>168</sup> This situation made the Bolshevik attempts to prevent the creation of Russian urban islands in Ukraine well justified. On the one hand, efforts to industrialise and modernise the country required a continuous influx of workers, which in the case of Soviet Ukraine originated predominantly from the countryside. The party, in Zatons'kyi's words, "need[ed] to create an environment where the peasant gets used to seeing Ukrainian signs, announcements, and posters".<sup>169</sup> On the other hand, such affirmative actions towards the 'proletarian neophytes' had clear strategic goals. The Communist Party in Ukraine, even in the mid-1920s, lacked general public support and the majority of the peasantry viewed the Bolsheviks as alien both in

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<sup>167</sup> Arthur E. Adams, "The Great Ukrainian Jacquerie," In *Ukraine*, 247-270; Vladyslav Verstiuk, *Makhnovshchyna: Selians'ko-Povstans'kyi Rukh na Ukraïni (1918-1921)* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1991); Andrea Graziosi, *The Great Soviet Peasant War: Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1917-1933* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1996).

<sup>168</sup> Liber, Soviet Nationality Policy, 7. George Liber, *Total Wars and the Making of Modern Ukraine, 1914-1954* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2016)

<sup>169</sup> Quote in Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 89.

class and national terms. The arrival of these 'hostile elements' to the cities could cause further alienation from the party, this time also on the part of proletariat, in whose name it claimed to exercise its dictatorship. There was an urgent need to bring the spontaneous demographic Ukrainizatsiia (caused by party-initiated industrialisation and urban growth) under control by means of party-sponsored and party-controlled preferential policies, framed as korenizatsiia.

Another important factor for the implementation of the new nationalities policy was the international factor. After the First World War a significant number of Ukrainians remained on the territories of Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. In addition, after the Polish-Soviet war, four million ethnic Ukrainians were left in the territories ceded to Poland by the 1921 Treaty of Riga. A successful solution to the national question, therefore, was designed to counterbalance the strongly anti-Soviet attitude of the Ukrainians abroad, stirred up by a significant political emigration.<sup>170</sup> The Soviet strategy behind the implementation of affirmative actions in the national sphere was based on the idea that generous treatment of Ukrainians within the Soviet Union would appear attractive to the large Ukrainian population from abroad. As Skrypnyk put it, Soviet Ukraine should be regarded as a twentieth-century Piedmont that would serve as a centre to unite the divided Ukrainian populations of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania.<sup>171</sup>

The adoption of korenizatsiia was also linked to the failure of the Soviet expectations for immediate world revolution. The Bolsheviks were forced to take a more sober look at things after the defeat of the German Communist uprising scheduled on 23 October

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<sup>170</sup> Snyder, *Sketches*.

<sup>171</sup> The idea of Piedmont was cemented by Skrypnyk in his speech for the XI All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets (1929). See Skrypnyk, "USRR-Piedmont Ukraïns'kykh Trudiashchykh Mas," in Skrypnyk, *Statti i Promovy z Natsional'noho Pytannia*. (Munich: Suchasnist', 1974), 178-184. The Piedmont principle entered the Soviet political discourse of the 1920s: see Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 9.

1923.<sup>172</sup> A radical shift towards advocating the possibility of building socialism in one country was declared by the TsK VKP(b) Conference in April 1925.<sup>173</sup> Yet, the intention to be the beacon for the proletariat of other countries did not fade away. The re-orientation to the East and the adoption of the Comintern's position on the national and colonial question<sup>174</sup> required that the Soviet leadership serve as a forefront of a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the national question. In this regard, Ukraine was seen as, in Lazar Kaganovich's words, "a pattern and an example of a solution which the proletariat can offer to the problem of national liberation for the oppressed masses, of a state-building for national republics within the borders of the Soviet Union."<sup>175</sup>

The 1923 resolution went in line with the Party's previous intentions. Throughout the civil war years, attempts were made to address the Russification and to enhance the role of the Ukrainian language, which often took the form of promoting the equality of the Ukrainian and Russian languages in the republic. For instance, the adverse consequences of "forced Russification" were addressed in the draft constitution of the Ukrainian SSR, adopted by the III All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in March 1919.<sup>176</sup> In addition, the Commissariat for Education adopted a resolution according to which the official state

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<sup>172</sup> Gleb J. Albert, "German October Is Approaching?: Internationalism, Activists, and the Soviet State in 1923," *Revolutionary Russia*, 24:2 (2011): 111-142.

<sup>173</sup> The idea of socialism in one country was introduced in Stalin's "The Foundation of Leninism" (1924). It was elaborated by Bukharin (*Can We Build Socialism in One Country in the Absence of the Victory of the West-European Proletariat?*) and presented at the XIV Party conference in April 1925. It was secured as a new approach in the Soviet foreign policy by the 1925 resolution "On the aims of Komintern and RCP(b), 1925 and finally adopted as the state policy after Stalin's January 1926 article *On the Issues of Leninism*.

<sup>174</sup> Final Resolution adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of Komintern directed to support the national-revolutionary movements in colonies.

See: <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/ColNatQ2.htm> (Accessed 11 July 2016)

<sup>175</sup> Quoted in Iurii Shevel'ov, *Ukraïns'ka Mova v Pershii Polovyni Dvadtsiatoho Stolittia (1900-1941). Stan i status*. (Chernivtsi: Ruta, 1998), 91.

<sup>176</sup> Documents on Ukrainization were published in *Budivnytstvo Radians'koï Ukraïny* (Kharkiv, 1931); V. Iurchuk et al. *Komunistychna Partiiia Ukraïny v Rezoliutsiïakh i Rishenniakh Z'izdiv, Konferentsii i Plenumiv TsK*, (Kyiv: Polityvydav, 1976), vol. 1: 1918-1941; *Zbirnyk Uzakonen' ta Rozporiadzhen' Robitnycho-Selians'koho Uriadu Ukraïny* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1924-25); M. Panchuk et al. *Natsional'ni Vidnosyny v Ukraïni v XX st.: Zbirnyk Dokumentiv i Materialiv*, (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1994).

language was abolished in favour of free development of local, commonly spoken languages.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, adherence to the Ukrainian language was highlighted in the Resolution of the TsK RKP(b) “On the Soviet Rule in Ukraine,” adopted on 4 December 1919. It was stated that the Ukrainian language should be regarded as “an instrument for the communist education of the working people” and therefore proficiency in the Ukrainian language for civil servants and party workers was desired.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, in 1920 Stalin, the Commissar for Nationalities at the time, made a speech stating the need to introduce national languages into schooling, the judicial system, public administration and executive authorities. The same points were reiterated by the Commissar for Nationalities at the Tenth Party congress in March 1921.<sup>179</sup>

The RKP(b) Resolutions on korenizatsiia were followed by similar decrees in Ukraine, passed by the TsK KP(b)U Plenum in June 1923. These decrees concerned the status of the Ukrainian language (attempts to proclaim it as the second official language failed due to the opposition of pro-Russian party members, insisting to make it another commonly-used language), schooling (the Ukrainian Radnarkom Decree “On Measures for Ukrainizatsiia of Schools, Educational and Cultural Institutions”<sup>180</sup>) and the major task of regulating political education and propaganda in the countryside.<sup>181</sup> The most decisive decree on Ukrainizatsiia, “On Measures for Guaranteeing the Equality of Languages and on the Equal Development of the Ukrainian Language,” was issued on 1 August 1923. It was stated that

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<sup>177</sup> “Do Istorii Mizhnatsional'nykh Protsesiv na Ukraïni,” *Ukraïns'kyi Istorychnyi Zhurnal*, 6 (1990), 110.

<sup>178</sup> *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo v Ukraïns'kii RSR. Vazhlyvishi rishennia Komunistychnoi partiii Radians'koho uriadu 1917-1959 rr. Zbirnyk dokumentiv*, Vol. 1. (Kyiv: DVU, 1959), 60-62.

<sup>179</sup> Borisenok, *Fenomen*, 66-69.

<sup>180</sup> *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 71-72.

<sup>181</sup> *Natsional'ni Vidnosyny*, 130-132; *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 253-256.

the formal equality [of languages] [...] is not sufficient. [...] the Russian language has, in fact, become the dominant one. In order to destroy this inequality, the Workers'-Peasants' Government hereby adopts a number of practical measures which, while affirming the equality of languages of all nationalities on the Ukrainian territory, will guarantee a place for the Ukrainian language corresponding to the numerical superiority of the Ukrainian people on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>182</sup>

Nonetheless, the implementation of korenizatsiia did not start in earnest in 1923. Despite being officially declared, this policy met with stubborn passive resistance. For party officials, such declarations did not seem important or obligatory. A number of initiatives, such as attending language courses or examinations in language proficiency for government employees, were prescribed, but never enforced. Such an attitude can be ascribed to the fact that the national question and the nationalities policy were regarded as soft-line policies, minor in comparison to the core Bolshevik tasks.<sup>183</sup> In addition, in 1923 the KP(b)U did not simply possess enough resources to implement such optimistic goals. Unsurprisingly, the lack of resources and disregard from the centre resulted in a certain level of cynicism on the ground, with the lower ranks not taking these policies at all serious. However, the significance of korenizatsiia increased in December 1925, when the official course on industrialisation had been declared by the Fourteenth VKP(b) Congress.<sup>184</sup> Meeting the needs of the republic's peasantry became key not only for securing the uninterrupted food supply to the cities, but also for nurturing the future workforce.

On 26 March 1925, Kaganovich, Stalin's protégé was appointed the First Secretary of the KP(b)U. Kaganovich was selected to implement korenizatsiia using the mechanisms of hard-line policies: direct leadership, constant control over its implementation, use of

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<sup>182</sup> *Natsional'ni Vidnosyny*, 106-109; *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 242-47.

<sup>183</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 83; Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'The "Soft" Line on Culture and Its Enemies: Soviet Cultural Policy, 1922- 1927', *Slavic Review*, 2 (33) 1974, 267-287; Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 342.

<sup>184</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 85.

pressure and force as its methods, and restricting disapproving public discussion around this project.<sup>185</sup> The decision to assign Kaganovich to Ukraine and to upgrade the status of korenizatsiia was linked to low impact of the policy on party membership since 1923;<sup>186</sup> the adopting of projects aimed at modernising the country; and the need to secure Stalin's position in Ukraine at the time of fierce inner-party struggle with Trotsky and the left opposition.

With the appointment of Kaganovich, the Party had finally acquired direct control over korenizatsiia, which allowed it to tackle passive resistance within its rank-and-file, a major impediment in the previous years. A call for comprehensive Ukrainizatsiia of the party, issued at the April 1925 plenum, focused on two different agendas: the nativisation of the party apparatus, meaning engagement of locals in party activities, and linguistic Ukrainizatsiia, requiring language proficiency from civil servants, carrying out all paperwork in the national language, and publishing all major party newspapers in Ukrainian.<sup>187</sup>

In the following years, the greatest achievement of these policies was the change they effected in the national composition of the KP(b)U's membership. The percentage of ethnic Ukrainians in the party organs grew from 23.6% in 1922 to 47.0% in 1927 and rose to 53.0% in 1930;<sup>188</sup> the number of Ukrainians in *VUTsVK* amounted 56.5% in 1926.<sup>189</sup> This advance was attained by a massive campaign to engage "local cadres" in party and governmental service. Success was recorded in transferring the paperwork and the press

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<sup>185</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 87.

<sup>186</sup> The results of Ukrainizatsiia were discussed at the TsK KP(b)U Plenum in April, 1925. See: *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 282-286.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Table 33: Representation of Local Nationals in Major Non-Russian Areas, 1922-1930, in T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R.* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 369.

<sup>189</sup> More on changes in the party membership see Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*, 87-103.

into Ukrainian. In 1927, 70% of central government paperwork was conducted in Ukrainian;<sup>190</sup> the percentage of newspapers published in Ukrainian increased to 68.8% in 1929, including the Ukrainian TsK's newspaper *Komunist, Visti, Proletar*. Subsequently, the circulation of these periodicals increased: *Komunist* – from 28 thousands copies in 1928 to 122 thousands in 1930; *Visti* – from 46 thousands in 1928 to 90 thousands in 1929, and *Proletar* – from 11 thousands to 79 thousands.<sup>191</sup>

Nonetheless, the implementation of korenizatsiia was met with difficulties. There was constant passive resistance to linguistic Ukrainizatsiia. The deadline for its comprehensive institutionalisation among governmental employees, for example, was never met with the official declaration of its completion on 1 January 1926.<sup>192</sup> For most the governmental employees, the imposition of the Ukrainian language held limited appeal and did not go beyond paperwork and obligatory language classes. Ultimately, the methods to force civil servants to speak Ukrainian beyond their offices failed; indeed, there were cases of low rank-and-file being fired for opposing the Ukrainian language, but these penalties never touched high ranking officials or skilled workers.<sup>193</sup> In fact, of the 1,898 top-ranking Bolsheviks in Ukraine in 1926 only 345 knew Ukrainian (71 of them were fired because of their reluctance to learn Ukrainian).<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Smolii, *Ukrainizatsiia*, 81.

<sup>191</sup> *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 319-320; Skrypnyk, "Novi Liniï u Natsional'no-Kul'turnomu Budivnytstvi," In *Skrypnyk Statti i Promovy*, 211.

<sup>192</sup> *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 282-286; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 96

<sup>193</sup> Shevel'ov, *Ukraïns'ka Mova*, 165; TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, spr.4172: "Dokladnaia Zapiska i Proekt Resheniia "O Sostoianii Ukrainizatsii Sovetskoho Aparata, Profsoiuznykh Orhanov i nachal'nykh Uchebnykh Zavedenii na Ukraine" za Podpisu A.Khvyli dlia Orgbiuro TsK KP(b)U, noiabr' 1931.

<sup>194</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 93; M. Frolov, *Kompartiino-Radians'ka Elita v Ukraïni (1923-1928 Rr): Osoblyvosti Isnuvannia ta Funktsionuvannia* (Zaporizhzhia: Prem'ier, 2004), 588-589.

### *Ukrainizatsiia: the Ukrainian Perspective*

In 1923, the first historian of the KP(b)U Moisei Ravich-Cherkasskii suggested that the history of the KP(b)U was “a sum of two histories: that of the Ukrainian proletariat and that of the Russian proletariat in Ukraine”.<sup>195</sup> Accordingly, there were two distinct ideological roots in the KP(b)U, one extending from the Russian Revolutionary movement and another from the Ukrainian socialist movement. The idea of the ‘two distinct ancestral roots’ helps understand not only the origins of the party, but also the way certain policies were developed and implemented in Ukraine, especially, in our case, the Soviet nationalities policy of korenizatsiia. At the time, “the Ukrainian root” comprised of the ‘old’ Bolsheviks with distinct national orientation, former members of the Ukrainian communist parties and new party members, enrolled in the party from among local activists in the 1920s.

As said earlier, at the end of 1918, there were only 130 Ukrainians out of a total of 4,364 KP(b)U members. However, this number steadily increased on account of members of other political parties, joining the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. For instance, in summer 1918, the left wing group of the USDRP, headed by Panas Butsenko, Petro Slyn'ko, Ievhen Kasianenko, joined the KP(b)U.<sup>196</sup> Later on, indigenous representation within the party’s rank-and-file increased mainly due to the rapid growth in membership.<sup>197</sup>

This was mostly due to the absorption of other parties into the KP(b)U. At the time of their dissolution in 1920, there were about 5,000 Borot'bysty members and 3,000 UPLSR members, the majority of whom joined the KP(b)U. It is hard to estimate exactly how many former Ukrainian communists joined the Bolshevik party, since there was a clear interest

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<sup>195</sup> Ravich-Cherkasskii, *Istoria*, 5.

<sup>196</sup> Butsenko recalled of 225 members, A. Butsenko, O Raskole USDRP (1917-1918), *Letopis' Revoliutsii*, 4 (1923), 121-122.

<sup>197</sup> Frolov, *Kompartiino-Radians'ka Elita v USRR*; Frolov, *Kompartiino-Radians'ka Elita v Ukraïni*; M. Doroshko, *Nomenklatura: Kerivna Verkhivka Radians'koï Ukraïny (1917-1938 rr.)* (Kyiv: Nika Tsentr, 2008).

among its propagandists to exaggerate the number of the new-comers. Nevertheless, according to the official party statistics, in March 1920, 30.5% out of 11,087 KP(b)U full members and 2,439 candidate members had previously belonged to other political parties: the USDRP, the RSDRP (Mensheviks), the SRs, and the Borot'bysty (the Bor'bisty merged with the KP(b)U in June 1920).<sup>198</sup>

However, this new dynamic in party membership did not remain the case for long. Statistics on membership shows that during the first half of the 1920s, there was a gradual decline of the share of the former members of other parties. For instance, in spring 1921, the share of the KP(b)U members, who came from other parties, shrank to 18% (7,560 members) and to 8.9% (4,647 members) in 1922.<sup>199</sup> It is worth noting that only 197 previously belonged to the Borot'bysty, the Bor'bisty and the Nezalezhnyky.<sup>200</sup> At the beginning of 1926, this share had already decreased to only 3.2%.<sup>201</sup> The decline in numbers can be explained in several ways. Firstly, during the first Soviet years, party membership constantly grew on account of the rank-and-files, who arrived from the RSFSR with the Red Army: during the first half of the 1920, according to the TsK RKP(b)'s official data, 1,232 RKP(b) members were sent to the Ukrainian SSR from Russia.<sup>202</sup> Secondly, those 'less reliable' KP(b)U members were subjected to party purges. This dynamic occurred mainly due to the fact that the Bolshevik party succeeded in recruiting new members to its ranks. The first general party purge was launched in the aftermath of the Tenth RKP(b) Congress (8-16 March 1921), that announced a purge of 'petty

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<sup>198</sup> Frolov, *Kompartiino-Radians'ka Elita v USRR*, 175.

<sup>199</sup> Frolov, *Kompartiino-Radians'ka Elita v USRR*, 176-177.

<sup>200</sup> Partiinaia Perepis' k 1-mu aprelia 1922, in Ravich-Cherkasskii, *Istoriia*, 241.

<sup>201</sup> Frolov, *Kompartiino-Radians'ka Elita v USRR*, 182.

<sup>202</sup> M. Frolov, "Osoblyvosti Evolutsii Partiinyh "Verkhiv" i "Nyziv" u KP(b)U 1920-1930-h." *Kul'tura Narodov Prichernomia*. 171 (2009), 40.

bourgeois' elements "not trained in the Communist spirit".<sup>203</sup> The preliminary results of the purge were tallied in December 1921 at the Sixth Conference of the KP(b)U: as reported, 21,430 party members (or 22.5%) out of the 97,321 members checked, were expelled.<sup>204</sup>

Whilst the share of the KP(b)U members from other parties was decreasing, the number of new party members, conscripted and promoted from the local population grew steadily. The Tenth RKP(b) Congress called for the recruitment of more non-Russian members in order to strengthen party influence in the countryside as part of the NEP. In addition, the national composition of the party was significantly influenced by the rapid social and economic developments in Soviet Ukraine: due to urbanisation and industrialisation, more rural Ukrainians were joining the working class and subsequently the ranks of the KP(b)U.<sup>205</sup> As a result, the 1927 party census showed that out of 182,396 full and candidate members, 52% called themselves Ukrainians, and almost 70% gave Ukrainian as their mother tongue.<sup>206</sup>

The rise of national awareness was equally characteristic among both the rank-and-file and the leadership of the KP(b)U. Whereas the KP(b)U's national composition was influenced significantly by the social and economic developments in the republic, the level of national awareness within its leadership directly depended on the Moscow attitude towards Soviet Ukraine. The negotiations around the question of the formal relationship between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR intensified the national opposition inside the KP(b)U. The Treaty of Workers' and Peasants' Alliance between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR, signed on 30 December 1920, granted de jure recognition to the

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<sup>203</sup> Preliminary Draft Resolution Of The Tenth Congress Of The R.C.P.On Party Unity; <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/10thcong/ch04.htm> (Accessed 28 February 2016)

<sup>204</sup> Kul'chyts'kyi, *Komunizm v Ukraïni*, 248.

<sup>205</sup> Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986); Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*.

<sup>206</sup> Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 100-1.

independence and sovereignty of both sides but, nevertheless, established a union “for defence purposes as well as in the interests of economic development.”<sup>207</sup> To achieve this objective, the two republics united certain commissariats: military and naval affairs, foreign trade, finance, labour, railways, post and telegraph, and the Supreme Economic Council. The Ukrainian republic retained authority over foreign affairs and diplomatic relations. This arrangement, however, did not correspond with the status of a sovereign republic. In reality, the status of Soviet Ukraine was reduced to a Russian autonomous region. On the Twelfth RKP(b) Congress (17-25 April 1923), Skrypnyk accused Stalin of practicing “double book-keeping on the nationalities question.”<sup>208</sup> In the same year, at a meeting of the leaders of the non-Russian republics called to discuss the case of Sultan-Galiev,<sup>209</sup> Skrypnyk assumed that it was Russian chauvinism encouraged from Moscow that created preconditions for nationalist opposition in the Soviet republics.<sup>210</sup> Skrypnyk’s position on the national question and the relationship between Soviet Ukraine and Russia were shared by such prominent ‘old’ Bolsheviks as Shakhrai, Vlas Chubar, Iurii Kotsiubyns'kyi, and Khvyl'ovyi.

However, despite the fact that the majority of members from other Ukrainian parties were purged from the KP(b)U, it was not the quantity that made the influence of the Ukrainian communists so significant. After its merger, the Borot'bysty’s main leaders were admitted to important positions in the KP(b)U. Blakytynyi and Shums'kyi entered the TsK KP(b)U, the former also acquired a seat on the Politburo. Liubchenko became the TsK KP(b)U’s Secretary for Culture and the editor-in-chief of the TsK KP(b)U newspaper *Komunist*. Already in May 1919, the Borot'bysty gained control over the Ukraine’s

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<sup>207</sup> *Natsional'ni Vidnosyny*, 97-98.

<sup>208</sup> Skrypnyk, “Proty Bukhhal'terii v Natsional'nomu Pytanni,” in Skrypnyk, *Statti i Promovy*, 23-28.

<sup>209</sup> Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, was a Tatar Bolshevik, active member of the RKP(b) in the early 1920s. He was the architect of Muslim “national communism,” opposing official centralist policies. Imprisoned in 1923, and executed in 1940.

<sup>210</sup> Skrypnyk, “Pro Spravu Sultan-Haliiieva,” in Skrypnyk, *Statti i Promovy*, 32-33.

Commissariat for Education and the All-Ukrainian Literary Committee, (*Vseukrains'kyi Literaturnyi Komitet, Vseukrlitkom*). The Commissariat for Education, headed officially by a Bolshevik Volodymyr Zaton's'kyi between January 1919 and April 1920, was de facto since May 1919 controlled by the Borot'bysty leader and the poet Mykhailychenko, succeeded by the Borot'bysty Mykhailo Panchenko, Shums'kyi and Hryhorii Hryn'ko.<sup>211</sup> A State Publishing House of Ukraine (*Vsevydav*) was opened under the auspices of the Commissariat for Education. At the same time, the Borot'bysty also launched the first Soviet-sponsored Ukrainian-language literary journal *Mystetstvo* [Art]. Former Borot'bysty had gradually taken control of cultural and intellectual life in the republic.

Of course, one cannot assert that all the Ukrainian elements in the party leadership possessed distinctive national orientation. As Andrii Khvyliia put it in 1932, the KP(b)U “derives its origin from the Social Democratic Bolshevik organisations ... [and] if the former Borot'bysty, Ukapisty, Bundisty entered the KP(b)U, they did so not with their old petty-bourgeois views, but after having condemned [and] rejected them”.<sup>212</sup> Among those former Borot'bysty, who had definitely condemned and rejected their earlier ‘nationalistic’ views were Khvyliia himself and Panas Liubchenko, who soon after joining the KP(b)U completely accepted the ‘centralist’ perspective of the relationship between the all-Union centre and Soviet Ukraine.

As mentioned, the Ukrainian-minded leaders of the KP(b)U had distinct views on the goals of korenizatsiia. For them korenizatsiia predominantly meant Ukrainizatsiia, with the main objectives to be de-Russification of all spheres of public life and the accelerated development of national identity. In this way, the Soviet policy of Ukrainizatsiia was seen as a continuation of the initiatives of accelerated nation-building, elaborated and partially

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<sup>211</sup> In 1922-24, the Bolshevik Volodymyr Zaton's'kyi occupied the post to be replaced again by Shums'kyi.

<sup>212</sup> A. Khvyliia, *KP(b)U v Borot'bi Za Lenins'ku Nacional'nu Polityku* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1933), 80-81.

introduced by different Ukrainian governments during the civil war. In one of its first decrees dated from April 22 1917, for example, the Tsentral'na Rada declared its course on the sweeping Ukrainizatsiia of the republic, yet focusing mainly on the army and schooling.<sup>213</sup> For all the haphazard revolutionary changes on the territory of Ukraine during 1917-1920, Ukrainizatsiia continued to be on the agenda of different political authorities. In the case of national developments, the most significant of these was the conservative regime of the Ukrainian State. Led by Skoropads'kyi, this government in a short period between April and December 1918 managed to expand a number of Ukrainian schools and state universities, to establish the State Ukrainian Archive, the National Art Gallery, the Ukrainian History Museum, the Ukrainian National Library, the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, the Ukrainian State Publishing House etc.<sup>214</sup> Steps were also taken to expand Ukrainian-language book publishing and the Ukrainian press.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, during the civil war years, Ukrainizatsiia was one of the programme demands of the Ukrainian socialist and non-Bolshevik communist parties, discussed above. For Ukrainian communists, especially the Borot'bysty, de-Russification of the cities and the promotion of the Ukrainian language were seen as prerequisites for creating a separate Ukrainian socialist republic. After 1923, korenizatsiia and the KP(b)U were seen as possible mechanisms to continue introducing those previously tested ideas in public life.

Not surprisingly, their vision of Ukrainizatsiia clashed with what was expected from the nationalities policy to achieve by the KP(b)U centrally. As mentioned, the April 1925 TsK KP(b)U Plenum called for comprehensive Ukrainizatsiia, aimed at establishing

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<sup>213</sup> “Druhe Zagal'ne Zibrannia Ukraïns'koï Tsentral'noï Rady,” in *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada. Dokumenty i Materialy*, ed. V. Verstiuk (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1996). Vol 1, 69-71; On Ukrainizatsiia policy of the UNR see: V. Shevchenko, “Protsesy Ukraïnisatsiï Revoliutsiinoï Doby ta Het'manat Pavla Skoropads'koho,” *Natsional'na ta Istorychna Pamiat'*, 7 (2013), 267-276.

<sup>214</sup> Hunczak, “The Ukraine under Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi”, in *Ukraine*, 61-81.

<sup>215</sup> Shevel'ov, *Ukraïns'ka Mova*, 63-64.

Ukrainian as the dominant language within the public sphere including the industrial proletariat, higher education, all-Union institutions and the government bureaucracy.<sup>216</sup> The resolution exposed inherent differences on the rationale of Ukrainizatsiia between the two political cultures in the KP(b)U, those oriented towards Moscow and the representatives of the Ukrainian faction in the party leadership. The disagreements occurred mainly over the speed in which this policy should be implemented, cadres policy (especially in regards to high ranking officials) and the republic's proletariat as the policy's main target. In 1925, the results of Ukrainizatsiia were considered unsatisfactory. This was not surprising since the targets from the beginning were unrealistic, such as the VUTsVK decree from 1 August 1923 calling for complete linguistic Ukrainizatsiia of the entire government bureaucracy at all levels in the course of one year.<sup>217</sup> At the Plenum, Shums'kyi, the Commissar for Education, attacked the achievements of Ukrainizatsiia, ascribing the lack of success in its implementation to the fact that the policy was carried out by Russians with little interest in developing Ukrainian culture.

Shums'kyi brought his concerns on Ukrainizatsiia to Stalin's attention at their meeting in Moscow in late 1925. To Shums'kyi, the successful implementation of Ukrainizatsiia was constrained by the fact that political elites could not keep up with the development of Ukrainian culture and the rapid growth of Ukrainian intelligentsia. Consequently, the anti-Ukrainian attitude, prevailing among the leadership of the party and trade unions, was leading to the masses further alienation from the Soviet regime. For the program to succeed, changes in the party leadership would be necessary: Shums'kyi proposed to replace Kaganovich, the First Secretary of the KP(b)U since 1925, with

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<sup>216</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.1, spr. 208 "Pro Pidsumky Ukraïnizatsii: Tezy Chervnevoho Plenumu TsK KP(b)U 1926 Roku," *Kul'turne Budivnytstvo*, 1: 312-318.

<sup>217</sup> Andrii Khvyliia, *Natsional'nyi Vopros na Ukraine*, (Kharkiv: DVU, 1926), 117-118.

Chubar, Skrypnyk or another Ukrainian who would ensure proper implementation of Ukrainizatsiia.<sup>218</sup> In the same manner, Shums'kyi pushed for accelerated Ukrainizatsiia of the working class and their conversion to Ukrainian culture, including those workers who were not ethnically Ukrainian or did not identify themselves as Ukrainians, the so called Russified Ukrainians (Ukrainians by origin yet Russian speakers).

Stalin indirectly responded to Shums'kyi criticisms in a letter to Kaganovich on 26 April 1926.<sup>219</sup> According to Stalin, the Commissar for Education had misinterpreted the very concept of Ukrainizatsiia confusing Ukrainizatsiia of the party and other apparatus (a declared objective of the policy) with Ukrainizatsiia of the republic's proletariat. Stalin noted that Ukrainizatsiia of the working class was supposed to be a natural and gradual process whereas Shums'kyi was attempting to impose Ukrainizatsiia 'from above' and believed it would be wrong to force the Russian working masses to renounce their Russian language and culture. This, according to the leader, "contradict[ed] the principle of the free development of nationalities [...] and [was] equal to national oppression". Stalin predicted that forced Ukrainizatsiia from above could provoke "an outbreak of anti-Ukrainian chauvinism among non-Ukrainian proletariat" as well as "a struggle for the alienation of Ukrainian culture from the All-Soviet culture, a struggle against 'Moscow', against Russians, against the Russian culture and its greatest achievement, Leninism, altogether."<sup>220</sup> Shums'kyi was reproached for miscalculating the speed at which Ukrainizatsiia could safely be implemented. The Commissar for Education, in Stalin's

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<sup>218</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.6, spr.88, ark.110-138 "Doklad o Predvaritel'nykh Itogah Ukrainizatsii v Sviazi s Zaiavleniem Tovarishcha Shumskoho, Zaslushanyie na Zasedanii Politbiuro TsK KP(b)U ot 12-20 Maia, 1926 goda".

<sup>219</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, Spr.2248; On Khvyl'ovyi and Shums'kyi, ark.1-7; For English translation see: Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 66-68.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

words, overlooked how weak the indigenous communist cadres in Ukraine were and how dangerous the influence of the non-Communist intelligentsia in such situations could be.

These ‘oversights’ quickly led to Shums'kyi’s demotion in 1926. The ‘Shums'kyi affair’ signalled a radical shift in the party. The KP(b)U, despite its previous visible divergence of opinions on the national question and the level of autonomy of the republic, gradually sided with the centralist vision of the place and role of the Ukrainian SSR. Robert S. Sullivant has claimed that during the Shums'kyi affair a fundamental compromise between Ukrainian and Russian leaders was met, according to which Russian Bolsheviks were to accept a localisation program for Ukraine and a measure of independence for the KP(b)U while the party would support Stalin against opposition groups and would accept central leadership on questions of high policy and on matters of all-Union importance.<sup>221</sup> Consequently, Shums'kyi was withdrawn from Ukraine to a third-rate position in Moscow. The important post of the People’s Commissar for Education was assigned to Skrypnyk, who, it was believed, would implement the Party’s vision on controlled Ukrainizatsiia.

By the late 1920s, Ukrainizatsiia had proven successful in all the spheres concerned. One of the biggest advances were seen in the Ukrainizatsiia of the school system. By 1933, teaching in 88.5% of elementary schools was conducted in Ukrainian (against 50.4% in 1922).<sup>222</sup> Similar albeit slower, tendencies were reported in professional and higher education. In 1929/30, 40% of institutes of higher education conducted teaching in Ukrainian; 39.5% of academic and teaching staff and 62.8% of enrolled students were

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<sup>221</sup> Robert Sullivant, *Soviet Politics and the Ukraine 1917-1957* (New York-London: Columbia UP, 1962), 139.

<sup>222</sup> Smolii, *Ukrainizatsiia*, 89-90. On Schooling in the 1920s: Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*. In general, Pauly argues that the process of Ukrainizatsiia of the school system was far from straightforward. The main difficulties were the lack of standardised Ukrainian language and the teaching cadres.

Ukrainians.<sup>223</sup> All these advances resulted in increased literacy rates among the population with illiteracy dropping from 47% in 1926 to 8% in 1934.<sup>224</sup> Similar strides were observed in Ukrainian-language press and book publishing. In 1932, 87.5% of the republic's press was in Ukrainian.<sup>225</sup> In 1929, the share of Ukrainian books published in Soviet Ukraine reached 70% in titles and 77% in copies against those in Russian.<sup>226</sup> Ukrainizatsiia also reached theatre, film making and radio-broadcasting; in 1931, for example, the Ukrainian SSR boasted 66 Ukrainian, 12 Yiddish and 9 Russian stationary theatres. The 1920s were also the most productive years for the cinematographic arts, with the All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration (*Vseukraïns'ke Foto-Kino Upravlinnia, VUFKU*), subordinated to the Narkompros, in charge of the national film production. Four films were produced in 1924, 16 in 1927, 36 in 1928 and 31 in 1929.<sup>227</sup> Ukrainian radio-broadcasting was launched in 1924-25. Concerts, amateur choirs and literary evenings, popularising Ukrainian culture, became the norm in industrial areas. Thus, the national intelligentsia for the first time gained wide access to the proletariat. The response of the proletariat to the Ukrainiser's attempts will be discussed in Section Three.

Skrypnyk's tenure coincided with the implementation of the first Five-Year Plan, which made provisions for the forced industrialisation of the Soviet Union. Under the Five-Year Plan, drives for uniformity became more frequent. The State Planning Commission (*Gosplan*) with its greater power became a leading all-Union agency in economic planning; a number of the republic's social and cultural institutions, e.g., higher education, which became closely bounded to the needs of industrialisation, also came under central control.

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<sup>223</sup> Smolii, *Ukrainizatsiia*, 102.

<sup>224</sup> Volodymyr Kubijovyč (ed.) *Ukraine: a Concise Encyclopaedia*, (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1971). Vol.1, 176-179.

<sup>225</sup> Shevel'ov, *Ukraïns'ka Mova*, 95.

<sup>226</sup> Skrypnyk, *Novi Liniï*, 212.

<sup>227</sup> Kubijovyč, *Ukraine*, 661.

There were frequent voices of dissent from both the KP(b)U officials and Ukrainian intellectuals, opposed to the transformation of the Ukrainian SSR into a “Soviet colony.” At the Fifteenth VKP(b) Congress in December 1927 Kaganovich publicised the position of the KP(b)U leadership stating that Ukraine “with its mineral wealth” should be given more weight in national economic planning.<sup>228</sup>

This approach towards industrialisation and centralisation intensified the party’s autonomist horizon. It was understood that for the Ukrainizatsiia program to succeed, a strong socio-economic foundation was required. This economic platform for national communism was articulated by Hryn'ko and Mykhailo Volobuiev, who continuously expressed the dangers central planning posed for Ukraine.<sup>229</sup> Two main aspects were highlighted: the share of total Soviet investment in industry and Ukraine’s agricultural significance. As a head of the Ukraine’s Gosplan (1924-26), Hryn'ko repeatedly voiced his disagreement with the way the republic was treated centrally, advocating against regionalism, when Ukraine was considered an administrative extension of Russia.<sup>230</sup> The Ukrainian economist Volobuiev was more precise with the critique of Soviet economic centralisation. In his article “On the problem of Ukrainian Economics,” published in 1928 in the Party journal *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, he signalled the exploitative approach towards Ukraine carried out by the RSFSR. Volobuiev called for broadening the republic’s budgetary powers, stating that Ukraine was capable of maintaining its own independent economic life and, therefore, should be treated on a par with Russia.<sup>231</sup> The economist observed that “when it [the Ukrainian economy] has grown stronger, Ukrainian society will

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<sup>228</sup> Sullivant, *Soviet Politics*, 154.

<sup>229</sup> Bohdan Somchynsky, “National Communism and the Politics of Industrialization in Ukraine, 1923-28,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 25 (1988), 53.

<sup>230</sup> H. Hryn'ko, “Narys Ukraïns'koi Ekonomiky,” *Chervonyi Shliakh*, 5-6 (1926): 120-136.

<sup>231</sup> Mykhailo Volobuiev, “Do Problem Ukraïns'koi Ekonomiky”, in *Dokumenty Ukraïns'koho Komunizmu* (New York: Proloh, 1962), 132-230.

not accept its de facto, if not de jure, decreed leader – its Russian competitor”.<sup>232</sup> He also advocated the need to recognise Ukraine as “an historically-formed national-economic organism”.<sup>233</sup>

The idea of Ukraine as of a colony was fiercely repudiated in the national press. Khvyly'ovyi warned about the loss of Ukrainian sovereignty in his censored pamphlet “Ukraine or Little Russia” [*Ukraina chy Malorossia*]:

We are indeed an independent state whose republican organism is a part of the Soviet Union. And Ukraine is independent not because we, communists, desire this, but because the iron and irresistible will of the laws of history demands it, because only in this way shall we hasten class differentiation in Ukraine.<sup>234</sup>

Mace somewhat optimistically suggested that “Skrypnyk temporarily achieved what Ukrainian communists had advocated since Mazlakh and Shakhrai, recognition that Ukraine was a country in its own right, ruled by a regime which was clearly Ukrainian in its policies and goals.”<sup>235</sup> Since 1918, different possible alternatives of a Soviet Ukraine were elaborated and debated by Ukrainian communists. The unification of political life, achieved by the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s, did not necessarily mean the liquidation of ideological pluralism in the KP(b)U. As shown in this section, the implementation of Ukrainizatsiia reinforced the significance of the Ukrainian horizon in the party, as defined earlier. The Ukrainian fraction in the KP(b)U, although the minority, promoted their project of Ukrainizatsiia and were able to carry it out alongside centrally defined initiatives. The vision of Ukrainizatsiia, enforced by the Ukrainian element in the KP(b)U, enabled cultural and ideological debates in Soviet Ukraine and for some time kept the illusion of potential

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<sup>232</sup> Semen Pidhayny, “Ukrainian National Communism,” *Ukrainian Review* 7 (1959), 56.

<sup>233</sup> Volobuiev, *Do Problem*, 227.

<sup>234</sup> Mykola Khvylovy, Ukraine or Little Russia, In Khvylovy, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Political Pamphlets 1925-1926* (Edmonton: CIUS, 1986), 227.

<sup>235</sup> Mace, *Communism*, 230.

political alternatives. The strength of the Ukrainian horizon in the party was realised both in sustaining the autonomy of Ukraine and in challenging the central party leadership.

The present discussion provides the background for the thesis; the political genealogy of national communism is the key to understanding the cultural discourse of the decade. The legacy of the independent communist movement in Ukraine's ideological sphere, despite all constraints, provided grounds for a separatist political horizon in the KP(b)U and, consequently, for the autonomous project of Soviet Ukrainian culture. The active engagement of the Borot'bysty in the cultural management of Soviet Ukraine allowed gradual transition, or even blending of the pre-revolutionary and Europe-oriented modernist aesthetics with the new proletarian ethos and Soviet principles of artistic work.

This section also examined the Ukrainizatsiia policy, the key prerequisite for a cultural flowering during the twenties. As shown, Ukrainizatsiia was a multi-faceted and far-reaching project. Firstly, it triggered political, cultural and ideological pluralism in Ukraine in the 1920s, exemplified by Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna. It will be shown that these two protagonists played the key role in defining Ukrainian Soviet literature, seen as a form of opposition to the state intervention in the cultural sphere. Secondly, Ukrainizatsiia led to important social changes in the republic, contributing to the emergence of a national audience for cultural products in the Ukrainian language. Hence, this thesis also examines the role of the mass audience in shaping cultural alternatives. Finally, the following chapters will explore further the contradictions in the way the Soviet nationalities policy was defined centrally and by the local Ukrainisers, especially during the first Five-Year Plan. In general, the political pluralism of the early 1920s defined the entire decade, regarded as one of the most complex period in recent Ukrainian history.

## **Section Two: Defining Soviet Ukrainian Culture: Cultural Alternatives of the 1920s**

### ***Chapter 2.1: Pavlo Tychyna (1891-1967)***

Tychyna is conventionally regarded one of Ukraine's supremely gifted poets. His oeuvre consists of multiple volumes of poetry written between 1912 and 1967. However, if one refers to his literary genius, only his early collections (up until 1920) and a few examples of his later poetry are considered. Tychyna glorified the national revolutionary upheaval of 1917-1918; he represented Ukrainian Modernism and with time, he became the leading Symbolist poet. In the years to follow, the poet experienced all the hardships and political reversals of the civil wars. Later on, he needed to adapt to the post-revolutionary reality and to accept the only political power, which gained its victory over the territory of Ukraine. Tychyna, as a fellow-travellers, agreed to cease their public opposition to the regime whose ideology they did not necessarily share. As the years ensued, the poet became a representative of socialist realism and a mouthpiece for the regime. The following chapters discuss the process of gradual evolution of Tychyna towards the Soviet canon, highlighting different options available for revolutionaries and fellow-travellers to continue their activities in Soviet Ukraine during the 1920s. Examples, such as Tychyna, suggest what kind of literature Soviet Ukraine had lost once ideological and aesthetic pluralism became curtailed.

### 2.1.1. “Black Wings over the Doves and Sun”: Poetry of the Revolution(s)

#### “Be damned together with war! //Raven-black wind...”: the Poet amidst the Civil Wars

Tychyna, registered at birth as Tychynin, was born on January 23, 1891 in Chernihiv region. His father, a village acolyte [*diak*, a priest-assistant] and a literacy teacher, descended from Cossack nobility. After completing his primary education, Tychyna moved to Chernihiv, where he studied in a local religious school and sang in a monastery choir. In 1907-1913 Tychyna continued his education in Chernihiv theological seminary. Creatively gifted, besides singing in a choir, he wrote poetry and studied drawing with the famous modernist painter Mykhailo Zhuk, who at the time lived and worked in Chernihiv. It was Zhuk, who introduced the talented young seminarian to the leading literary figure Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi, who hosted weekly literary meetings for local talented youth.

To Kotsiubyns'kyi, Tychyna was indebted for discerning his talent and making his early poetry public. One of his first poems *Vy Znaiete Iak Lypa Shelestyt'?* [You Know How Linden Rustle?] under Kotsiubyns'kyi's recommendation was published in 1912 in the All-Ukrainian literary journal *Literaturno-Naukovyi Visnyk* [The Literary-Scientific Herald].<sup>236</sup> During those regular meetings in Kotsiubyns'kyi's house, the young poet was able to make valuable contacts. Among frequent visitors there was, for example, a leading Modernist poet Mykola Voronyi, who influenced Tychyna's literary style and shaped his adherence to Symbolism.<sup>237</sup> Kotsiubyns'kyi also recommended Tychyna to Hrushevs'kyi

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<sup>236</sup> Pavlo Tychyna, *Avtobiohrafia*, in Tychyna. *Tvory*, vol.11, 8-9.

<sup>237</sup> Ivan Koshelivets', *Suchasna Literatura v URSR* (New York: Proloh, 1964), 66.

and Maksim Gorky.<sup>238</sup> Tychyna would benefit greatly from their acquaintance in the years to come.

In 1913, Tychyna, having abandoned his singing career, moved to Kyiv to commence his study at the Kyiv Commercial Institute, which, however, he never finished. To financially support himself, the poet worked in the editorial offices of Ukrainian periodicals; such as a daily paper *Rada*, edited and financed by the Ukrainian conservative activist Ievhen Chykalenko, and the monthly pedagogical journal *Svitlo*. In 1914, however, all Ukrainian-language periodicals were banned as a temporary censorship measure during the First World War. So Tychyna, now unemployed, moved to Chernihiv to occupy clerical posts there. Nevertheless, the unprecedented revolutionary upheaval in Ukraine's capital, awoken by the Petrograd events in February 1917, brought him back to Kyiv, where he got actively involved in state-building endeavours of the Tsentral'na Rada. During the subsequent years, Tychyna, although not affiliated with any political party, worked in the editorial boards of the periodicals associated with the UNR: the daily newspaper *Nova Rada* (in 1917), a publishing body of the Ukrainian Party of Socialists Federalists headed by Andrii Nikovs'kyi and Serhii Iefremov, and *Literaturno-Naukovyi Visnyk* (in 1917-1919), edited at the time by Hrushevs'kyi. Inspired by the pace of the national revolution, the young poet in a letter to his brother Ievhen dated from 15 April 1917 asked for a reply addressed to "Tychyna, not Tychynin" [a Ukrainian variant of the surname].<sup>239</sup>

Tychyna stepped into the limelight amidst the chaotic political developments in Kyiv. On 22 (9) March 1917 the Tsentral'na Rada, Ukraine's revolutionary parliament, issued its first declaration, "To the Ukrainian People," in support of the Russian Provisional

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<sup>238</sup> Correspondence between Pieshkov [Gorky], Tychyna and Kotsiubyns'kyi see in Pavlo Tychyna, *Z mynuloho – v Maibutnie*. (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1973), 21-23.

<sup>239</sup> Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.12.1, 10-11.

Government and democratic transformation of the Russian state. In less than a week, Hrushevs'kyi, who was elected the head of the body at the first Rada's meeting, returned from Moscow and assumed his duties. Tychyna echoed those events in his highly patriotic poem *Hei, Vdarte v Struny, Kobzari* [Hey, Strike the Strings, Kobza Players!], published on 30 (17) March on the pages of *Nova Rada*. The poem conveyed the general enthusiastic attitude, patriotism and anticipation, which permeated Kyiv in those early days of the national revolution. It also lauded the first fallen fighters for the Ukrainian state:

Гей, вдарте в струни, кобзарі, Натхніть серця піснями! Українські прапори вгорі — Мов сонце над степами... [...]	Hey, strike the strings, kobza players! Inspire hearts with songs! Ukrainian flags are overhead Like sun above the steppes... [...] (O.P.)
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One of Tychyna's greatest poems, *Zoloty Homin* [The Golden Harmony], was dedicated to the declaration of Ukraine's autonomy on 23 (10) June 1917. *Zoloty Homin* presents the overwhelming enthusiasm and joy of Kyivans welcoming national autonomy. This poem, rightly regarded a hymn of the national revolution, is an eulogy to the new-born country and its nation, who "heaps of rocks crashing down on my chest, || I took them off so easily || like eider down...", exclaiming "I am the unquenchable Beautiful Fire, || The Spirit Eternal. [...] I am young! Young!"<sup>240</sup> Tychyna's early poetry is imbricated with folklore songs, legends and religious symbolism. Thus, when the poet mentions Apostle Andrew on the hills of Kyiv, it is an allusion to a legend according to which the Apostle came to preach Christianity and blessed those hills with God's grace for the future majesty. The national

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<sup>240</sup> Гори каміння, що на груди мої навалили,  
Я легенько скинув —  
Мов пух..  
Я — невгасимий Огонь Прекрасний,  
Одвічний Дух. [...]  
Я — молодий!  
Молодий! (Золотий Гомін)

revolution, hence, was meant to approach the anticipated glory of the republic. Tychna echoed the long-awaited advances in the national state-building:

Над Києвом — золотий гомін. І голуби, і сонце! [...]	Above Kyiv there is a golden hum, Both doves and the sun! [...]
То Україну За всі роки неслави благословляв хрестом Опромінений Ласкою Божою в серце зраний Андрій Первозванний.	It was the Apostle Andrew, Illuminated, Wounded in the heart with God's grace, Blessing Ukraine with a cross For all the years disgrace.

For the poet the events of 1917 symbolised, in Sherekh words, the “awakening of the inner music of the world, which until that time had slumbered in the Ukrainian nation.”<sup>241</sup> Not surprisingly, the author enthusiastically responded to every new step in national state-building. In another patriotic poem, the ode *Oi, shcho v Sofiis'komu Zahraly Dzvony* [Oh in Sophia the bells struck], published in *Nova Rada* on 23 (10) November, the poet portrayed the crowds cheering a military parade on Sophia Square in Kyiv, gathered to celebrate the proclamation of the Ukrainian People’s Republic on 20 (7) November. The bliss of the promise that “from now on - there will be no master in free Ukraine”<sup>242</sup> was transmitted by the rings of the Kyivan churches and, as described in the poem, echoed in the soul of every Ukrainian. Similar mood permeated the early 1917 *Duma pro Triokh Vitriv* [A Duma on Three Winds], in which the revolutionary upheaval was associated with the long anticipated sun in early spring and the winds of change for the country.

These poems were included into the first collection of poetry *Soniachni Klarnety* [The Clarinets of the Sun], published at the end of 1918. According to Lavrinenko, the collection was a “congenial aesthetic universal of the country, which in the tellurian [*телиурьчній*] mass upheavals of the national revolution of 1917 woke up to overcoming

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<sup>241</sup> Iurii Sherekh, “Trends in Ukrainian literature under the Soviets,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, 2 (1948), 152.

<sup>242</sup> Не буде більше пана у вільній Україні! (Ой, що в Софійському...)

the internal and external slavery, to a new life.”<sup>243</sup> Tychyna’s early poetry was significantly influenced by the Symbolist school, the current within broader Ukrainian Modernism, represented before the revolution by such masters as Oleksandr Oles’, Voronyi, Hryhorii Chuprynka.<sup>244</sup> Yet, it was *Soniachni Klarnety*, with its unique “fusion of folksongs and poetry, or rather the transformation of folksongs into poetry,”<sup>245</sup> which brought a new sounding into Ukrainian Symbolism. In fact, as admitted by the diaspora literary critic Ivan Koshelivets’ in the 1960s, Tychyna had actually initiated genuine Ukrainian Modernism, enhancing Ukrainian poetry with a new quality, of which nobody had ever suspected before.<sup>246</sup>

The highly acclaimed collection declared the genius of young Tychyna, who was subsequently considered the most prominent Ukrainian poet of the twenties<sup>247</sup> or even the entire twentieth century.<sup>248</sup> A contemporary literary critic Iefremov noted that the collection opened a new, “fresh, exciting, and deep” page in Ukrainian literature.<sup>249</sup> It was said that Tychyna’s talent refuted all those “grumbling at inherent crudity of the Ukrainian language.”<sup>250</sup> Most importantly, as evaluated by Iurii Sherekh, Tychyna’s poetry brought the Ukrainian language up to a new standard, showing that it could be used not only for realistic novels, but also for highly symbolic modernist poetry.<sup>251</sup> Later on, Novychynko, a

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<sup>243</sup> Iurii Lavrinenko, “Literatura Vitaizmu, 1917-1933,” in Lavrinenko, *Rozstriliane*, 941.

<sup>244</sup> On Ukrainian modernism see: Oleh Illytzyk, “The Modernist Ideology and Mykola Khvylyovy,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 15, 3/4 (1991), 257-262; Maxim Tarnawsky, “Modernism in Ukrainian Prose,” *ibid*, 263-272; George Grabowicz, “Commentary: Exorcising Ukrainian Modernism,” *ibid*, 273-283.

<sup>245</sup> Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 121.

<sup>246</sup> Koshelivets’, *Suchasna Literatura*, 69.

<sup>247</sup> Sherekh, *Trends*, 102.

<sup>248</sup> Biletskyi, *Dvadtsiat’ Rokiv*, 25

<sup>249</sup> Serhii Iefremov, *Istoriia Ukraïns’koho Pys’menstva*, (Kyiv: Femina, 1995), 483.

<sup>250</sup> Oleksander Leites, *Renesans Ukraïns’koi Literatury* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1925), 15.

<sup>251</sup> Sherekh, *Trends*, 102.

Soviet official biographer and an expert on Tychyna, observed that the poet, “seemed had never been a pupil, a novice poet.”<sup>252</sup>

Yet, in the long run, the high merit of the first collection to a certain extent was used against the author. In 1926, Zerov observed that Tychyna already in 1918 had used his trump card and reached the summit of his creative potential.<sup>253</sup> Similarly, in 1930, the Kharkiv literary critic Myron Stepniak argued that Tychyna in *Soniachni Klarnety* had developed a “complete system of Ukrainian symbolism,” and there was nothing more to achieve thereafter.<sup>254</sup> Hence, every new poetic contribution was compared to *Soniachni Klarnety*, and every new poem was regarded as a step back. In retrospect, his entire literary career started to be seen as lowering of his genius, a journey from the literary Parnassus into the abyss of “court poetry.”

Given the political and military situation of the civil war period, Tychyna’s patriotic poetry, apart from enthusiasm and anticipation, was infused with disturbance and trepidation. Already in *Zoloty Homin*, Tychyna apprehended: “Black wings over the doves and sun – || Black wings.”<sup>255</sup> The rapture of the national awakening did not last long. After having seized power in Russia, the Bolsheviks strated their advance onto Ukraine, plotting the overthrow of the Ukrainian government. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to repeat their coup in Kyiv, the Sovnarkom’s Ultimatum from 17 (4) December declared the war on the People’s Republic. Under the Bolshevik fire, the Tsentral'na Rada by its Fourth Universal ventured to proclaim Ukraine’s independence. The escalation of the war revealed

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<sup>252</sup> Novychenko, *Poeziia i Revoliutsiia*, 24.

<sup>253</sup> Mykola Zerov, “Literaturnyi Shliakh Maksyma Ryl's'koho,” in Zerov, *Tvory*. vol. 2 (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990), 548.

<sup>254</sup> Myron Stepniak, “Do Problem Poetyky Pavla Tychyny,” *Chervonyi Shliakh*, 11-12 (1930), 99.

<sup>255</sup> Чорнокрилля на голуби й сонце —Чорнокрилля.

how unprepared Ukraine was for such reversals. The Rada, which since its formation had been pushing for a leaner military, was caught in unequal fight with the Bolsheviks.

On numerous occasions, Tychyna reflected on those turbulent years. The most revealing testimony of the violence committed by the Bolsheviks in Ukraine is presented in a poem, written to commemorate the thirty young cadets captured and later executed after the unequal battle of Kruty. The combat took place on 29-30 January 1918, when around five hundred students tried to stop the offensive of four thousand soldiers headed by Mikhail Muraviev near a railway station 130 km north-east from Kyiv. The poem *Pam'iaty Trydtsiaty* [In Memory of the Thirty] was published in *Nova Rada* on March 21 immediately after the ceremonial funeral of those thirty in Kyiv.

На Аскольдовій могилі  
Поховали їх —  
Тридцять мучнів-українців,  
Славних молодих...  
На Аскольдовій могилі  
Український цвіт! —  
По кривавій по дорозі  
Нам іти у світ.

Deep in the Mound of Askold  
Their bodies have been laid –  
Thirty staunch Ukrainians,  
Young, glorious, unafraid...  
Here in the Mound of Askold  
The bloom of the Ukraine! –  
Our fate it was by bloody paths  
This destiny to gain.<sup>256</sup>

Within a few months, Ukraine's capital witnessed astounding military and political reversals. On 8 February (26 January) 1918 the Bolsheviks succeeded in occupying Kyiv only to retreat already on 1 March, pushed back by the UNR forces, headed by Petliura and assisted by German and Austrian troops. In April 1918 the UNR was replaced by a the Ukrainian State, headed by Skoropads'kyi and backed by the Germans. For a poet, who lived in Kyiv through the succession of those bloody reversals, everyday reality became a painful experience of rejecting the earlier anticipated revolutionary values. The majority of Kyivans perceived the 1918 events as a failure of the national revolution. Until 1921, as shown in Section One, Kyiv experienced thirteen changes of rulers, each of which

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<sup>256</sup> Tychyna, "On the anniversary of Kruty (In memory of the thirty) (Deep in the Mound of Askold)," *Zhinochyi Svit=Woman's World*. 25.1 (289) (1974): 17.

contrived new rules and persecuted alleged dissenters. Caught amidst this chaos, Tychyna, venturing to “find an herb || to heal human madness” (*Viina II* [War II]),<sup>257</sup> exclaimed: “Be damned together with war! || Raven-black wind...” (*Po Blakytnomu Stepu* [Along the azure steppe...]).<sup>258</sup>

Presumably, the everyday life in Kyiv was by far harder than in Kharkiv, the capital of Soviet Ukraine, which experienced less political and military turbulence during those years. In Kyiv, it seemed the civil war brought to naught all the promises of the UNR leaders. The discrepancy between the expectations and the outcomes of the national revolutionary upheaval, which, instead of sovereignty, for the years to follow brought hatred and fratricidal wars, were captured in a short poem *Odchyniaite Dveri...* [Open the Doors...]:

Одчиняйте двері —	Open the door —
Наречена йде!	The bride is coming!
[...]	[...]
Одчинились двері —	The door was opened —
Горобина ніч!	A dark, stormy night!
Одчинились двері —	The door was open —
Всі шляхи в крові!	All the roads in blood!

Consequently, Tychyna foresaw, “There will never be paradise || In this blood-spattered land” (*Skorbotna Maty III* [Sorrowful Mother III]).<sup>259</sup>

At the time of the publication of *Soniachni Klarnety*, the “blood-spattered land” had yet no chance for rejuvenation. In late December 1918, the merged forces of the UNR and the Western Ukrainian National Republic (ZUNR) overthrew Skoropods'kyi’s conservative government and once again, albeit for only some months, consolidated their position in Kyiv. Amidst the constant reversals, writers, among those who still remained in the capital, tended to search for accommodation with every new government. As a result, although the

<sup>257</sup>Шукати зілля || На людське божевілля.

<sup>258</sup>Будьте прокляті з війною || Вороний вітер.

<sup>259</sup>Не будь ніколи раю, || У цім кривавім краю.

literature could not keep pace with constant change of leadership, the creative life in Kyiv did not vanish altogether. There were a number of literary journals, such as *Shliakh* [The Way], *Literaturno-Naukovyi Visnyk*, and *Knyhar* [Bookseller], and some newspapers which continued to appear with relative frequency.

At the same time, a number of literary groupings were collecting their forces to resuscitate the world of letters. In Kyiv, there were two main literary trends at the time, originating in the pre-war years: the Futurists and the Symbolists. The Futurists, championed by Mykhail' Semenko, continued their attempts to diversify the hibernating literary life, organising literary events and venturing publication of almanacs and literary journals. Similarly, in January 1919 the Symbolists, gathered in a literary and artistic group by the name of *Muzahet*, with the political and promised financial support of the Directory made daring plans for the group's literary journal. The defeat of the Directory, however, adjusted their objectives and the overdue issue of *Muzahet* appeared only in May, backdated for months of January, February and March. This first issue, which also became the last that the group managed to publish, was opened with three poems of Tychyna (*Mizhplanetni Intervaly* [Interplanetary Intervals], *Pluh* [The Plough], and *I Bielyi, i Blok* [And Bely and Blok]).<sup>260</sup>

### "A Party Member or Not?": Coming to Terms with the Victor

Meanwhile, the authorities in Ukraine continued to change rapidly. The Ukrainian government was forced once again to surrender Kyiv on 5 February 1919, when the Bolshevik troops entered the city. The Bolshevik advance became the heyday for the Borot'bysty Party (see Section One), a newly reorganised party, which had united non-

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<sup>260</sup>*Muzahet: Misiachnyk Literaturny i Mystetstva*, 1-3 (1919).

Bolshevik leftist activists with a strong national agenda. After 1919, Tychyna, a recent herald of the national revolution, was becoming closely linked to the Borot'bysty. This bond was not merely ideological, although it is hard to judge about Tychyna's convictions due to the scarcity of primary sources and the prudence, with which the poet omitted any public expression of his views. Possibly, this cooperation was instigated by Ellan-Blakytynyi, an UPSR activist, a future Borot'bysty leader, and a close friend of Tychyna from their study in Chernihiv theological seminary and Kyiv Commercial Institute. Throughout the civil wars, Blakytynyi on repeated occasions helped Tychyna to live through those difficult years, offering him various placements and procuring financial support from the Soviet government.

In his recollections from 1918 (or 1919, not clear in the source), Blakytynyi complained that Tychyna lacked revolutionary temper and stamina; he had nervous disposition and could not endure moments of extreme tension of that struggle.<sup>261</sup> Nonetheless, he used every opportunity to engage Tychyna with the Communist agenda and proletarian literary corpus. In 1918, Tychyna joined the literary group “*Borot'ba*,” formed by the Borot'bysty members Mykhailychenko, Vasyl' Chumak, Zalyvchyi and Ellan-Blakytynyi, and was invited to contribute to its collections *Zshytky Borot'by* [Chapbooks of Struggle] and *Chervonyi Vinok* [The Red Wreath]. On 20 and 23 February 1919, two of his poems *Iak Upav...* [He fell...] and *Na Maidani...* [On the Square...] were published in the Borot'bysty periodical *Borot'ba*.

Besides attempting to make Tychyna's poetry public, Blakytynyi through the channels of “ideologically correct periodicals” validated, so to speak, his poems for the years to come. The two verses, published in *Borot'ba*, and later included to the 1920 collection *Pluh*

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<sup>261</sup>H. Donets' (ed.), *Spivets' Novoho Svitu: Spohady pro Pavla Tychynu*. (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1971), 54.

[The Plough], with time became widely cited to provide an image of the October Revolution in Ukrainian Soviet literature. Nonetheless, by analysing the wording of these verses, another contextualisation is suggested. For example, *Na Maidani...* opens up with a stanza:

На майдані коло церкви  
революція іде,  
- Хай чабан! – усі гукнули, -  
за отамана буде.

In front of the church on the square,  
The Great Revolution is on.  
“Hey, shepherd!” cries shatter the air.  
“For leader, you’ve enough brawn.”

*Iak Upav...*, in turn, depicts the death of a revolutionary during the consequent war:

Як упав же він з коня  
Тай на білий сніг.  
- Слава! Слава! – докотилось  
І лягло до ніг

He fell from his horse  
Onto the white snow  
“Hurrah! Hurrah!” Rolled up to him  
and lay at his feet.

Despite proper revolutionary mood, these two stanzas include allusions to the national Ukrainian revolution: the usage of words “*otaman*,” and exclamation “*Slava!*” suggests that the events depicted were connected to the UNR history (there were no such words as ‘*otaman*’ or ‘*slava*’ in the Bolshevik revolutionary vocabulary and they both have clear national connotations, hard to render in English translation).<sup>262</sup>

In early 1919, Blakytyni along with other fellow party members was rapidly promoted to senior positions. The Borot'bysty won control over Ukraine’s Commissariat for Education and the All-Ukrainian Literary Committee, *Vseukrlitkom*. The Borot'bysty, now being in charge of the republic’s cultural matters, tried to provide possible institutional support for cultural figures. Tychyna became a head of the literary subdivision in *Vsevydav* and the head of the special Ukrainian section. Also, the Borot'bysty launched the first state-sponsored Ukrainian-language literary journal *Mystetstvo* [Art]. Headed by the Futurist leader Semenko, the journal united a large circle of Ukrainian writers providing a forum for

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<sup>262</sup> *Otaman* refers to the highest military rank of the Zaporizhian Cossacks in the 16-18th centuries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term was used to call the leaders of the anarchist movements in Ukraine; *Slava* means ‘glory’ in Ukrainian.

contributors from different ideological currents. The journal evenly presented works of Futurists, Symbolists and the proletarian writers, associated with the Borot'bysty.

This brief stabilisation of political and cultural matters was once again interrupted by another military reversal, when Denikin's White Army took Kyiv on 31 August 1919. Denikin detested both the ideas of a Ukrainian national state and a Soviet order, forcing those similarly endangered associates to go underground. In addition, the White Army started conscripting Ukrainians, and call-up papers were delivered to Tychyna. To avoid persecution for his affiliation either with either UNR or the Bolsheviks, as well as to escape the conscription, Tychyna along with other Borot'bysty for months took cover in the crypts on Baikove cemetery in Kyiv.<sup>263</sup> His verse *Palit' Universalnyy* [Burn the Universals], referring to all the governments trying to establish their authority during the years, was widely circulated among Kyivans to support public resistance to the White forces.

The Denikin regime, although short-lived, had a heavy toll on Ukrainian cultural affairs. Among those brutally executed were the Borot'byst poet Chumak and the Commissar for Education Mykhailychenko. To the death of the latter Tychyna dedicated a verse calling for people to rally under the Socialist banner for the common victory: "We take an oath: in the hour of victory – to fight till the death – but we'll vanquish the enemy!"<sup>264</sup> On 16 December 1919 the Red Army re-took Kyiv and re-established the Soviet order. Tychyna once again responded to this change of authorities with the verse anticipating the new era, approached by the fallen heroes and red martyrs:

Надійтеся...Ховайте правду у своїй матні.  
Над Україною – Тарасова рука...  
Вже зайнялися в Києві нові дні, -  
То дні Михайличенка й Чумака.

Do hope... Hide the truth in your purse.  
Above Ukraine – the hand of Taras...  
New days are at dawn in Kyiv, -  
These are the days of Mykhailychenko and Chumak (O.P.)

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<sup>263</sup>Тичина, *Iz Shchodennykovykh Zapysiv*, 260.

<sup>264</sup>Засприсягаєм: в час побідний – || Хай смерть – а ворога поборем!

As mentioned, it is hard to evaluate Tychyna's ideological convictions of the time. His diaries or personal documents reveal little on the poet's early life.<sup>265</sup> His association with the Borot'bysty, on the one hand, was linked to his friendship with Blakytnyi. On the other hand, the public support he expressed to the Soviet regime could be explained by the simple fact that the Bolsheviks, supported at the time by the Ukrainian communists, remained the only power able to withstand other rivals, especially the Whites with their imperialist and anti-national ideology. Nonetheless, it is hard to assert that the poet already during the civil war years had decided to side with one political actor. Probably, Tychyna, as many others at the time, was guided not by ideology, but a simply desire for stability and long awaited peace. Instead of definite answers, the poetry of the time reflected the general confusion of the immediate post-revolutionary years.

The civil war was coming to an end with the Bolsheviks celebrating their victory over the territory of Ukraine. Kharkiv was proclaimed the capital of Soviet Ukraine; governmental and administrative bodies, including those institutional setting for national culture, had been moved out of Kyiv. As a result, Kyivan writers lost even their meagre state support, which they had secured with the Borot'bysty on board.<sup>266</sup> Everyday life also did not become easier once the Bolshevik regime was in place. The political and military situation, even after the Whites had been ousted from Ukraine, was tense. In May 1920, a united UNR-Polish Army entered Kyiv as a part of the offensive against Soviet Russia during the Soviet-Polish war. Ironically, Tychyna's poetry, which in March-November

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<sup>265</sup> It is believed that Tychyna's wife, Lidiia Paparuk (1900-1975) was in charge of the way Tychyna was presented in the press and scholarship. She carefully went through all volumes of memoirs and published primary sources to make sure that the legacy of Tychyna would not be challenged or questioned.

<sup>266</sup> On the everyday life in Kyiv at the time and the experience of the writers see: Natalia Polons'ka-Vasylenko, "Kyiv Chasiv M. Zerova ta P. Fylypovycha", in *Kyivs'ki Neoklasyky*, ed. V. Aheeva (Kyiv: Fakt, 2003); V. Domontovych, Bolotiana Lukroza. Spomyny," in V. Domontovych, *Divchynka z Vedmedykom* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 1999), 261-300; for the literary account of those years see: N. Bulgakov "The White Guard" (1925); Natalia Polons'ka-Vasylenko, *Spohady* (Kyiv: Kyievo-Mohylians'ka Akademiia, 2011).

1917 called for safeguarding the People's Republic, in summer 1920, was anonymously distributed from the Soviet agitation trains during their anti-Polish and anti-UNR campaign. His agitation verse *Rondeli* [Rondels] called for mobilisation and unification of the world proletariat against the common enemy:

Гукнем же в світ про наші болі!  
Щоб од планети й до зорі –  
Почули скрізь пролетарі,  
За що ми б'ємось тут у полі!  
Мобілізуються тополі...

We'll shout to the world about our pain!  
So that from our planet to the stars –  
All the proletarians everywhere would hearken  
To what we fight for, here, in the field!  
The poplars mobilise...

By the end of 1920, the haphazard change of authorities seemed to be over, with the Bolsheviks the only power to remain. Yet, the country was devastated. In the situation when, as described by Lynn Viola, “three of the four horsemen of apocalypse – war, famine and disease – stalked the Russian [and the Ukrainian] land in an all too literal orgy of death and destruction,”<sup>267</sup> public figures were still expected to manifest their civic stand and side with one of the feuding parties. Those captured in irresolution were no longer tolerated and terror became the means of each and every authority, claiming their ultimate right to govern the country. Literature could not enjoy the privilege of autonomy. It was often used, even at times without an author's concern, to defend and to cleanse those in power. At the same time, men of letters were using their only tool, their muse, to justify the situation which befell the country, and the ideas conventionally leading to it. Presumably, a lot had been written at that time, yet, as described, “writers [were] writing, but they publish[ed] little because there [was] no one and nowhere to publish.”<sup>268</sup>

In such unfavourable conditions, Tychyna still managed to publish two collections of poetry, *Zamist' Sonetiv i Octav* [Instead of Sonnets and Octaves] and *Pluh* [The Plough]. Overall, the two collections reflected the ideological hesitations within himself caused by

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<sup>267</sup>Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 48.

<sup>268</sup>Quoted in Illytzyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 38.

the disastrous turmoil of the civil wars in Ukraine, and challenged the idea(s), in the name of which those brutalities were committed. The collections were inspired by the multifaceted experience of the civil war years in Kyiv. On the one hand, the poet focused on the humanitarian side of the catastrophe of 1917-1920. On the other, his poetry signified the poet's preoccupation with the social aspects of the revolution. Notably, *Pluh* peaked at glorifying "the beauty of the dawning day" approached by "a million millions muscular arms". For this very matter, the collection was regarded in the Soviet historiography as Tychyna's "decisive 'yes' to the Socialist revolution."<sup>269</sup> Conversely, the collection of aphoristic poetry in prose *Zamist' Sonetiv i Octav*, exposing how complicated it was to come to terms with the regime, was censored after the first edition and republish only in the late 1980s.

Generally, the period of 1919-1920 was not about making decisive choices; it was the time to accept and reconcile the idea, which made the terror and cruelty of the civil war possible. Tychyna's anguish was caused primarily by the fact that he himself used to glorify a revolution, which, however, had revealed the worst side of human beings. Thus, his revolutionary dreams crumbled:

Ждали ми героя, а став свинопас, —  
Хто ж так люто кинув на поталу нас?

We expected a hero, but the swineherd has come, -  
Who then made a victim so brutally out of us? (O.P.)

He questioned:

Хто ж це так із тебе насміялись смів?  
Хто у твоє серце ніж загородив? [...]  
Хто ж тобі зготовив цей кривавий час?  
Хто ж так люто кинув на поталу нас?

Who then brought you to such derision?  
Who has stabbed you with a knife in your heart?" [...]  
Who has brought this bloody trial on you?  
Who then made a victim so brutally out of us?" (O.P.)

Those, who promised to lead, brought knives and fratricidal war with them:

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<sup>269</sup>Novychenko, *Poeziia*, 14.

То ж сокири брали, щоб в крові погрить,  
І йшли брат на брата однімать, ділить...  
І взялися кров'ю поле і гаї,  
Бо рубались, бились ріднії, свої

They took axes to warm them up in blood,  
and brother stepped against brother to bereave, to share...  
And blood was shed over the fields and groves,  
because those who slashed were kin and our own.<sup>270</sup> (O.P.)

The poet is confused, he embodied his tormented country:

Стоїть сторозтерзаний Київ  
І двісті розіп'ятий я.

There stands Kyiv tormented a hundredfold and I,  
crucified two hundred times

But still he believed that “Ukraine will raise its own Moses - || it has to be.”<sup>271</sup> Humanity and patriotism laid the foundation to this aspiration: “poet, to love your homeland isn't a crime || when you do it for the good of all.”<sup>272</sup>

“The beauty of the dawning day,” glorified in *Pluh*, was still gruesome. As for many revolutionary writers, the idea of a revolution consequently became devalued; it was compromised by all the crimes that people had committed in its name. More painfully, all the contemporaries shared the guilt, especially those poets, who had cherished the idea and translated it to the masses. Tychyna explained: “the creators of the revolution are, for the most part, lyric poets.”<sup>273</sup> But those who came to preach were useless since “the one who said ‘to kill is a sin’ the next morning lies with a bullet in his head.”<sup>274</sup> Tychyna deprecated any possible explanation of such terror. He challenged: “The great idea demands sacrifices. But is it a sacrifice when a beast eats a beast?”<sup>275</sup> Tychyna condemned all the sides leading to that chaos, an encompassing ‘red terror’: “Damnation to all, damnation to all, who've become beasts!”<sup>276</sup>

Whereas *Pluh*, it may seem, suggested the author's decisiveness to come to terms with the new order, *Zamist' Sonetiv i Octav* reflected the cost of achieving this

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<sup>270</sup>Хто ж це так із тебе насміялись смів?, 1918

<sup>271</sup>Воздвигне Україна свого Мойсея, -не може ж так быть!

<sup>272</sup>Поете, любити свій край не є злочин, коли це для всіх! (І Бєлий, і Блок... 1919)

<sup>273</sup>Творці революції здебільшого лірики (Евое!)

<sup>274</sup>Людина, що казала: убивати грїх! - на ранок з простреленою головою. (Герор)

<sup>275</sup>Але хїба то є жертва,коли звір звіра їсть? (Герор)

<sup>276</sup>Прокляття всім, прокляття всім, хто звіром став! (Уже світає...)

determination. In *Pluh*, Tychyna glorified locomotives and advances of techniques, while in another collection he questioned: “airplanes and the perfection of technology – what good is it when people don’t look each other straight in the eye?”<sup>277</sup> He concluded: “Everything can be justified by a lofty purpose – but not the emptiness of the soul.”<sup>278</sup> Similarly, while affirming that every village should have its ‘Marseillaise’, the author opposed that “they shoot the heart, they shoot the soul – they pity nothing.”<sup>279</sup> Hence, the revolution was doomed, that universal idea had lost its purity and was smeared with blood. The poet stung: “without music socialism can’t be established by any cannons.”<sup>280</sup>

The two collections of 1920 are seen as antipodes. In the Soviet historiography they were seen as “pro and contra of the [October] revolution.”<sup>281</sup> However, in both collections the poet is torn apart; he is inconsistent, full of dissociations and contradictions. Even *Pluh* with its traces of appreciation for the “new dawning day” was ambiguous. Alongside the decisive social themes (*Pluh, Siite, Lysty do Poeta, Psalom Zalizu, Rondeli II, Hnatovi Mykhailychenku*), the collection is adorned by philosophical poems (*Mesiia, Iz Zyклу Sotvorinnia Svit, Madonno Moia*) and deeply psychological dialogues with the author’s self (*Ia znai, 26-II (11-II)*). Nevertheless, the new collection marked Tychyna’s implicit departure from his previous devotion to folklore, religious motifs, deep symbolism, musicality and manifold sounding of the Ukrainian word. In the collection, new heroes, new values were emerging. One of the central poems of the collection, the quadriptych *Psalom Zalizu* [Psalm to Iron], cemented the change of the poet’s poetic self. In one of the verses, the author portrayed a devastated Ukrainian city in the wake of the new communist

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<sup>277</sup> Аероплани й усе довершенство техніки - до чого це, коли люди одне другому в вічі не дивляться? (Антистрофа)

<sup>278</sup> Все можна виправдати високою метою - та тільки не порожнечу душі. (Антистрофа)

<sup>279</sup> Стріляють серце, стріляють душу - нічого їм не жаль. (Кукіль)

<sup>280</sup> Соціалізм без музики ніякими гарматами не встановити (Антистрофа)

<sup>281</sup> Stepniak, 107.

order. The new authorities required new morals: instead of Apostle Andrew blessing the Kyivan hills and a sorrowful mother mourning her hasty sons (the images of Tychyna's early poetry), the communists (mentioned for the very first time in this poem), marched to summon workers "to smash the capitalists."

The "new renaissance" came to glorify steel, iron and a factory whistle, whereas Tychyna's "Madonna of Mine, Immaculate Virgin, exalted in eternity"<sup>282</sup> became superfluous. Thus, in 1919-1920, the poet bid the "farewell to his Madonna"<sup>283</sup>:

Схились, Мадонно, на причілок	Lean over, Madonna, against the side
Останньої хати в селі.	Of the last house in the village.
Усміхнись – і пійди собі геть по ріллі,	Smile – and then leave through the ploughed
Одганяючись од куль, як од пчілок	fields,
	Flicking away bullets like bees

The ambiguity reflected in the two collections in full corresponded to the author's personal confusion about the social and political developments of the time. The entry of 1 August 1920 from the poet's diary read: "In the recent days I have been thinking quite often: a party member or not."<sup>284</sup> He was hesitant, he questioned the party (perhaps, ironically): "Join the party, where they look upon a human being as a world treasure, and they all are as one against the death penalty."<sup>285</sup> The concluding piece from *Zamist' Sonetiv i Octav* best accounted on the author's satiation with all the discredited ideas, with the revolution as such, with all the sham slogans and symbols:

Грати Скрябіна тюремним наглядачам – це ще не революція.	It's still not a revolution just to play Scriabin for the prison guards.
Орел, Тризубець, Серп і Молот.. І кожне виступає як своє.	The Eagle, a Trident, a Hammer and Sickle... each acts as your own.
Своя ж рушниця нас убила.	But a rifle has killed our own.
Своє на дні душі лежить.	Our own lies at the bottom of our soul.
Хіба й собі поцілувати пантофлю папи?	Should I, too, kiss the slipper of the Pope?

<sup>282</sup>Мадонно моя, Пренепорочна Маріє,|| прославлена в віках!

<sup>283</sup>Ievhen Sverstiuk, "Proshchannia z Madonnoiu," in Sverstiuk, *Bludni Syny Ukraïny* (Kyiv: Znannia, 1993).

<sup>284</sup>Тучуна, *Tvory*, vol.11, 13.

<sup>285</sup>Приставайте до партії, де на людину дивляться як на скарб світовий і де всі як один проти кари на смерть. (Антистрофа)

On the one hand, the concluding line (*Should I, too, kiss the slipper of the Pope?*) suggested that Tychyna started considering options to comply with the ruling party. Lavrinenko interpreted it as “a counter-reflex, an instinctive, rather than conscious, fit, [...] a headlong breakdown” from the highest spire, where the poet was placed after 1918.<sup>286</sup> After this breakdown, it was a mere decision-making out of the options available: embrace of the authorities, submission, suicide, inescapable madness or emigration, the option with which so many artists and intellectuals were faced during the civil war. On the other hand, however, Tychyna’s rhetorical question revealed the uncertainty about the authorities he conceded to side with. In another poem, *Na Mohyli Shevchenka II* [At Shevchenko’s Grave...II], he mourned: “and there was no one to ask: || whom should we expect to save Ukraine?”<sup>287</sup> The time did not offer easy answers though.

“... Good that I am Alive and who Cares about the Rest”: Justifying the Terror

The two collection of poetry were warmly welcomed by different ideological sides. The poet’s genius was reassessed by both the adherents of his Symbolism and those who anticipated Tychyna joining the ranks of proletarian literature. Instead of gratification, such reception brought confusion to Tychyna, as apparent from his diary entry of 23 August 1920. The poet wrote: “People show their admiration to my poetry. And this is not for the first time. How can I understand this: either I have pleased everyone (then I am not a poet) or ... (interrupted).”<sup>288</sup> Indeed, Tychyna was praised by the critic of the time. In 1921, Ellan-Blakytnyi called Tychyna the most talented contemporary poet, calling him “the beauty and pride of the new Ukrainian poetry”. However, he regretted that the poet was

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<sup>286</sup>Lavrinenko, *Literatura Vitaizmu*, 950.

<sup>287</sup>І ні в кого було спитать: || кого ж нам на Вкраїну ждять?

<sup>288</sup>Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.11, 15.

“not yet a complete Communist”. Nonetheless, as the collection *Pluh* had shown, Tychyna “leaped forward, consciously catching up with the revolution, with the new life.”<sup>289</sup>

Indeed, Tychyna was highly admired by the proletarian poets. An example of the influence he had on the young writers in Kharkiv can be found in the dedication, printed on the cover page of the almanac *Zhovten'* [October], the first issue of which appeared in 1921. Published by the literary group *Zhovten'*, the almanac featured contributions by Khvyl'ovyi, Volodymyr Sosiura, Maik Iohansen and Koriak. The dedication read: “To Pavlo Tychyna. Dear Comrade, please accept from us this book as a proof of our candour and red respect [*chervona povaha*]. We know You and we love You. We hope and we believe – You are with us. With warm and communist greetings, the Kharkiv group of proletarian writers and the Vseukrlitkom.”<sup>290</sup> Tychyna’s diary entry from around the same time referred to this dedication: “How shallow we all are! To regard that signature from *Vseurklitkom* with the communist (October) greetings as an attempt to allure me to their camp – what a narrow-mindedness! [...] What do they want from me?!”<sup>291</sup> Despite the warm welcome from the proletarian camp, Tychyna was not yet ready to comply with the new ideological boundaries.

By the end of 1920, Tychyna, probably, had come to terms with the revolution and the ruling power. But its scale and means, its horrors, were still unfathomable for him. In his poetry, Tychyna offered a poetic account of the anxieties of the time. Firstly, he could not reconcile the terror, widely used by the new authorities to reaffirm their rule. In January 1921, Tychyna’s friend, the famous composer Mykola Leontovych, an UNR supporter, was

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<sup>289</sup>Vasyl' Ellan-Blakytnyi, Pavlo Tychyna (Shkitz), in Ellan-Blakytnyi, *Tvory* (Kyiv: Derzhlitvydav, 1958), vol. 2, 77.

<sup>290</sup>*Zhovten'*. *Zbirnyk Prysviachenyi Rokovynam Proletars'koï Revoliutsii* (Kharkiv: Vseukrlitkom, 1921), cover page.

<sup>291</sup>Diary entry from December 29, 1921, in Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.11, 33.

shot dead by a Chekist in his parents' house in Podillia. Tychyna echoed this event in a poem, dedicated to the memory of the great composer. Tychyna urged for peace to his worn-out country: "Let this bloody cup pass from Ukraine, let the harmony and equality be among the people."<sup>292</sup> Similar to the antistrophes of *Zamist' Sonetiv i Oktav*, Tychyna appealed to humanity, condemning the methods used by the opposing sides to remain in power. At the same time, the diary entry, referring to the death of Leontovych, suggested the repulsion that the poet felt about his own accord with the regime: "How awful! Awful that he was killed and that I am clutching at life. So to say, good that I am alive and who cares about the rest. How awful."<sup>293</sup>

Another ordeal of the time was the famine of 1921-23, an expected outcome of the lack of centralised power, constant changes of authorities and the years-long civil war. The government, which was meant to stay, however, was not effective enough to ease the situation. The motif of famine is pervasive in Tychyna's early poetry. In the poem *Holod* [Famine] (1921), later published in the collection *Viter z Ukrainy* [The Wind from Ukraine], the author depicted a desperate mother questioning the (in)sanity of a neighbouring woman who ate her children from hunger. She calls for alleviation for her children: "go to sleep, go to sleep, - may you go to sleep forever... Life!"<sup>294</sup> In another striking poem *Zahupalo v Dveri Prykladom* [One Banged on the Door with a Rifle Butt] the author showed a demented mother who was caught in the act of cooking her son. She tried to rationalise her deed: "Am I not his mother? Or didn't I, tell me, want to eat?"<sup>295</sup>

The poet himself suffered during the famine. In his diaries there are multiple entries of the poverty and rationing in Kyiv. To escape the hungry capital, Tychyna in late 1920

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<sup>292</sup> Хай чаша кривава Україну мине, | Хай буде між людьми і згода, і рівність...

<sup>293</sup> Тичуна, *Tvory*, vol.11, 19.

<sup>294</sup> ...ну, спати - | навк засунуло б ти... Життя!

<sup>295</sup> Хіба ж то йому я не мати? Чи їсти, скажіть, не хотілось?"

together with Kyrylo Stetsenko, a Ukrainian composer and a conductor, went in a tour on the Right-Bank Ukraine with the Ukrainian Republic Capella (choir), a journey of which the author left a detailed diary depicting the life of the country during those years in turmoil.<sup>296</sup> During the most severe years of the famine, the poet, who in addition fell seriously ill after his touring of Ukraine, was once again saved by Blakytyni. With Blakytyni's assistance, Tychyna fell under Sovnarkom's scheme, which assisted financially to those occupied in 'liberal professions' and registered within the first artistic trade union, the Union of the Workers of Arts (*Profspilka Robitnykiv Mystetstva, Robmys*), established in January 1921. Under this scheme, the Union's members, who expressed their loyalty to the regime, received a ration card and a protection card assisting them significantly through those years.

The aid of the Bolshevik party, however, came at a cost. Most painfully, the poet needed to adjust his poetry to the demands of the day. Already in 1919 Tychyna, as an official from *Vsevydav*, was appointed a jury in the Narkompros competition for a revolutionary hymn of Soviet Ukraine. Notably, he did not only evaluate the submissions, but also offered his own text for the consideration of the committee. This propaganda piece, written in spring 1919, became a complete opposite to *Zoloty Homin*, a conventional hymn of the national Ukrainian revolution, written by the poet in 1917. Instead of the inner musicality and metaphorical abundance, the anthem of the Bolshevik revolution consisted of simple agitation rhymes.

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<sup>296</sup>Tychyna, *Podorozh iz Kapeloiu Stetsenka. Shchodennyk*. (Kyiv: Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk, 1982).

Все здолаєм, все ми зможем,  
тьму прокляту переможем!  
Із раба зробити брата –  
гасло пролетаріата!  
Розкувать невольний світ –  
наш єдиний заповіт! [...]

Будимо, будимо, будим – молот, гудки,  
димарі,  
Єсть ми, були ми і будем, так як то сонце  
вгорі!  
Все прямуєм, все працюєм,  
Буржуазний світ руйнуєм!

We will overcome everything, we are capable of  
everything,  
The darkness we will turn away!  
To make a brother out of a slave –  
This is a slogan of proletariat!  
To unchain the un-free world –  
This is our behest! [...]

We rouse, awaken, call – hammer, whistle and  
funnels,  
We are, we were and we will be, same as the sun  
above us!  
We are striding, we are walking,  
And the bourgeois world we are destroying! (O.P.)

The question of how sincere the poet was in this propaganda verse remains open. That party-minded agitation was balanced by another piece of the time, an intimate poem from the *Zamist' Sonetiv i Oktav*. The poet ironically remarked:

Найглибший, найвеличніший і разом з тим  
найпростіший зміст, укладений на двох-  
трьох нотах, - оце і є справжній гімн.  
Без конкурсів, буз нагород напишіть ви  
сучасне «Христос Воскрес».

The most profound, the loftiest and at the same  
time, the simplest content is composed of two or  
three notes – that's a true hymn.  
Not for contests, and not for awards, write a  
contemporary "Christ is Risen"

These contradictions suggest Tychyna's lack of determinacy at the time. Obviously, there were pieces written for social order or as a pay-off for the party's assistance in personal or career matters. But also there were highly personal, sincere accounts of his everyday experiences and observations. The ambivalence was observed by the critics of the time, who repeatedly expressed concerns about the political choices made by Tychyna. Although not a member of any literary group at the time, he was in the centre of attention of different ideological camps. The poet was welcomed to join proletarian literature, but some of the verses (propaganda pieces) from *Pluh* raised concerns about the limits of Tychyna's submission to the regime.

By contrast, Iefremov, a Kyivan literary scholar and an important old-line intellectual, predicted Tychyna's submission to the party. He feared that the poet "was facing the danger of exchanging eternal values for profits [secured by] literary associations

and party-mindedness.”<sup>297</sup> The party speakers, instead, highly praised the evolution of the poet. The prominent critic of the time Oleksandr Bilets'kyi called *Pluh* a “book of iron tunes, a book with a sound of fanfares rather than organs, a book, where a breeze becomes a wind and later a storm, unfurled by million millions of muscular hands.”<sup>298</sup> Tel'niuk, a Soviet official biographer of Tychyna discerned in the collection the poet’s “*profession de foi* (faith statement) of a revolutionary poet, the program of a struggle for genuine revolutionary art.”<sup>299</sup> According to Soviet critics, *Pluh* was a leap forward in comparison to *Soniachni Klarnety*, which was called “pre-revolutionary” and unsuitable for “revolutionary masses.”<sup>300</sup> In this way, perhaps for the first time, Tychyna started to be praised not for his literary merit or poetic genius, but for his usefulness for the revolutionary cause, for the mobilising effect of his agitations.

In 1921-24, Tychyna, as if playing into the hands of the central party leadership, copiously contributed to Bolshevik propaganda. He repeatedly glorified the party, anticipated the future communist order, scathingly criticised its ideological rivals and asserted his own adherence to this victorious camp. In *Zhyvemo Komunoiu, X* [We Live as a Commune, X, 1920], he wrote: “Well, what of it that blood has flooded the universe? Future generation will arise – the union of bodies and souls. We do what we do, and the new world – it will be ours!”<sup>301</sup> Similarly, following resolute Prometheus in one of his poems written in 1921 (1922?), the poet asserted:

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<sup>297</sup>Iefremov, *Istoriia*, 483.

<sup>298</sup>Bilets'kyi, *Dvadtsiat' Rokiv*, 27-28.

<sup>299</sup>Stanislav Tel'niuk, *Molodyi ia, Molodyi. Poetychnyi Svit Pavla Tychyna. 1906-1925* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990), 252.

<sup>300</sup>Stepniak, 99.

<sup>301</sup>«Ну що ж з того, що всесвіт кром залляла, Майбутні встануть покоління – єднання тіл і душ. | Ми робим те, що робим, і світ новий – він буде наш» (Живем комуною X)

Піду життя творить нове -  
Хоч би й по трупах –  
Сам!  
Так мусить быть.

I will go create the life anew –  
Even if over the corpses –  
Alone!  
This is how it should be. (O.P.)

Tychyna discerned his future path: the last line in the triptych *Lysty do Poeta* [Letters to the Poet] affirmed: “...You’re quite a force, and someday You’ll make a communist.”<sup>302</sup> Despite not being a party member, the poet, as corroborated by his contributions, in full submitted to the expectations of the establishment. Moreover, Tychyna, as many other party-minded poets, got engaged in the ideological battle with the representatives of the Ukrainian political emigration. The example of Tychyna, the poet who not long before glorified the national revolution, was yet exceptional. In the collection *V Kosmichnomu Orkestri* [In Cosmic Orchestra] (1921) the poet, as if trying to strengthen his newly acquired position in the new Soviet society, impudently warned ‘Europe’ against the advance of the first proletarian state from the East:

Хто хто засміявся у Європі,  
Кого на кутні узяло,  
Що ми тут з голоду здихаєм,  
а не даємся ворогам,  
[...]  
Так, так, ми пухнемо без хліба.  
Надія наша – діти – мруть.  
Та голод – революції язик.  
А що, як вдарить вам іззаду  
Весвітній робітник?

Who are those who began to laugh in Europe,  
Who began to wail  
That here we’re dying of hunger  
but won’t surrender to our enemies?  
[...]  
Yes, yes, we’re bloating without bread.  
Our hope – the children – are dying.  
But hunger is the language of the revolution.  
And what if the workers of the world  
Strike you from behind your back?

The same collection included a squib on the political emigrants, all those “who duped the Republic with lies and unscrupulously escaped abroad.”<sup>303</sup> In *V Tsariakh Znaishly Svoiu Opiku i Ridniu* [In Tsars you Found your Support and Kinship] Tychyna put the whole blame for the civil war on those former Ukrainian leaders. He addressed the Ukrainian émigrés:

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<sup>302</sup> ... Ви сила! | | І з Вас ще буде комуніст

<sup>303</sup> Це ж ви Республіку пошили у брехню | | і безоглядно повтікали за кордон

Надійтесь? Сконайте, здохніть у пивних,  
Щоб ваші й кості перетрухли й поцвіли!..  
Нащо ви темних піддурили і сліпих,  
Нащо ви брата проти брата підняли?

You still have hope? So perish, die like dogs in  
taverns,  
So your bones putrefy and become mouldy!..  
Why did you dupe the ignorant and blind?  
Why did you set brother against brother?

Understandably, in those harsh times everybody could submit and produce verses to attain the party's benevolence. And yet, the level of submission can be different. In case of Tychyna the depth of falling down from the top of lyricism to the bottom of eulogy was striking. The diary entries from the time revealed how complicated the transformation was for the poet; but also they emphasised how important it was for him to fit in the new setting, hence to survive and to continue writing. The entry from 9 March 1922 read: "I don't want to lie, I cannot. I want to live, live at this moment!"<sup>304</sup> A later entry from the same year presented the pervasive fear of the poet for his life: "I am getting mad at nights. I will still face enough affliction, sorrows, tears and deaths. But now I want to live, because only in such a way I can blossom." As for his new poetical method he added: "I won't find a brave, wise Madonna. And yet the bourgeois (*mishchans'ka*) one I don't want."<sup>305</sup> It remained unclear, however, whether the 'proletarian Madonna' could indeed assist the poet in expressing himself.

In 1921 Tychyna anticipated: "We'll move forward – history won't wait. Proletarians! Call to each other in the struggle – The Inter-Republic, the Republic is approaching!"<sup>306</sup> As predicted, in late 1922 the Ukrainian SSR joined the newly created Soviet Union. Tychyna responded to this event with another address to all those who did not believe in the bright future of the republic of soviets. With the verse *Vidpovid' Zemliakam* [A Reply to my Countrymen] the poet tackled all those, who escaped hard

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<sup>304</sup>Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.11, 38.

<sup>305</sup>Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.11, 39.

<sup>306</sup> ... ми підемо вперед — історія не жде.

Пролетарі! перекликайтеся в борні — || Інтер-Республіка, Республіка іде!

choices due to their ‘faintheartedness’ and ‘blindness’. Hence, Tychna made a clear distinction between him, as a (already) Soviet poet, and all the ‘nationalist’ poets, let alone the émigré ones. All the ‘infidels’ were bundled together in hell:

Немов той Дант у пеклі, Стою серед бандитів і злочинців, Серед пузатих, ситих і продажних Серед дрібних, помстливих, тупоумних, На купі гною жовчного, що всмоктує, затягує на дно [...]	Like Dante in hell, I stand among bandits and criminals, Among the fat-guts, the gorged, the mercenaries, Among the trifling, the vengeful, the dim-witted, On a pile of bilious manure that sucks everything to the bottom [...]
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Стою – мов скеля непорушний.	I stand firm – like a cliff.
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In the verse *Za Vsikh Skazhu* [I will Speak for All] (1922) he reiterated his resoluteness: “I’ve reached my height and strength || I’ve seen the light in the distance.”<sup>307</sup> The more positive the poet was in his proclamations, the bigger was the criticism. Tychna with his new persona was often accused of betrayal of the ideals of the national revolution, of his lyric self, of his previously highly-acclaimed poetry. For diaspora observers, the latest poetry proved that Tychna had initiated an epic transformation from “a genius poet into an excellent grapho-maniac [*graphoman*]”.<sup>308</sup> While the opinion of the diaspora literary critics was unambiguous, the critics and writers in Soviet Ukraine refrained from decisive evaluations, often ascribing Tychna’s agitation rhymes to his ideological confusion. Kharkiv writers retained their hopes that Tychna would join the corpus of Soviet Ukrainian literature. In 1924, Khvyl'ovyi, a leader of the Kharkiv group of Ukrainian writers, in one of his letters to Zerov expressed his concerns about Tychna’s literary evolution. Khvyl'ovyi disagreed with Zerov’s assumption that Tychna “has come to an end” (*perevivsia*). Instead, the Kharkiv writer believed that the poet was “at his turning point.” Indeed, Khvyl'ovyi continued, some of his latest poetry, “especially those which smell of *agitka*” were repelling. But he expressed hopes that it was only a temporary

<sup>307</sup>Я дійшов свого зросту і сили, || я побачив ясне в далині.

<sup>308</sup>Koshelivets', *Suchasna Literatura*, 85.

matter, since Tychyna was easily swayed by political agendas. Thus, “we need to be more cautious with him, otherwise *the result might be not the one we expect.*”<sup>309</sup> Khvyl’ovyi, thus, presumed that Tychyna could easily fall in hands of centralist party propagandists and educators, bypassing the attempts of the Kharkiv intellectuals and Ukrainisers.

Conventionally, 1933, the year of the publication of the verse *Partiia Vede* [The Party Leads] in Moscow newspaper *Pravda*, is regarded as a radical shift in Tychyna’s conduct towards the Soviet regime and Soviet canon. However, it seems more apt to consider Tychyna’s submission not as a sudden break but a gradual process of self-sovietisation, of adapting his social and lyrical self throughout the 1920s. His self-sovietisation was non-linear, with continuous change from one ideological extreme to another. Perhaps, this can be explained by the lack of ideological or political convictions or as a reaction to haphazard implementation of Ukrainizatsiia in the republic. In addition, the poet in Kyiv was detached from the current literary trends in Ukrainian literature, centred in Kharkiv. While the poet was expected to contribute to the quality of Soviet Ukrainian literature, Tychyna repeatedly rejected his poetic autonomy in favour of state vision of literature.

Perhaps, with a certain purpose in mind, it is possible to present the Tychyna of this early period as an adherent of Symbolism and Modernism. One can excuse or even reconcile Tychyna’s choices by simply picking up different poems or changing emphases while discussing verses written already with the party in mind. But the pieces cited above were not marginal and they were published by major publishing houses allowing for all sides of Ukraine’s literary life to observe the trajectory of Tychyna’s transformation. The critics of the time tried to pull apart Tychyna’s poetry between black and white interpretations. Among the Ukrainian diaspora, there were only two sides: “red” (party-

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<sup>309</sup>Mykola Khylyovyi, *Lysty do Zerova* in Khylyovyi, *Tvory u dvokh tomakh*, vol. 2, 843. (Italics mine, O.P.)

mindedness) and “blue-and-yellow” (pre-revolutionary Modernism). In Soviet Ukraine, the pool of options was far more complicated; the two extremes were mediated by the project of Soviet Ukrainian literature, which, however, was itself a process in the making.

The civil war period enabled the rivalry of different aesthetic movements and schools in Ukraine. Not surprisingly, the poetry of those turbulent years was defined by social themes and ideological hesitations. Despite the common understanding that art should preserve its autonomy, creative literature, and especially poetry, was often used by different political actors of the time. The post-civil war order, in turn, raised the question of stabilisation and governance. The cultural sphere became an important component in the process of sovietisation of Ukraine. Although the victory of the Bolshevik party in Ukraine ruled out a number of potential alternatives for Ukrainian literature, the debates about Soviet Ukrainian literature had only begun.

## 2.1.2. “Kharkiv, Kharkiv, where is your Countenance? || For whom is your call?”: a Fellow-Traveller in the Soviet Capital

“...this big but not grand city”:<sup>310</sup> Kharkiv versus Kyiv

On 19 December 1919, Kharkiv was proclaimed the capital of the newly established Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic. The decision to make Kharkiv, a border provincial city in eastern Ukraine, a Bolshevik stronghold was justified by numerous political and strategic reasons. From the very early on, the city favoured the Bolsheviks, as seen from the elections to the Constituent Assembly (November 1917). Right after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks enjoyed considerable public support in the city. According to the elections results, the Bolsheviks were the most popular party with 27.9% (against 10.46 in Kharkiv district (*okruh*) and 4.02% in Kyiv district), leaving behind the representatives of the Constitutional Democratic Party and SRs.<sup>311</sup> Nonetheless, it was not only the level of public support, which became decisive for the decision to make Kharkiv the first capital of Soviet Ukraine. In comparison to other eastern Ukrainian cities, Kharkiv with its 28% of votes had shown considerably less support to the Bolsheviks. For instance, 47.9% of electorate in Luhans'k voted for the Bolsheviks and in Iuzovo (later Stalino and Donets'k) they gained 47%. Mostly, Kharkiv was chosen for its strategic position and due to economic reasons. Since Imperial times, the city had a good rail connection to Russia and was the centre of the most industrially developed region in Ukraine.

The results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Kharkiv suggest yet another interpretation. Kharkiv at the time experienced the problem of “double loyalty” to

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<sup>310</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, Redaktor Kark, in Khvylovy, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol.1, 132.

<sup>311</sup> Results of the elections in 1917: <http://www.electoralgeography.com/ru/countries/r/russia/1917-uchreditelnoe-sobranie-russia.html>

Kyiv and Petrograd,<sup>312</sup> with both identities, Ukrainian and all-Russian, being present amongst the population. It should be noted that Kharkiv, according to the All-Union Urban Census from 1923, had the biggest share of ethnic Ukrainians in the national composition of the six largest Ukrainian cities as for 1920, 21.3% (against Mykolaiv (15.3), Kyiv (14.3), Iuzovo (11.4) Dnipropetrovsk (4.7) and Odessa (3.9)).<sup>313</sup> However, the Ukrainians were mostly peasants, with little access to officialdom and industries.

The “third Kharkiv”<sup>314</sup> as a capital and a new artistic and cultural centre of Soviet Ukraine in 1919-1934 became possible due to an influential current of national intellectuals, gathered around Kharkiv University (founded in 1804). These intellectuals preserved a strong bond to Kyiv (hence, the UNR statehood initiatives), and developed different autonomous projects of regional identity and national state-building. The all-Soviet policy of korenizatsiia, introduced after 1923, had significant precedent in the region since 1917, when Kharkiv intellectuals and academics started advocating distinct national (Ukrainian) and regional (Sloboda Ukraine, *Slobozhanshchyna*) identities and inculcated them in the local population.<sup>315</sup> For example, in 1917 the decision was made to open Ukrainian schools in Kharkiv starting with the new academic year, for which, accordingly, a network of training courses and evening classes for teachers was established. On 1 September 1917 the meeting of the Kharkiv Ukrainian society “*Prosvita*,” headed by the historian, academic and the mayor of Kharkiv (1914-1917) Dmytro Bahalii, took place. The regional identity was cemented by Bahalii’s lecture, later published as a book chapter in his

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<sup>312</sup> Vladimir Kravchenko, *Kharkov/Kharkiv: Stolitsa Pohranich'ia* (Vilnius: EGU, 2010), 236; Rex A. Wade, “Ukrainian Nationalism and ‘Soviet Power’: Kharkiv, 1917,” in *Ukrainian Past, Ukrainian Present*, ed. B. Krawchenko (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1993), 70-83.

<sup>313</sup> Appendix 3: Changes of the national composition of the six largest Ukrainian cities, 1920-26. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*.

<sup>314</sup> Reference to Iurii Sherekh, “Chetvertyi Kharkiv”, in Sherekh, *Porohy i Zaporizhzhia* (Kharkiv: Folio, 1998), vol.1, 478-492.

<sup>315</sup> See Kravchenko, *Kharkov/Kharkiv*, 229-280.

well-known “History of Sloboda Ukraine,” entitled “Kharkiv as a Ukrainian city.”<sup>316</sup> Nevertheless, Ukrainian current in Kharkiv could not boast enough strength and was a mere invention of the local elites. The matters had changed in autumn 1917, when the revolutions raised questions of political loyalties anew.<sup>317</sup>

In 1919, Kharkiv became the capital of Soviet Ukraine, which consequently provided a new impetus for creative, cultural, social, economic and political advances for this formerly provincial city. Its new central status, fully established in 1921 (the end of the civil war), became a magnet for young artists, writers, political activist and intellectuals in their drive to contribute to the creation of a new Ukraine with only limited reference to the past. Its qualitative composition for the following decade differentiated Kharkiv from a former capital Kyiv, unable, according to this new generation, to kindle the new proletarian art.<sup>318</sup>

For around a decade, it seemed that these two cities, the former and the current capital, existed parallel to each other with only limited examples of cultural interactions. After the capital had been moved eastward, Kyiv was becoming provincial itself. It still had its century long cultural traditions, with the Symbolists, the most important literary current, being its link between Modernism of the past and revolutionary literature of the present. But Kyiv during the revolution, as it was seen from Kharkiv, was becoming the “bohemian” centre of a “European country” with its new culture of “coffee houses,” in which young artists “[were] having breakfast and lunch together with ministers and officials from the Tsentral'na Rada: ones working on state-building, the others on public

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<sup>316</sup> Dmytro Bahalii, *Istoriia Slobids'koï Ukraïny* (Kharkiv: Del'ta, 1993).

<sup>317</sup> Wade, 71.

<sup>318</sup> M. Dolengo, “Kyiv ta Kharkiv – Literaturni Vzaiemovidnoshennia,” *Chervonyi Shliakh*, 6 (1923), 151-157.

opinion and nationalist ideology.”<sup>319</sup> From the perspective of 1923, Kyiv was seen as rustic (*selians'kyi*), old and historic (*staryi ta istorychnyi*) with its bygone glory; whereas Kharkiv was “the centre and pulse of cultural life of Ukraine, industrial Kharkiv [striding towards] modernity, the new capital, the youngest capital of the Universe.”<sup>320</sup>

Kharkiv attracted young talented people with its enormous creative potential, which came hand in hand with immense social and cultural transformations. In only a decade, Kharkiv was transformed from a provincial city in eastern Ukraine into an industrial centre, able to flaunt all the benefits of the new regime. A young writer, Iohansen, expressed his fascination with Kharkiv in the outline for a future novel: “...Kharkiv theme prevails over others mainly because [its development] proves creative and the life-giving potential of the proletariat, who has transformed this place from an assemblage of merchants into today’s industrial colossus. Instead of an old town with dilapidated shacks and huge junkyards, a new and giant city is being built, which stands on a par, or maybe even surpasses, other European cities. [...] I don’t even mention those grand changes in the way of life, which took place during this time.”<sup>321</sup>

Despite Kharkiv’s array of opportunities, Kyiv remained an important reference point for proletarian writers; to be praised, or even mentioned, by Kyivan ‘old’ masters meant to be accepted in the world of letters. The value of such ‘approval from the old school’ can be found in the correspondence between Khvyl'ovyi, a young and yet well-established Kharkiv proletarian writer, and Zerov, a Kyivan Modernist poet and academic. In his letter from 1924 Khvyl'ovyi wrote: “Thank you for the offer to publish my works in *Slovo* [Kyiv

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<sup>319</sup> Volodymyr Koriak, *Etapy*, in *Zhovten'*, 1 (1921), 89.

<sup>320</sup> Dolengo, *Kyiv ta Kharkiv*, 151.

<sup>321</sup> Maik Iohansen, “Knyha pro Misto Industrial'nykh Veletniv,” *Literaturna hazeta*, 12 June, 1936, 2; Iaryna Tsymbal, “Kharkivs'kyi Tekst” 1920-kh: Obirvana Sproba,” *Ukrains'ka Literature XX Stolittia. Literaturoznavchi Obrii*. 18 (2010), 54-61.

publishing house]. At the end of this year I should use my acquaintance with You and publish at least something in Kyiv. I need to do this, because Kyiv is Kyiv. And such professors as Plevako [an editor of the academic edition of the Reader of the New Ukrainian Literature, 1923] etc., I heard, don't want to acknowledge me as a writer based on the fact that I have published everything in Kharkiv, and Kharkiv is only Kharkiv, but Kyiv is Kyiv etc. In a word, an unusual explanation; but, to some extent, I agree with it".<sup>322</sup>

With the consolidation of the Bolshevik regime, Kyiv gradually experienced an outflow of artists to the new capital. It was partly caused by more favourable social and political conditions in the capital, and partly by the opportunities which opened up for the young generation in this "tradition-less" city. In addition, the Bolsheviks encouraged in every way the creation of the new Ukrainian proletarian culture. The non-interference in literary matters and lenient attitude towards the so-called fellow-travellers helped the all-round development of the arts and literature. Besides, due to the new policy on nationalities, the Ukrainian language was being slowly but gradually introduced into the cities. The advances in spreading the Ukrainian language helped to erase the language barrier for writers from various backgrounds and wipe away the differences in readership requirements between Kyiv and Kharkiv. Nonetheless, the distinctive ideological, political and cultural differences between the two cultural centres, which seemed unbridgeable in the early 1920s, were erased by the Bolshevik grand social engineering project of the first Five-Year Plan.

In light of all these changes, Tychyna, a bard of the national revolution and a Bolshevik neophyte, also considered moving to the new capital. His motives were not only professional, however. The available primary sources disclose his deep inner confusion

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<sup>322</sup> Khylyovyi, *Lysty do Zerova*, 844.

with the situation in Kyiv. One of the main reasons for Tychyna to consider moving cities was the outflow of artistic forces and the impoverishment of the intellectual atmosphere. In his diary, the poet confessed how forlorn and lonely he felt on those days: “There is nobody I can federate with. Semenko – no, Vasyl' [Blakytnyi] – is far away, *hronisty*<sup>323</sup> want to eat me up and benefit from it.”<sup>324</sup> A diary entry of 29 July 1920 suggested the unbearable atmosphere in Kyiv. It read: “I grow rusty in Kyiv. Yet, the hell with it, even with these stale forces I should continue doing something, while it is still possible.”<sup>325</sup>

In addition, Tychyna found himself in the centre of criticism from all ideological sides. His most acclaimed collection *Soniachni Klarnety* was attacked fiercely by the Futurists. Tychyna, with his clear reference to the modernist tradition, was seen as “*panych*” (a noble man),<sup>326</sup> a “bard of the Tsentral'na Rada” who, thereof, could not represent the new grand-to-be revolutionary literature. Futurist Semenko in 1922 rejected the conventional approach to regard the “young Ukrainian poetry” (Tychyna, Iakiv Savchenko, Dmytro Zahul) as “a great progressive step.” His attitude towards Tychyna was ludicrously presented as follows: “Pavlo Tychyna [meanwhile] sat quietly in his little den, content with onanism, translating “beautiful Ukrainian folk songs” into the language of poetry, stylising Ukrainian rugs, restoring ancient *dumy* and other useless things, preparing to become “father’s” (or “mother’s”) little boy and the successor to Voronyi, Lesia Ukraïнка, and Oles'.”<sup>327</sup> Geo [Hryhorii] Koliada in his collection *Futur Extra*, published in Moscow in 1927, in the same critical manner spoke of Tychyna’s bland attempt to make

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<sup>323</sup> Hrono – literary group in Kyiv formed in 1920 and headed by Valerian Polishchuk.

<sup>324</sup> Tychyna, *Iz Shchodennykovykh*, 36.

<sup>325</sup> Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.11, 12-13.

<sup>326</sup> Tychyna, *Iz Shchodennykovykh*, 43.

<sup>327</sup> Quoted in Ilnytzyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 33.

use of the revolution: “You, || deeply lyrical, || “genial” Tychynas, Sosiuras et al. || Hands off! || Don’t grasp the wheels of the *lokomobili* of history.”<sup>328</sup>

Later on, Tychyna reflected those last years in Kyiv in his diary: “Ukrainian nationalist hated me for my *Vidpovid' Zemliakam* (1922). From another side I was pressed by Ukrainian neo-futurists, who labelled me and made the filthiest comparisons. [...] From the third side, there were those moderates, preaching for peace and quietness, to whom I replied in *Velykym Brekhunam* [To Big Liars].”<sup>329</sup> In addition, Tychyna was attacked by his old adherents for his new literary style, developed in *Pluh* and *V Kosmichnomu Orkestri*. In one of his later letters to Lidiia Paparuk, the woman who would become his wife in 1938, the poet referred to those common reproaches: “They cannot forgive [*zabuty*] me Kharkiv. According to them, I should have stayed in Kyiv and reprinted for the fifth time my first collection [*Soniachni Klarnety*].”<sup>330</sup> Thus, Kyiv with its constant intrigues and plotting was becoming an unbearable place. Kharkiv, instead, could offer some openness and easy-to-fit-in atmosphere.

There was another reason for quitting Kyiv in 1923. The city was becoming dangerous for former UNR supporters. In Kharkiv, with its various opportunities, it was easier to blend than in Kyiv, where people often searched for possible occasions to climb the social ladder. An entry from the diary dated already from 10 November 1921 read: “Every time when Vasyl' [Blakytnyi] comes to Kyiv he suggests me to move to Kharkiv.

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<sup>328</sup>Ви,  
Отебезезено-олірені,  
«геніальні» Тичини, Сосюри, інші...  
Геть руки!  
Не хапайтеся за колеса локомотивів історії

<sup>329</sup>Тучуна, *Iz Shchodennykovykh*, 290-291.

<sup>330</sup>Тучуна, *Tvory*, vol.11, 28.

There is a big reason for this. One person is especially threatening me.”<sup>331</sup> There are no records of who this person was. However, according to the recollection of Paparuk, Tychyna at the time had a complicated relationship with the Kyiv Cheka.<sup>332</sup> This assumption was later seconded by Volodymyr P"ianov, an expert on Tychyna and his close friend in the later period. P"ianov pointed out that the poet was blackmailed for his former UNR ties by Vsevolod Balyts'kyi, a Cheka vice head at the time.<sup>333</sup>

Subsequent spread of political arrests made those hypothetical threats more tangible. On 11 April 1923 Tychyna’s brother Ievhen, a precentor of a Ukainian autocephaly church, was arrested by the Chernihiv Cheka for his alleged attempts to Ukrainianise his parish. The investigation file included Tychyna’s poem with a clear anti-Soviet attitude: *Do Koho Hovoryt'?* [To Whom to Talk?], written in 1922. The poem reflected the poet’s despair and discordance with the state of affairs, with the situation of “class-less feud,” hypocrisy and mustiness of those in power. Tychyna confides in Rabindranath Tagore, his moral references:

Я покажу тобі такі речі  
В однокласовій ворожнечі!  
Я покажу тобі всю фальш, всю цвіль  
Партійноборчих породіль!  
А братні зуби! Дружній зиск!  
Гнучка політика як віск!

Коли б були це генерали —  
Ми б знали, що робить.  
Ах, в тім то й річ, що це кати  
Однокласовії.

I will show you rare things  
In our class-less feuds!  
I will show you all the hypocrisy and mustiness  
Of those emerged from in-Party struggles!  
And fraternal fangs! And friendly lucre!  
That wax-like pliable policies!

When were they generals —  
We would have known how to act.  
And that’s a thing, that they are hangmen  
From the same class (O.P.)

Given its political sounding, the poem, although it existed in a number of handwritten copies, was never published until 1990. Tychyna was under suspicion. The political

<sup>331</sup>Tychyna, *Iz Shchodennykovykh*, 37.

<sup>332</sup> Tel'niuk, *Molodyi ia, Molodyi*, 372.

<sup>333</sup> See Sosnovs'ka, “Iak ia Zheniu – Svoho Brata –Riatuvav u Cheka,” *Malovidome z Zhyttia Poeta Pavla Tychyna*,” *Z arkhiviv VUCHK, GPU, NKVD, KGB*, 1 (1994), 166.

periodicals and newspapers of the time [e.g., *Nova Rada*, *Literaturno-Naukovyi Visnyk*] contained enough proofs of his engagement with the national revolution. In addition, Tychyna's anti-Soviet stand could easily be proven from evidence, already available in the Cheka files on his brother. Thus, it was due to the whole complexity of the poet's experience in Kyiv that he finally took Blakytnyi's advice and moved to Kharkiv.

### *The Poet at the Crossroads*

In 1923, when Tychyna finally moved to the new capital, it seemed that Kyiv had already experienced its final days of glory. The enormous creative upheaval, inspired by the national revolution, was terminated with the last hopes to restore the UNR. Tychyna became another 'Kharkiv Kyivan' adjusting not only to the new post-revolutionary and post-civil-war way of life, but also fitting into the new ideological and institutional setup of Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian writers in Kharkiv gathered around the only Ukrainian-language newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* [VUTsVK News], the major daily newspaper of the Soviet Ukrainian government, published in Kharkiv since May 1920. The newspaper covered republican, all-Union and world news, publicised official Party pronouncements and commentaries. In addition, considerable attention was devoted to cultural issues. *Visti VUTsVK* had weekly cultural supplements *Literatura, Nauka, Mystetstvo* [Literature, Science and Arts], 1923-24 and *Kul'tura i Pobut* [Culture and the Everyday Life], 1924-28, which became a platform for new Ukrainian literature. In summer 1921, Ellan-Blakytnyi became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, turning it into the most influential organ in support of Ukrainizatsiia and the forum for Ukrainian writers and public speakers.

Kharkiv was steadily becoming a centre of new proletarian literature. Unlike Kyiv, the faithfulness to the abstract ideological cause was valued here more than consistency of

literary manner, the legacy of national tradition or the boundaries of a single school. The Kharkiv literary world was ready to include various writers as long as they were ready to contribute to “the era of creative proletarian poetry of the real future” (‘Our Manifesto,’ Khvyl’ovyi, Sosiura and Iohansen, 1921). Not surprisingly, Tychyna, with his previous forays into proletarian poetry, was sincerely accepted in Kharkiv. In April 1923, at the very first days of his residence in the new capital, Tychyna for the first time presented his poems at the *Pluh* [Union of Peasant Writers] literary evening in front of the Kharkiv audience. Tychyna was widely recognised as the most talented poet of Ukraine. The review of this event reported a warm welcome to the Kyivan poet,<sup>334</sup> who had long been awaited in the proletarian literary ranks. In turn, to offer an example of literary slough in Kyiv, the reciprocal visit of the *Hart* [Union of Proletarian Writers] members to Kyiv in December same year ended up with a scandal.<sup>335</sup> As reported by Iefremov, “a stretched hand poised in mid-air since none of the Kyivans answered their call for the unification of literary fronts.”<sup>336</sup>

Tychyna, although a new-comer in the proletarian literature, got quickly involved with the broad literary arrangements in the capital. He became closely associated with proletarian writers. Yet, he remained a circumspect fellow-traveller (Rus. *poputchik*), representing the group of non-proletarian writers, who on various occasions pledged their allegiance to the party and proved their readiness to cooperate. Fellow-travellers were originally defined by Trotsky as artists, who presented a kind of transitional art which was “more or less organically connected with the Revolution, but which is not the art of the

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<sup>334</sup> *Chervonyi Shliakh*, 2 (1923), 258.

<sup>335</sup> Volodymyr Koriak, “Podorozh Hartu do Kyieva,” *Literatura. Nauka. Mystetstvo*. 1923, December 9.

<sup>336</sup> Serhii Iefremov, *Shchodennyky*, 1923-1929. (Kyiv: Biblioteka hazety Rada, 1997), 44; Different appraisal of the event from Kharkiv perspective can be found in *Literatura, Nauka, Mystetstvo*, 10 (278), 1923. The account is as followed: “all have agreed on a broad soviet front [in literature] with the engagement of all artistic forces”.

Revolution.”<sup>337</sup> Due to the lack of Communist cadres and elites, the fellow-travellers were not only accepted within the new Soviet order, but often even highly praised for their new commitment. The benevolent attitude of the party towards fellow-travellers was well justified. Whereas for the artists this cooperation secured the possibility to continue their creative activity, the party, used the artists for its far-reaching strategic goals of creating a positive image both within the republic and beyond its Western borders. One of these goals was the need to win over the political emigration in Eastern Europe.

The official position in literature was reiterated by the resolution of the Politburo of the TsK KP(b)U “Concerning Ukrainian Literary Groupings” issued on 10 May 1925. It was stated that “no existing literary organisation [...] can claim that it alone represents the party in the field of literature, or holds the monopoly in applying the party line in this field.”<sup>338</sup> Similar approach was executed on the All-Union level with the publication of the All-Union resolution “On Party Policy in the Sphere of Literature” on 1 July 1925. It asserted that “the hegemony of proletarian writers is, as yet, non-existent, and the Party ought to help those writers to earn for themselves the historical right to such a hegemony.”<sup>339</sup> Since the party refrained from interfering into literary life in the first post-revolutionary years, none of the existing literary groupings, despite their ideology, enjoyed full party support. Both resolutions were intended to seek a compromise between proletarian writers and fellow-travellers and to set limits to the party intervention in literary matters. Nonetheless, it was made clear that the final say in the cultural domain, as well as

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<sup>337</sup> Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*. [Online]. Available:

[http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit\\_revo/ch02.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit_revo/ch02.htm) (Accessed 10 September 2014)

<sup>338</sup> “Resolution of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CP(b)U on Ukrainian Literary Groupings, 1925,” Appendix C in Luckyj, *Literary politics*, 277-78.

<sup>339</sup> “On Party Policy in the Sphere of Literature,” in *Soviet Culture and Power: a History in Documents, 1917-1953*, ed. Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007) 40-44.

in political, belonged to the party, who, as it was explicitly stated was the leader of “literature as a whole.”<sup>340</sup>

In 1923, Tychyna was among the founders of a new literary mass organisation *Hart*, whose goal was to “unite the proletarian writers of Ukraine, [...] who using the Ukrainian language as a means of artistic expression, aimed at creating one international, Communist culture.”<sup>341</sup> Headed by Blakytynyi, the organisation united the most prominent names in Ukrainian letters and arts of the time: Khvyly'ovyi, Dovzhenko, Sosiura, Polishchuk, Kulish, and Volodymyr Kulyk. Within a short time, *Hart* became a leading literary organisation in Ukraine. To mark the new page, in 1924 Tychyna published a new collection of poetry, *Viter z Ukraïny* [Wind from Ukraine], dedicated to Khvyly'ovyi. This collection offered a variety of voices, both idyllic ones, joyful and oversaturated with the anticipated bright socialist future of Ukraine (e.g., *Nadhodylo Lito* [Summer is on the Way]) and tragic ones, depicting sorrows and grievances of the civil war years (e.g., *Holod* [Famine]). In a number of landscape, intimate poetry (e.g., *Osin'* [Autumn], *Vesna* [Spring], *Vulytsia Kuznechna* [Kuznechna Street]), the poet remained faithful to his former lyrical self. Alongside these poems, the collection contained several politically engaged pieces (*Vidpovid' Zemliakam*, *Nenavysti Moieï Syla* [Oh Strength of my Hate] etc.).

The collection received mixed response. Firstly, it was admitted that Tychyna reached unprecedented heights in mastering a poetic form. *Viter z Ukraïny* boasted verses written in *vers libre* and hexameter, there were folk quatrains, blank verses, and poetry in prose. Tychyna constantly developed his technique, which, nevertheless, came along with simplifying the message of his poems. In 1931, for this very reason the poet would be accused of formalism. In 1924, however, these experiments with the poetic form and

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<sup>340</sup> *ibid*, 43.

<sup>341</sup> A. Leites, M. Iashek *Desiat' Rokiv Ukraïns'koï Literatury (1917-1927)* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1928), 374.

content were defined as “a democratisation of the poet’s muse.”<sup>342</sup> Secondly, the critics remarked the strengthening of his ideological tune. Iefremov recorded the poet’s evolution towards “communist ‘other-worldly’ romanticism, hatred towards communist enemies and some weird belief in the ‘Inter-Republic’.”<sup>343</sup>

Another Kyivan, Zerov was more cautious with his appraisals. In the review, he observed that Tychyna had not only accepted the revolution, but also composed “a victorious hymn to the new age, the age of grand social advances”.<sup>344</sup> As for the poetic style, the critic mentioned that Tychyna’s earlier allusions, metaphors and refined reflections were transformed into “cold allegories waiting to be deciphered.”<sup>345</sup> A more nuanced account on Tychyna’s ideological transitions is presented in the personal correspondence between the two. In a private letter, Zerov commented on the mood of *V Kosmichnomy Orkestri*, the poem written in 1921 and included in the 1924 collection. For Zerov, the cycle “produces an impression of bastard-ness [*ubliudochnost*]. Your cosmos is a mongrel of two styles: on the one hand, ‘a spirit that had imbued all,’ on the other, ‘confederations’, ‘aerostats’, ‘socialism.’ There are too many insincere words that float on the surface and disturb – they do not correspond to the inward nature of your thinking.”<sup>346</sup> Obviously, former adherents of Tychyna were dissatisfied with the trajectory of his transformation.

In his letter to Mohylians'kyi, a Kyivan academic and a literary critic, Tychyna expressed his own account of *Viter z Ukraïny*: “I am very pleased to hear from you that my book leaves its mark, but this, my dear Mykhailo Mykhailovych, is not what I was aiming

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<sup>342</sup>Stus, *Fenomen*, 71.

<sup>343</sup>Iefremov, *Istoriia*, 482.

<sup>344</sup>Zerov, “*Viter z Ukraïny*” (Tretia Knyzhka Tychyny),” in Zerov, *Tvory*, Vol. 2, 494.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid, 499.

<sup>346</sup> Quoted in R. Kharchuk, “Zmina oblychchia: PavloTychyna,” *Dyvoslovo*, 2 (2011), 58-62.

at. My soul is longing for unknown heights, I want to stand like a monolith and my hands are rising upwards. But will I rise? To become a monolith one need knowledge, strength and health. Unknown heights require universal blossoming and shine. Marks... in order to leave marks on the whole epoch! [...] *Viter z Ukrainy* is only a wind, and a storm is yet to come, or maybe not.”<sup>347</sup> It is hard to say, what the ‘heights’ implied by Tychyna were. On the one hand, with his first collection *Soniachni Klarnety* he had already reached the pinnacle of symbolist poetry. His experiments with the form suggested that Tychyna was evolving within the trends of avant-garde. His forays into propagandist rhyming showed that the poet did not disdain the role of a party mouthpiece. Perhaps, it was this seeking for the right format for his poetry along with the simplification of its message, which gradually brought him to the heights of socialist realism, as the theory of ‘natural’ progression from avant-garde to “total art of Stalinism” suggests.<sup>348</sup>

In the end, Tychyna easily fitted into the new Soviet literary setting. In addition, from the early days in Kharkiv, the poet also joined the Soviet officialdom. For a decade, he was a co-editor and headed the fiction section of *Chervonyi Shliakh*, the newly launched state sponsored “thick” magazine, which engaged dozens of prominent Ukrainian intellectuals, academicians and writers. Shums'kyi, an ex-Borot'byst and a later Commissar for Education, occupied the position of its editor-in-chief (1923-27). In *Chervonyi Shliakh*, many literary works, academic texts and book reviews were published for the first time,

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<sup>347</sup>Pavlo Tychyna, “Lysty do M.K. Zerova, M.M. Mohylians'koho,” *Radians'ke Literaturoznavstvo*, 11 (1971). 75-76.

<sup>348</sup> The idea of a natural progression from modernism to socialist realism is discussed in Groys, *Total Art of Stalinism*; Petrov, *Automatic for the Masses*.

which made this Ukrainian-language periodical a unique platform for promoting national literature and culture in the 1920s.<sup>349</sup>

As the editorial to the first issue in 1923 made explicit, the journal, intended to be distributed abroad, was established to counterbalance similar endeavours of the Ukrainian emigration.<sup>350</sup> Primarily, *Chervonyi Shliakh* was trying to compete with *Nova Ukraïna* [New Ukraine], a periodical, funded and edited by Mykyta Shapoval and Vynnychenko and published in Prague in 1922-1928. Needless to say, *Chervonyi Shliakh* was received negatively by the Ukrainian nationally oriented émigrés, for whom the engagement of national intellectuals equalled betrayal on their side.<sup>351</sup> The Soviet Ukrainian periodical was regarded as a “Trojan horse”, launched with the underlying motive of enticing former countrymen to return to Soviet Ukraine. Frequency, content as well as a number of intellectuals involved in the creation of *Chervonyi Shliakh* could serve as further evidence of the cultural and literary flourishing in Soviet Ukraine.

Not surprisingly, Tychyna fitted well with the magazine’s profile. A son of an acolyte, a former seminarist, and a speaker of the national revolution, the poet could be regarded a model of a former social enemy re-forged into a true Bolshevik. As Koriak remarked in 1927, Tychyna was a symbol of self-rejection and self-destruction of Ukrainian nationalism: “He was proclaimed a poet of the whole nation, on whose behalf he condemned the yellow-blue emigration and switched to Soviet literature, gaining the place

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<sup>349</sup> O. Koliastruk, “Do Problem Vzaiemodii Bil'shovyts'koi Vlady z Intelihentsiieiu u 1920-i rr.” *Problemy Istorii Ukraïny: Fakty, Sudzhennia, Poshuky*, 17 (2007), 168; *Arkhiv Rozstrilianoho Vidrozhennia: Materialy Arkhivno-Slidchykh Sprav Ukraïns'kykh Pys'mennykiv 1920-1930-h Rokiv* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 26; More on Chervonyi Shliakh: N. Loshchyns'ka, *Zhurnal “Chervonyi shliakh” ta Literaturnyi Protse 20-30-kh rr. v Ukraïni*. Thesis. (Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy, 1998).

<sup>350</sup> “Redaktsiina Stattia,” in *Chervonyi Shliakh* 1(1923), iii-vi.

<sup>351</sup> See: Volodymyr Vynnychenko, “Znamenna Podiia,” in *Nova Ukraïna*, 6 (1923), 8-27.

in its first ranks.”<sup>352</sup> Overall, Tychyna was highly praised for his ideological determination and the ways the party could capitalise on his name. The article in *Komunist*, dated from 21 February 1924, asserted that the fact that Tychyna had joined the ranks of the proletarian poets was a sign of the Bolsheviks’ victory in the republic.<sup>353</sup> The same idea was promulgated by a literary critic Oleksandr Leites in his brochure “The Renaissance of the Ukrainian Literature,” published in 1925 both in Russian and Ukrainian. Leites highlighted the value of Tychyna’s commitment to the Soviet order: “The fact that Tychyna, the intellectual out of all intellectuals [*intelihent z intelihentiv*], the lyrist of all the lyrists [*liryk z lirykiv*], became the poet of October is the best evidence to prove that the revolution has won in Ukraine not only in material matters, but also in spiritual domain: it won over the best of what the old literature could boast of, over the most conservative of what it had – its secluded individualistic lyric poetry [*lirychna poezia*].”<sup>354</sup> The need to come to terms and embrace the pre-revolutionary cultural trends and elites was necessitated by a weak stand of the Bolshevik party, as discussed in Section One.

The Ukrainian emigration had an opposite perspective on Tychyna’s accord with the Bolshevik party. In October 1923, *Nova Ukraïna* published a review of Tychyna’s poem Skovoroda. For the critic, the poem became another proof of a striking political and poetic submission of “one of the most talented poets of the new Ukrainian generation towards slack Little-Russianism [*rozhliabane malorosiistvo*], diluted by *kvass* of Moscow internationalism”.<sup>355</sup> To prove it wrong and to strengthen the Soviet appeal in the West, Tychyna together with Oles' Dosvitnii and Polishchuk, was sent to Prague and Berlin, the

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<sup>352</sup> Volodymyr Koriak, “Pershe Desiatyrichchia,” *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, 14 (1927), 14. Volodymyr Koriak, *V Boïah: Statti i Vystupy, 1925-1930* (Kharkiv: Literatura i Mystetstvo, 1933), 250.

<sup>353</sup> Quoted in Novychenko, *Poeziia*, 124.

<sup>354</sup> Leites, *Renesans*, 17.

<sup>355</sup> Pavlo Tychyna. Skovoroda. Review by S. Rasnyts'kyi, *Nova Ukraïna*, 10 (1923), 178-179; *Literatura, Nauka, Mystetstvo*, 10 (278) (1923), 4.

very hotbed of émigré criticism. This visit was organised to present an opposite image of Soviet writers, determined to contribute to the development of “universal proletarian literature, written in the Ukrainian language”.<sup>356</sup> In the 1920s, writers were often sent abroad in cultural missions in order to convince the emigration of their voluntary decision in favour of Soviet literature and to refute all those views of a violent character of the Soviet regime. Also, the involvement of cultural figures of Tychyna’s level contributed greatly towards an affirmative outlook of the Soviet regime and suggested a significant level of local support, including from those former ‘enemies’.

There are no official records about this trip, which took place at the end of 1924. Some details can be found in the memoirs of the diaspora. In Prague, Tychyna organised meetings with Ievhen Malaniuk and Oles', his former revolutionary fellows in Kyiv and contemporary speakers of the Ukrainian emigration. The latter was reluctant to meet “what was left of the real Tychyna,” whereas Malaniuk still kept the warmest feelings towards his former revolutionary comrade, saying that Tychyna was “like the first love, something that one cannot forget.”<sup>357</sup> The memoirs of Mykhailo Mukhin, Malaniuk’s companion, first published after Tychyna’s death in 1968, described how frightened Tychyna was, how paranoid he behaved, constantly looking back to check whether someone was listening or watching. The observer concluded that Tychyna had “unconditionally and irreversibly” surrendered to “the Russian occupant”: “It was a shame to talk and to see him”.<sup>358</sup> The meeting with Oles' did not even take place. Dosvitnii and Polishchuk harassed Tychyna for his attempts to arrange this get-together, and reproached him in the “contacts with the

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<sup>356</sup> Koriak, *Orhanizatsiia*, 65.

<sup>357</sup> O. Sharvarok, “Dvi Doli – Odna Tragediia. Pavlo Tychyna – Ievhen Malaniuk: Dialoh bez Vidstani, Rozмова Cherez Tlumachiv,” *Kyiv*, 11 (1993), 127-130.

<sup>358</sup> Hryden', (Mukhin, Mykhailo) “Z mynulykh Lit,” *Suchasnist'*, 8 (1968), 40-41.

political emigration.”<sup>359</sup> More insights can be found in Tychyna’s letters to Paparuk and Arkadii Liubchenko. He confessed how irritated and angry he was with those “imposed companions”.<sup>360</sup> As a result, Tychyna left his colleagues behind and for another couple of months continued his European journey alone.

During his first years in Kharkiv, Tychyna continued shaping his Soviet persona. The contributions of the time, although sparse, show how little coherence there was in his poetic evolution. Numerous examples of poetry written in these years, suggest that Tychyna was successfully adapting to his new role of a state poet, was becoming a poet laureate, who was eager to use his rhyming skills to reflect on every milestone of the Soviet state-building. As earlier shown, Tychyna had abundantly engaged in Soviet propaganda. What Soviet Ukrainian writers regarded as an ideological confusion, with every new contribution more often resembled a conviction. In 1924, Tychyna published two verses, dedicated to the death of Lenin. In *Nenavysti Moieï Syls* he expressed the disarray, which permeated the republic after the death of the “Titan”:

Я б не кричав так, я б не кликав –	I wouldn’t scream so, I wouldn’t call out –
Не можна крику втамувать.	But you can’t stifle a shout.
Бо головного в нас титана	For our supreme titan
Уже нема, нема...	Has already gone, has already gone...

Another verse, “Lenin,” written on the same occasion, was often read on public literary evenings and was later published in the 1931 collection *Chernihiv*. The verse offered another example of a propagandistic poetry with a clear mobilising message:

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<sup>359</sup>Iefremov, *Shchodennyky*, 201.

<sup>360</sup> Letters to Paparuk, in Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol.12.1, 37-38; 44. Lyst do A.Liubchenka, *ibid*, 46

ЛЕНІН!  
 Одне тільки слово,  
 а ми вже як буря:  
 Готово!  
 [...]
   
 ЛЕНІН!  
 Всього лиш п'ять літер,  
 А скільки енергій

LENIN!  
 That sole word, just one,  
 And we are like a Storm –  
 Turned on!  
 [...]
   
 LENIN!  
 Just five letters in it,  
 But oh, what power to tear!

At the same time, a short collection *Kryms'kyi Tsykl* [The Crimean Cycle], published in 1924 provided an impression that the poet “for the last time gasped for some ozone of high poetry.”<sup>361</sup> The cycle includes an inner dialogue-contemplation of the poet about the choices, available for his ‘muse’ (*Proryv* [Breakthrough], 1926):

Ти знов. А як же дух і форма?  
 А як же вічне битіє?  
 Невже отак без сліду жорма  
 і пожере мене?

You again. And what about a spirit, and a form?  
 And an eternal being?  
 Will it devour me without even a trace  
 of a grindstone?

Чи, може, зовсім не питати? —  
 Мовчатиму. Мовчу.  
 Уже і Всесвіту не чуť —  
 лиш тиша ллє і ллє...

Or maybe I shouldn't even ask? –  
 I shall keep silent. I am silent.  
 I cannot hear a Universe any more –  
 Only silence is pouring, is pouring... (O.P.)

One may agree with Leites' account that Tychyna was not simply a *poputchik* [a fellow-traveller], but a *pereputchik* [the one at the crossroads].<sup>362</sup> Although he had clearly accepted the path of proletarian literature and adapted to its institutional settings, his indecisiveness could hardly satisfy his audience and those who closely followed his poetic evolution. After *Viter z Ukraïny*, Tychyna hardly published anything new. The letter to Mohylians'kyi from 1925 suggested reasons for his silence: “In times when I am thinking something over, I am always silent. I am silent, because so much is being written and said at the moment. You know, external chaos comes along with internal confusion. The passion [*horinnia*] is gone but writers insist on writing. [...] I cannot be superficial, I don't want to, because this will be the end of me. This is why I keep silent.”<sup>363</sup>

<sup>361</sup>Stus, *Fenomen*, 76.

<sup>362</sup>Leites, *Renesans*, 18.

<sup>363</sup>Tychyna, *Lysty*, 76.

Instead, Tychna pursued with editorial work and translations. Especially he was interested in languages and literatures of the so-called ‘fraternal peoples’. His special interest was in Armenian literature. The poet frequently corresponded with the Armenian poet and translator Hovhannes Hovhannisyán, discussing translations of his poetry into Ukrainian and the intention to prepare an anthology of Armenian poets. Similarly, Tychna had plans for preparing an anthology of Turkish poetry, the materials for which he gathered during his two months stay in Turkey in November 1928-January 1929. Tychna visited this country together with the All-Ukrainian Scientific Association of Oriental Studies, an organisation formed under the Commissariat for Education in January 1926. Tychna headed the literary section of the Association and was in the editorial board of *Skhidnyi Svit* [Oriental World] (later, *Chervonyi Skhid* [Red Orient], 1927-1931). In total, throughout his life Tychna prepared poetic translations (based on previous word-for-word translation) from fifteen languages. This fact underscores his poetic genius rather than unique language skills. In a questionnaire, filled in in 1946 as a part of his Party membership application, Tychna entered only Ukrainian and Russian as the languages he had a good command of. French, German, Turkish were mentioned as languages with which the poet was merely acquainted (supposedly having basic knowledge).<sup>364</sup>

#### “Even to Peel a Potato one Should Have a Skill”: the Poet at Odds with the Party

In one of the official Soviet biographies, it was admitted that during the second half of the 1920s, Tychna was struggling with his poetry, “a lot of the written materials did not satisfy him.”<sup>365</sup> Shakhovs'kyi by this suggested self-censorship. But also, the silence could

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<sup>364</sup>Reiestratsiinyi Blank-Anketa P. H. Tychny dlia Vstupu v Chlenu VKP(b), in *Z Arkhivu*, 47-50.

<sup>365</sup>Shakhovs'kyi, *Pavlo Tychna* (Kyiv: Dniro, 1968).

be caused by crucial changes in the literary politics at the time. Despite officially declared non-interference into literature, guaranteed by the TsK resolutions from 1925, the party on numerous occasions violated its assertions. The autonomy of literature and the ideological pluralism, realised through the existence of various literary groupings, was challenged by the party endorsement for the unification of literary corpus. Apart from seeking more control in the cultural sphere, the change of the official agenda was caused by the unprecedented turbulence of literary affairs in Soviet Ukraine in the mid-1920s, shaped in the form of the Literary Discussion. The unfolding Literary Discussion, examined in length in the next chapter, directly confronted two different visions of Soviet literature in Ukraine. The newly organised literary association, the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature (VAPLITE), became the main promoter of the debate, defending the autonomy of the cultural sphere and advocating for high quality literature. Its opponents defended the utilitarian vision on arts and its overall usefulness for the bigger cause, consolidating the Soviet regime in Ukraine. Tychyna, as a member of the VAPLITE, unwittingly found himself amidst the on-going power struggle between the local and central elites.

In 1926, Tychyna published an abstract from his unfinished poem in the first issue of the *Vaplite* almanac. A piece, entitled *Chystyla Maty Kartopliu* [Mother Peeled the Potatoes], presented a peasant family in the early years after the revolution, torn apart along ideological lines. A son, who had joined the ranks of the Bolsheviks, was set against a traditional mode of life, represented by his mother. For the woman, the Bolshevik regime became an intrusion into her habitual life; the Communist party represented an enemy, who had caused total devastation and destruction of the Ukrainian countryside. In the time of despair, the woman addresses her son, a personification of that enemy: “Tell me, what is left to do? Knife me, beat me, and push me into the grave with my little children. Let me be

smothered by your knee, same as Ukraine.”<sup>366</sup> For the peasant mother, the Bolshevik victory in 1921 was a bad omen. She exclaimed: “Lenin-Antichrist has appeared, my son. [...] We need to fight back: antichrist has come.”<sup>367</sup>

Not surprisingly, the party officials picked up on the poem. The piece, although without mentioning its authorship, was addressed at the Kharkiv District Party Conference by Chubar, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Council of the People’s Commissars. As seen from the meeting’s final reports, published in newspaper *Komunist* on 15 January 1927, Chubar evasively mentioned one “yet a non-party” poet, whose works suggested involuntary sovietisation of the republic. The poet was openly accused of “peddling a nationalist opiate under the banner of proletarian literature”. From the party perspective, Tychyna’s image of Soviet Ukraine (as represented by the protagonists) was “a subtle reference to a glaring fact,” namely the alleged subordinate status of Ukraine in the Soviet Union.<sup>368</sup>

Shortly after, Tychyna addressed the accusation in his open letter to *Komunist*. The poet tried to explain his intentions and defend the poem, the fragment of which was misinterpreted by the party leadership. According to the poet, the excerpts, cited by Chubar, were taken out of the context and contributed to a distorted view on his characters and the poem overall. The purpose of the poem, as explained, was to contrast the two opposing forces in post-revolutionary Ukraine: “the old and obsolete one, unable to catch up with the new realities (represented by the mother) and the new one, a revolutionary and victorious

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<sup>366</sup>Що ж, і скажіть мені, що зостається? Ну, ріжте, ну,бийте, в гроб удавіть мене з дрібними дітьми, нехай я вже буду вашим коліном придушена, наче ота Україна.

<sup>367</sup>Ленін-антихрист явився, мій сину, а ти про тіятри. Треба боротись: антихрист явився.

<sup>368</sup>XI Kharkivs'ka Okruzhna Konferentsiia KP(b)U. Robota TsKKP(b)U ta Cherhovi Zavdannia Partii. Dopovid' Tov. V. Ia. Chubaria, *Komunist*, 15 January, 1927, 2-3.

force, embodied in the communist son.” The poem, he continued, in hindsight reflected the state of affairs in the countryside during the civil war, exhausted by war communism, poverty and the famine, when Lenin indeed was considered “an antichrist” by many “retrograde” peasants. Tychyna outright rejected any similarities between his own views and those of the mother. Instead, his sympathy, as the note read, was with the son, hence with the new Ukraine.<sup>369</sup> This open letter was followed by a short editorial note. It read that Tychyna had deliberately confused the readership: the author should have published a bigger piece at once instead of presenting the fragment and causing those misunderstandings.<sup>370</sup>

The unrepentant letter of Tychyna appeared on the sixth page of the issue. The priority in the issue, as well as in the debate, was given to another Party official, Zaton'skyi, the editor-in-chief of *Komunist* at the time. The front page of the same issue featured a column with a meaningful title *Dumky pro Te, Iak Treba Chystyty Kartopliu* [Thoughts on How to Peel the Potatoes], in which Zaton'skyi reiterated the position of the party in this debate. The concluding paragraph of the column openly accused ‘quasi’-proletarian poets in disregarding the tastes of the working-class audience. It read: “Even to peel a potato one should have a skill. Especially when we speak about our proletarian poets tasked to peel a potato of truth with the knife of their own talent; they ought to present facts of life not to gourmets, who, because of their bourgeois and Europe-inspired psychologism, at times turn up their noses from native sauerkraut and a salty joke, but for the masses, who require simple but healthy truth.”<sup>371</sup> In such a way, the editor-in-chief of the main party newspaper and the former Commissar for Education, restated the task of proletarian writers to offer

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<sup>369</sup> Pavlo Tychyna, Lyst do Redaktsii, *Komunist*, February 3, 1927, 6.

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> *Komunist*, February 2, 1927.

simple and useful literature for the mass audience. Given the broader context of the Literary Discussion, Zaton's'kyi recapitulated the party's agenda on proletarian literature and its necessary social grounding.

Tychyna, despite his involvement in nothing but literary affairs, was put on the spot and criticised at the highest republican level. Although his name was not mentioned in the final report of the KP(b)U Conference, later on he was repeatedly tackled in the debates featured on the pages of the republic's press. Primarily, his non-affiliation with the Bolshevik party was emphasised. From Chubar's account, this non-party status was a mitigating factor, since certain mistakes could be forgiven for poets of non-proletarian and non-party origin. However, at the time of strengthening the party grip over literature, the lack of proletarian consciousness was becoming a serious accusation for numerous fellow-travellers and those 'frivolous' Ukrainian writers, challenging the party vision for Soviet letters. The exchange between Tychyna and the KP(b)U leaders suggests that the writers were constantly under surveillance; the party was well aware of the literary tendencies of the time and was constantly updating its records about cultural figures. Tychyna, highly praised for his ideological reorientation and usefulness for the Soviet cause, was closely guided in the process of his transition into a Soviet poet.

During the 1920s, there were various options available for cultural figures of pre-revolutionary origin to join the ranks of the Soviet poets. The exclusive Soviet model rested on unquestionable allegiance and the ideological purity of proletarian and later Soviet writers. The party enticed fellow-travellers towards the Soviet regime by offering benefits, various career opportunities and possibilities to improve their financial and social status. The miserable situation, in which intelligentsia found itself during and shortly after the civil

wars, contributed to the effectiveness of their tactics.<sup>372</sup> Those previous non-supporters were granted important offices in the Soviet state, they were trusted and their 'hostile' past was forgotten (at least for a time). In return, the party expected much: those fellow-travellers were to speak up on behalf of the Soviet authorities often against their own convictions or friendships. In addition, accepting the party line often meant drastic simplification of one's artistic style and manner. One did not only accept the terms of the party control, but also implement its didactic and socially useful view into their writings.

This path of conformism was well justified. The Bolsheviks in their all-Union scope persistently waged an uncompromising struggle against intelligentsia in its old traditional meaning. With the abolishment of private property and the campaign against private publishing houses, the only option available for intelligentsia was either to enter service or to submit to the guidance of state publishing houses. This turned them into a body of salaried, professional civil servants, depending on the state and, therefore, supporting its policies.<sup>373</sup> Understandably, in the situation when the party-state became the only manager, publisher and distributor of the printed materials, neutrality or opposition would necessarily mean finding oneself at the margins of literature. So, writers were eager to acquire this "formal" (*kasennyi*) status in order to alleviate their everyday life.<sup>374</sup>

Tychyna's accord with the Communist party was often explained in terms of conformism. According to Iefremov, Tychyna was "a prominent *shkurnyk*" (a profiteer). He best represented the group of cowards, careerists and dishonest people, serving the regime for mere benefits. Tychyna, thus, was "a sincere Ukrainian who, having found himself in the Soviet atmosphere, was tempted by offices and benefits and subsequently turned into a

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<sup>372</sup>See: Koliastruk, *Intelihentsiia USRR*; Chapter 3. Realii zhyttia intelihentsii USRR 1920-kh rr.: vid normatyvnoi do ekstremal'noi povsiakdennosti.

<sup>373</sup> Richard Pipes, "The Historical Evolution of the Russian Intelligentsia," in *Russian Intelligentsia*, 51-52.

<sup>374</sup> Roman Donets', "Suchasne Mystetstvo Ukraïny." *Nova Ukraïna*, 10-11 (1922), 30-31.

Soviet man, breaking his ties with former representatives of the Ukrainian anti-Soviet public.” Whereas in Kyiv Tychyna was a nationalist, in Kharkiv he suddenly made himself into a Soviet poet.<sup>375</sup> *Shkurnyky* were opposed by the “tactical” [*taktychnyi*] ones (a group Iefremov belonged himself), who simply agreed to live parallel lives with the Bolsheviks, regarding this tacit agreement as a possibility to continue their pre-revolutionary activities. The distinction, however, was a vague one.

In 1926, Malaniuk, an émigré poet, dedicated his poem, entitled *Poslanie* [Epistle] to Tychyna and Ryl's'kyi, the two poets, who, as said, fell for material promises and defected to the Soviet camp. Malaniuk generalised:

<p>Ви — син самої серцевини Слабої нації, якій Понад майбутнє України Дорожче теплий супокій — [...] І мудрість — „моя хата з краю“ — Вся філософія її.</p>	<p>You are a mere son of a Weak nation, for which Above the future of Ukraine a warm routine is more important – [...] ] And wisdom – “that this has nothing to do with me” – is its philosophy (O.P.)</p>
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It is interesting that Tychyna became the main target of the émigré criticism. Obviously, he was not the only one who had joined the ranks of proletarian writers and offered his support to the Bolsheviks. However, Tychyna did not only stand against his reputation of a leading national poet, but also discarded any attempts to negotiate his past “nationalism” and present “communism” within the framework of Soviet Ukrainian culture, broadly elaborated by Ukrainian public intellectuals at the time. As the thesis argues, the more inclusive project of Soviet Ukrainian literature offered non-proletarian writers yet another path for self-sovietisation. This model combined the ideological adherence to the ideas of the October revolution and the dedication to the national cause. At first glance, this model could be most appropriate for Tychyna, a renowned poet of the national revolution, who

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<sup>375</sup> SBU Archive, F.13, spr.370, t.13, ark.310; Nadiia Myronets', “Ukrains'ka Revoliutsiia v Doli i Tvorchosti Pavla Tychyny,” in Myronets', *Dzherela Istorychnoi Pam'iaty* (Kyiv: NAN Ukraïny, 2008), 129-131.

had shortly after reconciled the October revolution and found channels to contribute to proletarian literature. Tychyna's path into Soviet literature lay through the Borot'bysty party, the most eager proponents of the Soviet Ukrainian political and cultural projects.

And yet, Tychyna, despite all the preconditions, did not champion the ideological fight for Soviet Ukrainian culture. Indeed, he joined the literary associations, which defended the autonomous cultural path for Ukraine, especially the VAPLITE. However, he was never a public intellectual. The reasons for this withdrawal could be different. The central one was, perhaps, his personal characteristics, frequently commented on by his contemporaries. Tychyna represented that extinct intelligentsia in its traditional understanding ("*intelihent z intelihentiv*", as defined by Leites), whose genius required quiescence and autonomy. He lacked political or social activism, a dominant feature of public intellectuals of the new Soviet kind. He lacked strong ideological convictions. So, he was easily swayed by different sides of the ideological debates, as remarked by Khvyl'ovyi in 1924. Most importantly, many choices or moves of the poet were conditioned by fear, as repeatedly certified by his contemporaries and biographers. For instance, Bilets'kyi aphoristically asserted that Tychyna above all feared the Soviet power.<sup>376</sup> Ironically, this fear guided him all the way up to the summit of the Soviet politics and literature.

Tychyna's transition from a poet of the national revolution, a fellow-traveller into a fully-fledged Soviet poet was non-linear. His reversals from one tune to another are hard to trace or explain. Perhaps, by engaging with Soviet propaganda, the poet tried to compensate for his 'uncertain' past or his 'true lyrical self'. The hegemonic character of the Soviet regime and its ideology forced many public figures to renounce their pre-revolutionary activities and come to terms with the ruling party. Tychyna for a long time

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<sup>376</sup> Quoted in Volodymyr Panchenko, "Dyptykh pro Vtrachenu Svobodu," *Naukovi Zapysky NaUKMA. Filolohichni Nauky*, 150 (2013), 59.

tried to find a place “above the struggles”, as defined by a Soviet critic Koriak. Fortunately for the party, Tychyna, who “could not endure this soulless Olimpianism [*bezdušne olimpiistvo*, reference to highbrow literature]” threw himself “into the waves of reality.”<sup>377</sup>

As said by a Russian academic Igor Shaitanov, “you compromise when you adapt your choice, whereas you conform when you adapt to what has been chosen for you.”<sup>378</sup> Thus, the 1920s for Tychyna became a period of such adaptation, whereas 1933 became a year of his final subjugation. The years 1919-1922, discussed in this chapter, were the initial breakdown of the poet, when he first started to consider the need to adapt and to fit into the system. Throughout the 1920s, Tychyna was moving from an outsider (a poet of the national Ukrainian revolution, a fellow traveller) towards a trusted insider (a proletarian poet and a party poet during the years following the first Five-Year Plan), often omitting other intermediary forms of self-sovietisation. This process required not only shaping one’s revolutionary persona, but also adapting to the newspeak, accepting the hegemonic discourse.<sup>379</sup> Yet, since the formation of this discourse was itself a process, finalised in 1932-1934, writers, whatever their nationality or ideological standpoint, were gradually approaching the world of Soviet literature by their own trial and error.

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<sup>377</sup>Koriak, *Ukraïns'ka Literatura*, 60.

<sup>378</sup> Igor Shaitanov, “From Avant-Garde to Socialist Realism: How Writers Adapt,” in *In The Party Spirit. Socialist Realism and Literary Practice in the Soviet Union, East Germany and China*. (Critical Studies 6), Hilary Chung (ed.) (Amsterdam; Atlanta, Rodopi Bv Editions, 1996), 53.

<sup>379</sup>Reference to Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. (Berkeley: California UP, 1995); Daniel Weiss, “Novoiaz’ kak Istoricheskoe Iavleniie,” in *Sotsrealisticheskii Kanon*, ed. Hans Guenther and Evgeny Dobrenko (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii Proekt, 2000).

## ***Chapter 2.2: Mykola Khvyl'ovyi (1891-1933)***

Khvyl'ovyi was the most prominent Ukrainian writer and the leader of the entire artistic generation of the 1920s. His name came into the limelight in 1923-1924, when his first prose collections received general positive acknowledgements. During the early 1920s, Khvyl'ovyi initiated and perfected a new literary genre, which he himself called “romantic *vitaism*” or revolutionary romanticism. In his early prose, Khvyl'ovyi developed a heroic myth of the revolution and the civil war. He presented a palette of charismatic personalities, born of and later betrayed by the revolutionary element. Later on, however, Khvyl'ovyi deconstructed the myth by means of political satire and pervasive irony. But it was not only his literary merit which made Khvyl'ovyi one of the most significant public intellectuals of the decade. Between 1925 and 1928, Khvyl'ovyi became the spokesman of the cultural opposition in Ukraine, and led the literary discussion, which gradually evolved into becoming a political debate. These debates became the last legal platform to assert a different vision of a Soviet Ukraine, which had been elaborated by the Ukrainian communists and leftist intellectuals since 1917. This chapter focuses on the potential of Ukrainian revolutionary writers and public intellectuals to deliver a distinct vision of a Soviet Ukrainian culture and politics in the 1920s and their attempts to negotiate it with the central party leadership.

### **2.2.1. In Search of “*a blue Savoy*”: Revolutionary Literature in Ukraine**

Khvyl'ovyi (real name Fityl'ov) was born on 14 December, 1893 in Kharkiv (now Sumy) region to a teacher's family. Having received a modicum of education, Khvyl'ovyi moved to Donbas to become a worker. In 1914 he joined the Russian Imperial Army and a year later was sent to the front, which he recalled as “three years of marches, hunger, terrible

horror that I would not dare to describe; three years of squared Golgotha on the distant fields of Galicia, Carpathians, Romania and so on and so forth.”<sup>380</sup> It was during his military service that Khvyl'ovyi got engaged in revolutionary activity, and became associated with the Ukrainian SRs; the leading group in the Tsentral'na Rada. Until the end of the war, Khvyl'ovyi, together with other party sympathisers, participated in organising *prosvity* (enlightenment societies for literacy, cultural and basic political education) and various peasants' unions in demanding land socialisation.<sup>381</sup> In April 1919, Khvyl'ovyi joined the KP(b)U and became a member of the Bohodukhiv executive committee.<sup>382</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi's decision to join the Bolshevik party in April 1919 was most probably accidental or caused by his romantic view of the communists and the civil war. According to his autobiography, the Bolshevik party at the time was only one of the communist parties in Ukraine that a “non-party dreamer”, as Khvyl'ovyi called himself, could get affiliated with. In addition, the declared Bolshevik position on the national question seemed not to run counter to the agenda of other communist parties. As seen from his autobiography, his predisposition to the KP(b)U was defined by the fact that firstly, “the Bolsheviks went hand in hand with the Ukrainian parties seeking Ukraine's independence”, and, secondly, he associated it with “decentralised power of soviets”.<sup>383</sup> In 1924, the writer mentioned, however, that “with more certainty I can call myself a comunard rather than a communist”.<sup>384</sup> O. Gan, one of the first biographers of the writer, suggested that the KP(b)U membership was perceived by the writer as a possible answer to both his national

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<sup>380</sup>Khvyl'ovyi, *Lysty do Zerova*, 852.

<sup>381</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Kratkaia Biographia*, 833; Kostiuik, “Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: Zhyttia, Doba, Tvorchist',” in Khvyl'ovyi *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 1, 30.

<sup>382</sup> Biographies of Khvyl'ovyi: Gan, *Trahedia Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo* ([s.l.], 1947); Kostiuik, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi; Leonid Pliushch, Iogo Taemnytsya, abo "Prekrasna Lozha" Khvyl'ovogo* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2006).

<sup>383</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Kratkaia Biographia*, 832.

<sup>384</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Kratkaia Biografia* 836-837.

and social concerns. According to the biographer, “with distinct expansive ardour, [Khvyl'ovyi] threw himself into the abyss of political struggle, which was seething in Ukraine. An enthusiast of the Ukrainian national affairs [...], full of political extremism, he became an ardent adherent of a future Ukrainian state, in which questions of national and social emancipation would be finally resolved.”<sup>385</sup> Symbolically, in early 1917, Khvyl'ovyi, a combatant and a member of the army council, arrived to the congress of soldiers' councils in Romania with two ribbons pinned to his collar: a red and a yellow-and-blue one. He offered a simple explanation for his dual political views: “I wanted to be a Ukrainian Bolshevik.”<sup>386</sup> The party membership could as well be a form of survival during the civil war. As recorded from Khvyl'ovyi's words, although ambiguous, “one should be simpler with these things; the party membership nowadays is the most convenient form of [unreadable in the file].”<sup>387</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi's early life is surrounded by rumours and speculation. Among his alleged achievements were his holding of high ranking positions in the Red Army<sup>388</sup> or even serving in the Cheka.<sup>389</sup> Nonetheless, these revolutionary accomplishments were rebutted by Khvyl'ovyi's contemporaries. For example, his fellow writer Hryhorii Kostiuk stated in his recollections that “all those hints and allegations about the active connection of the young Khvyl'ovyi with the revolutionary underground, [...] his unique heroism and ‘devilism,’ - all these are only inventions and legends.”<sup>390</sup> Moreover, Kostiuk claimed that while being a member of Khvyl'ovyi's narrow circle between 1929 and 1933 (years of

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<sup>385</sup> O. Gan, *Trahedia Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo* ([s.l.], 1947), 19.

<sup>386</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Uryvok z Avtobiographii*, 106-108.

<sup>387</sup> HDA SBU, Spr. C-183, ark.24.

<sup>388</sup> Gan, 31.

<sup>389</sup> See: V. Pliushch, *Pravda pro Khvyl'ovizm* (Munich: Spilka Vysvolennia Ukrainy, 1954); Zadesnians'kyi, *Shcho Nam Dav Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*, ([s.l.]: 1979). Despite the fact that no proof can be found, the English Wikipedia says: “In the same year he became the chief of local Cheka in Bohodukhiv povit.”

<sup>390</sup> Kostiuk, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*, 32.

particularly intense persecution of Khvyl'ovyi) he never heard any claims of Khvyl'ovyi's heroic biography even though such claims (if true) could have saved his reputation with the Party leadership. A similar account is presented in the memoirs of Khvyl'ovyi's friend from Bohodukhiv Petro Shygy maga: "I would testify that until Khvyl'ovyi had moved to Kharkiv in 1921, in any way was he engaged in politics. He had never spoken of any meetings, Bolshevik or non-Bolshevik gatherings, neither did he participate in any of them. He quietly worked in the department of people's education and in the editorial board of a local newspaper, wrote his essays and published them."<sup>391</sup>

In 1922, after having served "seven-plus years in the Imperial and the Red Armies",<sup>392</sup> Khvyl'ovyi found himself demobilised in Kharkiv, the capital of Soviet Ukraine. The same year, he joined the circle of Ellan-Blakytnyi, the former Borot'byst and the editor-in-chief of the Kharkiv government newspaper *Visti VUTsVK*, who introduced the young writer to the artistic and intellectual milieu. In the following years, Khvyl'ovyi completed two collections of poetry, *Molodist'* [Youth], 1921 and *Dosvitni Symfonii* [Symphonies of the Dawn], 1922. These, however, went almost unnoticed. One of the poems was dedicated to Tychyna, the renowned poet and the model for young writers at the time. On the other hand, the first collection of Khvyl'ovyi's short stories *Syni Etiudy* [Blue Etudes], published in 1923, brought him immediate fame. Koriak, a well-known critic of the time, responded to this first collection as follows: "Genuinely: Khvyl'ovyi."<sup>393</sup> He is excited and excites all of us, he intoxicates and disquiets, irritates, weakens, captivates and fascinates. [...] He scourges anything that is corrupt in the revolution, seeks after it everywhere in the name of his beloved idea: communism, which he had accepted as an

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<sup>391</sup> Petro Shygy maga, *Fakty do Biografii Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo in Khvyl'ovyi Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol.5, 117.

<sup>392</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Kratkaia Biographia*, 835.

<sup>393</sup> Khvyl'ovyi stems from 'khvylia', a wave in Ukrainian.

ascetic and a romanticist”.<sup>394</sup> The publication of his second collection *Osin'* [Autumn] in 1924 established him as “one of the most outstanding writers of the proletarian age.”<sup>395</sup>

The two highly acclaimed collections exposed the potential of new revolutionary literature in Ukraine. Immediately after the revolution, there were at least two camps in Ukrainian proletarian literature: the followers of the Moscow-led Proletkult (an acronym for ‘proletarian culture’ in Russian) and Ukrainian leftist writers. The rivalry between these two camps brought to the forefront the important ideological component of Ukrainian literature. The Proletkult was a mass movement, resulting from the Bolshevik Revolution. It aimed at creating a new proletarian art by forced interference in artistic creativity.<sup>396</sup> The idea of a ‘mechanical artist’, ‘the highest value of amateur work’ and ‘collective art’ attracted Ukrainian revolutionary writers. Based on the Marxist formula that “being determines consciousness,” the *Proletkul'tivtsi* believed that art had an ability to construct a new reality, which would match post-revolutionary social advances. These were the views, shared by many young writers in Ukraine, who welcomed the revolution and glorified its purifying potential. And yet, the Proletkult movement did not gain strength in Ukraine. Writers were repelled by the Proletkult’s apparent Russian orientation, since the organisation “not only failed to acknowledge Ukrainian national art, culture or language, but referred to the [Ukrainian] Soviet Republic as a ‘region’ [*krai*].”<sup>397</sup> In May 1919, Mykhailychenko, a newly appointed People’s Commissar for Education, reported at the

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<sup>394</sup> Quoted in Leites, Iashek, *Desiat' rokiv*, vol. 1, 526.

<sup>395</sup> Doroshkevych, *Pidruchnyk*, 304.

<sup>396</sup> More on the role of the Proletkult in literature see: Dobrenko, *Aesthetics of Alienation*; Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature*, 32-40.

<sup>397</sup> Quoted in Ilnytzyk, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 39.

*Vseukrlitkom*'s meeting that "proletarian art can reach its international goal only through channels national both in content and form."<sup>398</sup>

Apart from the language, Ukrainian social structure became another stumbling block between Ukrainian writers and the *Proletkul'tivtsi*. The Proletkult excluded the peasantry from its activities due to its presumed reactionary and bourgeois character. In turn, for Ukrainian proletarian writers it was of primary importance to engage the peasantry; seen as a source of the republic's working class. The questions of the language and social basis for the revolutionary art were addressed in *Nash Universal* [Our Manifesto], published in the end of 1921 by three young revolutionary writers, Khvyl'ovyi, Sosiura and Iohansen. The Ukrainian language was seen a prerequisite of a future organisation of Ukrainian revolutionary writers, since it linked the workers with "their thousand-year-long history and their ancestors, the Ukrainian peasantry."<sup>399</sup> Similar demands were voiced by a short-lived All-Ukrainian Federation of Proletarian Writers and Artists (*Vseukraïns'ka Federatsiia Proletars'kykh Pys'mennykiv ta Myttsiv*), established in 1922. The declaration, signed by Khvyl'ovyi as the group's leader, admitted their orientation towards the Ukrainian peasantry as the source for the republic's proletariat. It also affirmed the Ukrainian language as a means of cultural development.<sup>400</sup>

Within this debate, a peculiar artistic and literary current, 'romantic *vitaism*', or revolutionary romanticism, was developed. Khvyl'ovyi coined this term to designate literature of the immediate post-revolutionary years, used for celebrating the times and its heroes:

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<sup>398</sup> Hnat Mykhailychenko, 'Proletars'ke Mystetstvo (Tezy na Dopovidi Vseukrlitkomu)' in Leites, Iashek. *Desiat' rokiv*, vol. II, 25-28.

<sup>399</sup> *Nash Universal* in Zhovten' 1 (1921), 1-2.

<sup>400</sup> "Dekliaratsiia Vseukraïns'koï Federatsii Proletars'kykh Pys'mennykiv i Myttsiv", *Arena*. 1 (1922): 3-4.

Hence, the time of Romantic *vitaism*, the epoch of civil wars. Hence, its artistic nature is militant “idealism” (in parentheses) of the young class, the proletariat. Hence, its perspectives are to play the role of a field marshal in the future battles on the barricades.<sup>401</sup>

Romantic *vitaism* directly opposed realism, a widely accepted method of proletarian literature. Firstly, Khvyl'ovyi believed that proletarian literature was not yet ready for realism, since the goals of the revolution (the complete awakening of proletariat and its creative potential) had not been achieved. Secondly, the post-revolutionary reality was seen as a retreat from the revolutionary goals and could not be depicted as it was. Within this current, as outlined by the critic of the time Bilets'kyi, three main themes were developed: “1) glorification of the revolution; 2) revolutionary satire on eternal ‘philistines’, who have adjusted to the new social conditions; 3) elegiac depiction of the loss of illusions among former revolutionary activists, leading to despondency, confusion, to moral decay”.<sup>402</sup> These themes were represented in full in Khvyl'ovyi’s early prose. The writer created a palette of characters of revolutionary heralds and ordinary people, party functionaries and bureaucrats, both in times of the revolutionary upheaval and post-revolutionary everydayness. Most of his characters, however, are placed in limbo between the revolution and communist utopia, which is yet to come. There was a constant reference to the heroic past in his writings. In addition, Khvyl'ovyi had a different understanding of time. In his creative writing a repellent contemporaneity was contrasted with desired future or the romanticised past.<sup>403</sup> Hence, melancholy and alienation became characteristics of his heroes. This chapter offers a textual analysis of Khvyl'ovyi’s prose, focusing on the heroic

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<sup>401</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, Quo Vadis, In Khvylovy, *Cultural Renaissance*, 70.

<sup>402</sup> O. Bilets'ky, *Pro Prozu Vzagalii i pro Nashu Prozu 1925 Roku*, quoted in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 2, 21-22.

<sup>403</sup> Vira Ageeva, “Mykola Khvyl'ovyi”, in *Istoriia Ukrain's'koï Literatury XX Stolittia*, V. Donchyk (ed.) (Kyiv: Lybid', 1998), 284-292; Tamara Gundorova, “Mykola Khvyl'ovyi i Ruinuvannia Romantychnoi Metafyziky,” in *Slovo i Chas*, 11 (1993), 23.

myth of the revolution and the civil war, as created by the writer, and accounts for its deconstruction in Khvyl'ovyi's later writing.

"New unknown outset is coming": the Glorification of the Revolution

Khvyl'ovyi's oeuvre consists of two collections of short stories (*Syni Etiudy* (1923) and *Osin'* (1924), a novelette (*Povist' pro Sanatoriinu Zonu* (1924<sup>404</sup>), two unfinished novels (*Val'dshnepy*, (1927) and *Iraïda*, (1925), rare short stories written in the second half of the 1920s (e.g., *Ivan Ivanovych* (1929), *Schaslyvyi Sekretar* (1931), *Opovidannia Skhvyl'ovanoi Hanky* (1933), and some journalist-style sketches from his travelling around Ukraine (e.g., *Po Barvins'komu Raionu* (1930). Khvyl'ovyi's early prose, with its metaphorical tone and symbolic language, romantic characters and revolutionary themes, is the best example of the revolutionary prose in Ukrainian literature. His contributions of the later period, in contrast, incorporated political satire, ideologically-loaded language and journalistic style of writing.

In the early prose, Khvyl'ovyi presented in full the complicated process of ideological adaptation to the post-revolutionary realities of an entire generation of revolutionary youth and civil war activists.<sup>405</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, a long-standing party member, an activist of the Red Army and member of a Bolshevik executive committee, became an inventor and promoter of a heroic myth of the Revolution and the civil wars in Ukrainian literature. For this reason, Khvyl'ovyi with his early writings was placed on a par with his Russian contemporary Boris Pil'niak (1884-1938), the author of the unorthodox chronicles of the

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<sup>404</sup> Here and hereafter the year of the first publication is indicated.

<sup>405</sup> On the inability of the revolutionary youth to reunite their aspiration and dreams with the contradictory reality of NEP see, for example, Matthias Neumann, "Youth, It's Your Turn!": Generations and the Fate of the Russian Revolution (1917-1932)," *Journal of Social History* 46, 2 (2012): 273-304.

Bolshevik Revolution “*Golyi God*” [Naked Year, 1922].<sup>406</sup> Similarly to Pil'niak's most common metaphor for a revolution as a blizzard, an unplanned, uncontrollable element valued for its purgative function),<sup>407</sup> Khvyl'ovyi depicts the revolution as a cardinal shift, a rebellion against triviality, a call for action and purification from the old false morality. It is described as being “without buttons, with elbow room, room to stretch oneself, to draw a lung-filling breath in the wide open spaces.”<sup>408</sup> Khvyl'ovyi's expectations from those turbulent years are condensed in metaphors of a “blue Savoy,” an “intangible Commune,” or a “Commune behind the hills.” In general, the revolution acquires universal, boundless meaning and scale. For instance,

In ‘*Synii Lystopad*’ [Blue November] (1923):

Tomorrow we will open a blue book of eternal lyrics – universal, blue.

This is the revolution.

Could the communards forget about this day? Isn't it a majestic poetry? We plunge into a blue anxious night, our reflections disperse [...]

And we are hovering above the earth full of dreams, distant.<sup>409</sup>

In *Chumakivs'ka Komuna* [Chumak's Commune] (1923):

Do broadcast further: Chumak's commune is saluting into the frost: Long live the World Revolution.

And the frost replies: Hurrah! Hurray! Hurrah!<sup>410</sup>

In *Syluety* [Silhouettes] (1923):

The boyans of the unknown communes are on the road under the glow of the downing sun singing an evening prayer.

- ... Glory to the revolutionary peaks and joy to the earth.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Alexander Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi: Eine Studie zu Leben und Werk* (Munchen: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1999), 154-167.

<sup>407</sup> On Pil'niak's account of revolution see: Philip Maloney, “Anarchism and Bolshevism in the Works of Boris Pilnyak,” *Russian Review* 32, 1 (1973), 43-53.

<sup>408</sup> Khvylovyy, “Puss in Boots” in *Stories From the Ukraine*, ed. G. Luckyj (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), 16.

<sup>409</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Synii Lystopad*, vol. 1, 230-231 (here and thereafter all the citations are from Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, if not stated otherwise).

<sup>410</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Chumakivska Komuna*, vol.1, 250.

<sup>411</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Syluety*, vol.1, 212.

The same optimism and admiration is granted to socialist Ukraine. For Khvyl'ovyi, as for many revolutionary contemporaries, the Bolshevik revolution had a potential of universal equality and fraternity, urbanisation, new perspectives for national and cultural development. Those expectations were put into words in Khvyl'ovyi's short stories through the first-person voice:

And Ukraine is striving upwards... And I love her – Bolshevik Ukraine – brightly, violently...<sup>412</sup>

My beloved socialist Ukraine! Steppes, a black kite, and summer sun is moving off the skyline, and right behind, a milky path is singing white, or maybe, crimson songs, cows are mooing, plodding from the pastures – farther and farther. Farms, electric ploughs... cars, factories, plants... Ah! And farther and farther...<sup>413</sup>

and through the words of his characters as, for instance, in 'Liliuli' (1923):

[...] amidst traffic noise someone opened his sentimental eyes and shouted noiseless – in despair or in madness, - one cannot tell:

... - o my beautiful land beyond the horizon!

I believe! I believe so profoundly, so unbearably [...]. I believe!..<sup>414</sup>

In his early prose, Khvyl'ovyi elaborated a variety of characters of revolutionary activists and war heroes, snapshotted amidst zealous struggle for a “new unknown.” The majority of the short stories are psychological sketches, emphasising individual experience of the events. For Khvyl'ovyi, it seems, there was no insignificant life experience during that turbulent time. Yet, these stories are more than simple biographical sketches from an eyewitness. Through separate characters, Khvyl'ovyi reflected particular social features and people's types. As stated by Volodymyr Iurynets', a literary critic of the time, the key to understanding Khvyl'ovyi's perception of social (dis)order is his “adoration of the intemperate, vigorous, mass, *ahistorical* people's element [...] which, while bursting the banks of triviality, should be considered primarily as *biological and physiological*

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<sup>412</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Shliahetne Hnizdo*, vol.1, 216-17.

<sup>413</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Zhyttia*, vol.1, 118.

<sup>414</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Liliuli*, vol.1, 373-374.

*experience and not as a mere social fact*".<sup>415</sup> Thus, not the revolution itself, but heroes (characters) of that revolution are in the centre of Khvyl'ovyi's attention.

The myth of the revolution originates in the chaotic, heroic and promissory ambience of the civil wars. In addition, Khvyl'ovyi had a first-hand military experience. The irrational belief in the glorious future becomes the attribute of Khvyl'ovyi's romanticists. Same as Sten'ka, the main character of the folklore-style story *Lehenda* [The Legend] (1923), revolutionaries were ready to abandon triviality, join the revolutionary struggle and sacrifice their lives in the name of a better future:

Listen! Listen! I am dying in the name of freedom. I appeal to you: sharpen the knives. Look, look at the glow: that is our liberation blazing; new unknown outset is coming!<sup>416</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi offers an extensive typology of the heralds of that 'new unknown'. Personal motives to join the revolution or to become the party rank-and-files drove most of his characters. In sarcastic manner or with earnest sympathy, the writer shows different reasons for a future communist affiliation. Here, however, ideology does not play a significant part. Except for certain cases (like Vadym (*Synii Lystopad*), Mariana (*Zaulok*), or Kark (*Redactor Kark*), the decision to support the Bolsheviks seems irrational, stipulated, or even personally loaded. Among the drivers to enter the political struggle were, for example, a revenge desire of a deacon from a poor parish, whose seminary was closed because of the lack of state funding (*Bandyty*, [Bandits], 1930), or the influence of propaganda on 'herself resembling a motley placard' Veronica (*Syluety*), or sincere adherence to a commune and admiration to 'un-poetised proletariat' (*Synii Lystopad*). Full of irony, Khvyl'ovyi depicts the motives of some female characters. Oksana, a main character of *Zhyttia* [Life] (1922)

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<sup>415</sup> Quoted in Leites, *Iashek Desiat' Rokiv*, Vol. 1, 527 (emphasised by Iurynets').

<sup>416</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Lehenda*, vol. 1, 319.

“did not like communists, the whole village did not like them, but in Myshko’s eyes there was love, and she started loving communists”.<sup>417</sup> Another example can be found in the anecdote from *Liluli*:

A spinster is sitting on the veranda, crying. ‘Why are you crying?’ – then she complains, that she, so to say, until forty was innocent, like a tear, but now she was seduced by a doctor from one health resort (on this very veranda!) and he spoiled her forever. How horrible! Do you hear: forever! So she decided to head to the capital city and to learn the *kapebeu* [KP(b)U] programme, because who will take her now...ah? Who needs her?<sup>418</sup>

Whatever the reasons, this “wild and anxious” time of the revolution and the civil war had transformed all those “naked and hungry” people into “titans and gods”.<sup>419</sup> This transformation was summarised by Comrade Uliana, one of the characters of the *Sentymental'na Istoriia* [Sentimental Tale] (1928):

Heavens! You cannot imagine what a wonderful country it was. Under its sun, not only the inner world of each one of us was transformed and we were made ideal, but we were physically born anew. I swear to you! Even physically we were ideal men and women.<sup>420</sup>

Each and every romanticist in Khvyl'ovyi's prose was capable of mastering the revolutionary element, because it was close, it felt feasible, it was right there, “behind the hills”. But as the days ensued, that “blue Savoy” did not become any closer. With time, the rapture of the revolutionary struggle faded away, and the revolutionary heralds woke up into the day when the cannons fell silent. With time, the “commune behind the hills” became a phantom and the victors suddenly noticed that their hands were covered in blood. Khvyl'ovyi's most famous short story *Ia (Romantyka)* [My self (Romantica)] (1924) presents this particular moment of realising that feats of the revolution were nothing more

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<sup>417</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Zhyttia*, 119.

<sup>418</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Liluli*, 372.

<sup>419</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Sentymental'na Istoriia*, vol.2, 214.

<sup>420</sup> Khvylovy, “Sentimental Tale,” in *Stories from Ukraine*, 77.

than violence committed in the name of an illusion. In the short story, the author alludes to a complicated process of ideological transformation of a revolutionary and a member of the local Cheka, who had carried out a death sentence on his own mother.

The story dwells on the activities of a provincial Cheka, “the dark tribunal of the commune”,<sup>421</sup> in Eastern Ukraine the night before the Soviet regime was ousted by another military power. The local Cheka consisted of a nameless story-teller *Ia*; an “evil genius, my evil will”, doctor Tahabat; an “unhappy communard” Andriusha; and a “faithful guard of the Revolution”, a degenerate. In the most turbulent period, the Cheka was authorised to ‘administer justice’ not only over the military enemies, but also over non-supporters and non-collaborators. In the centre of the story is a nameless story-teller, the Chekist. *Ia*, the head of the revolutionary ‘*troika*’, of a “new Sanhedrin”, became perhaps the most tragic character of Khvylyovyi’s prose. His personality was split: “I am a Chekist, but still I remain a human being”.<sup>422</sup> He was torn between the fanaticism of the civil war, and his humanity, the very essence of his human being. This said, *Ia* embodied the entire generation. He stood for countless “rebellious sons” hence, nameless, who were about to bring the revolution “from a distant misty regions, from the calm lakes of the intangible Commune”. But, “everything disappears [...] and the day darkens.”<sup>423</sup>

The Chekist constantly questions the rightness of his duty, which involved sentencing to death all kinds of ‘heterodoxies’: “I, a complete stranger, a bandit, according to one terminology, an insurgent, according to another”.<sup>424</sup> He was looking for a way out of this

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<sup>421</sup> Khvylyovyi, “My self (Romantica),” in *Stories from Ukraine*, 34.

<sup>422</sup> *ibid*, 33.

<sup>423</sup> *ibid*, 31.

<sup>424</sup> *ibid*, 33.

‘bacchanal’ – “But I see no way out”.<sup>425</sup> After another night of sombre decisions, the Chekist recalls the lives taken away that night:

Six on my conscience?

No, it is not true. Six hundred, six thousands, six millions – numberless hosts are on my conscience!

Numberless hosts?!<sup>426</sup>

At the beginning, the Chekist manages to retain his sanity thanks to his mother, “the prototype incarnate of that extraordinary Maria”.<sup>427</sup> The memory of his mother – “simplicity, silent grief, and boundless kindness”,<sup>428</sup> keeps the Chekist from complete vanishing in revolutionary fanaticism. Eventually, however, *Ia* subdues his weak will and hesitation. The next night, in “an extraordinary ecstasy”, the Chekist is to decide on the fate of a group of nuns, accused of agitating against the commune. He needs to decide quickly because “the cellar is filled to capacity”.<sup>429</sup> But he turns and sees “straight in front of me, my mother, my sorrowing mother with the eyes of Maria”.<sup>430</sup> Nevertheless, the decision must be made and Doctor Tahabat agitates: “Not so loud, you, traitor to the Commune! See that you arrange matters with ‘mother’, even as you have with others.”<sup>431</sup> Thus, the decision is not only about his mother; his loyalty to the commune was at stake. But, in the place “where sadism presides”,<sup>432</sup> the choice seemed obvious: *Ia* is already possessed with his “evil genius” and he leads his mother to the execution: “Mother! Come to me, I tell you; for I must kill you!”<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> *ibid*, 37.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid* 31.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid* 31.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>430</sup> *ibid*, 44-45.

<sup>431</sup> *ibid*, 45.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid* 35.

<sup>433</sup> *ibid*, 54.

On the surface, the main conflict in the novel lies between a professional duty and a personal attachments. The main character is to decide what price he is willing to pay for the sake of those revolutionary ideals, in which he once ardently believed, for those “peaceful lakes of the Commune behind the hills”. The image of *Ia* offers a painful confession of a revolutionary, whose “the intangible distance” had been transformed beyond recognition: “Once more, painfully, I feel like falling to my knees and looking pleadingly at the crude silhouette of the dark tribunal of the Commune”.<sup>434</sup> Enforcing the death penalty on his own mother is not only a duty. It means accepting the new reality, being able to represent that ‘Commune behind the hills’, to join the ranks of other ‘degenerates’, to build the socialist future in the time, when every revolutionary idea became compromised, discredited and devalued.

Khvyl'ovyi's prose, as literary critics observed, was highly self-referential, or autothematic.<sup>435</sup> Due to this, the fictional world he created seems “an objectification of the narrator's internal world, of his feelings and perceptions, forming a vaguely internal landscape and bestowing a lyrical dimension upon most of Khvyl'ovyi's early stories”.<sup>436</sup> This self-referentiality erased boundaries between the author and his characters. So, the most sincere claims or emotions of the characters may as well be ascribed to the author himself. This feature of Khvyl'ovyi's prose has often been used to compensate the paucity of primary sources on the writer, ascribing plots from Khvyl'ovyi's imaginary writings to his own biography. For instance, the plot of “*Ia (Romantyka)*”, and a lesser known

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<sup>434</sup> *ibid*, 52.

<sup>435</sup> Grabowicz, *Symbolic Autobiography*.

<sup>436</sup> Dolly Ferguson, “Lyricism and the Internal Landscape, in the Early Creative Prose of Mykola Khvyl'ovyi,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers /Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 18, 4 (1976), 429.

“*Podiaka Pryvatnoho Likaria*” [Gratitude of the Private Doctor, 1932<sup>437</sup>] are often referred to in order to claim that the writer was a Chekist himself, and that he had contributed to the all-pervading violence of the civil war years.<sup>438</sup> In such a way, a symbolic biography of Khvyl'ovyi is being constructed, where imaginary characters and conflicts are being used for interpreting Khvyl'ovyi's actual personality.

“*The Revolution is Ours but Words are Not*”<sup>439</sup>: the Experience of Alienation

The revolution initiated a profound change; it smashed the old order and set the preconditions for a new social order, which rejected the traditional values. Instead, during the peacetime reconstruction, these goals were withheld and the old customs reinforced. So, for the majority of revolutionary romanticists and young militants, the golden age remained in those turbulent years of the civil war, while the years of NEP presented all together a different kind of communism that demanded new virtues and skills. As stated by Nikolai Bukharin at the Third Congress of the Komsomol in late 1920, while the party still needed “conscious Communists who have both a fiery heart and a burning revolutionary passion,” it was now especially important to develop young Communists “who have calm heads, who know what they want, who can stop when necessary, retreat when necessary, take a step to the side when necessary, move cautiously weighing and calculating each step.”<sup>440</sup> This new

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<sup>437</sup> This short story, first published in the collection “R. XV. Rik Zhovtnevoi Revolutsii XV” (1932), has not been included to any of Khvyl'ovyi's Selected Works. It was republished for the first time in Kharkiv Almanac *Ukraïns'kyi Zsiv*, 1 (13) (1994): 47-74.

<sup>438</sup> Zadesnians'kyi, 30-31; Ihor Bondar-Tereshchenko, *U Zadzerkalli 1910-1930-h Rokiv* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 287.

<sup>439</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Iurko*, vol. 1, 170.

<sup>440</sup> Quoted in Anne E. Gorsuch, “NEP Be Damned! Young Militants in the 1920s and the Culture of Civil War,” *Russian Review* 56, 4 (1997), 564.

understanding of communism made those recently privileged activists, as Fitzpatrick noted, outsiders, whose values started to be seen as alien within the society they struggled for.<sup>441</sup>

To a certain extent, Khvyl'ovyi's prose reflected the dissatisfaction of those revolutionaries for whom the NEP period with its retreats in economic sphere, party centralisation and ideological pluralism signified the end of the golden age of the civil wars and heroic social revolution. Thus, the mood of his early prose can be compared to a general tendency to oppose the post-civil war developments, often voiced by the representatives of the left opposition in the communist party. In general, the idea of a revolution, valued for its spontaneity and experimentalism, was challenged. Its extremes were compromised for the need to reconstruct and govern the country. It required discipline and moderation, – the new virtues, inculcated into and promoted within the society. Khvyl'ovyi observed: “Maybe this is the end; those sons of a bitch have swallowed our revolution” (1923).<sup>442</sup> The revolution “had slipped into the lavatory bowl filled with excrement” (1926).<sup>443</sup> Similarly, the promissory idea of a commune had vanished. Instead of being a founding principle for a new socialist society, it became a relic of the old times. Ironically, Khvyl'ovyi in *Chumakivs'ka komuna* described the way that inspiring idea was realised: in a quiet seclusion of a small town, drinking tea from a samovar and dreaming of a future well-being, members of the Chumak commune are saluting communism and the world revolution over a telephone ... without a cord.<sup>444</sup>

The abstract idea of a socialist Ukraine, that ‘blue Savoy’, longed for and anticipated by numerous revolutionary romanticists, seemed to be transformed beyond recognition. As

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<sup>441</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “The Legacy of the Civil War,” in *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War*, ed. Diane P. Koenker et al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989), 393.

<sup>442</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Na Hlukhim Shliakhu*, vol. 1, 183

<sup>443</sup> Khvylovy, Woodcocks in *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s*, Luckyj, (ed.) (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986), 19.

<sup>444</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Chumakivs'ka Komuna*, 244.

the 1920s had shown, the workers' democracy became corrupted with the rise of bureaucracy. The revolutionary slogan "All power to the soviets" was quickly forgotten. Instead, a centralist bureaucratic institution, *Radnarkom*, a cabinet of ministers (people's commissars) was created. From the perspective of those young militants, the Bolshevik party had gradually being transformed from a vanguard party, established to steer the fight for emancipating the working class, to "*Your state party*" (1923),<sup>445</sup> an autocratic institution. Moreover, a cherished and just socialist order started more often to resemble the arbitrary rule of those in power. The occasional episodes of despotism became the norm, as Khvyl'ovyi portrayed:

I do not understand, father Polikarp, what is the matter. My forest, and my meadows, and my land were taken away. Is there a law?

The person emptied a glass and loudly, to be heard outside the window, to be heard by everyone:

- The law, grandpa. The Bolshevik law.

And then, he leaned forward the grandpa's ear and, looking around, murmured:

- Babel pandemonium. Time of Trouble in Rus. That is it. Do you understand? That is it (*Shliakhetne hnizdo*, 1923).<sup>446</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi's dissatisfaction with the post-revolutionary reality was not a rare example. The representatives of the Russian left opposition continuously voiced their disagreement with the party politics and its evolution. However, Khvyl'ovyi was not a mere mouthpiece of the Russian opposition in Ukraine. In his prose and later in his pamphlets he constantly addressed the political status of Soviet Ukraine and its autonomy. The writer reflected on the violation of the national and autonomous vision of a socialist Ukraine which he had cherished since the beginning of the revolution. The transition to NEP also involved important political and economic changes. The continuous discussion about the status of the soviet republics and their relationship with the Russian SFSR came to an end on 28

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<sup>445</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Zaulok*, vol.1, 328.

<sup>446</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Shliakhetne Hnizdo*, 218.

December 1922, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed. For numerous nationally-oriented communists the establishment of the Soviet Union signalled the end of Ukraine's political autonomy. Moreover, the subordination of the KP(b)U to the TsK RKP(b) exhausted the intensive debates about the role and the authorities of the KP(b)U in Ukraine and the nature of its relationship with the RKP(b).

The national theme is omnipresent in Khvyl'ovyi's prose. One of the aspects, highlighted by the author, was the question of why the communist party membership started to contradict the national affiliation of its members. A journalist Kark (*Redaktor Kark* [Editor Kark] (1923) embodied this frustration of numerous Ukrainian communists within the ranks of the KP(b)U. Kark repeatedly questioned: "Am I really superfluous because I love Ukraine madly?"<sup>447</sup> He was one of those errant dreamers, who could not conceive of the discrepancy between the slogans of national free self-determination and the realities of the Soviet nationalities policy. He could not harmonise his nationalism within the frameworks of 'international solidarity'. According to Lavrinenko, *Redaktor Kark* introduced in Ukrainian literature the motive of 'hangover' after the civil wars of 1917-1922.<sup>448</sup> For Kark, the only possible solution to the contradiction between his national aspirations and political affiliation started to be embodied in his Browning. The realisation that one could not be simultaneously a Communist and a Ukrainian became common for many KP(b)U members in the mid-1920s. The need to choose between the two became prophetic for the writer himself. The entanglement of both the national and the social in the revolution and post-revolutionary state-building became the most important strand in Khvyl'ovyi's romanticism. The inability (and perhaps impossibility in the then state of affairs) to fully achieve both of them led to growing unresolved frustration of the

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<sup>447</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Redaktor Kark*, vol.1, 149.

<sup>448</sup> Iurii Lavrinenko, "Dukh Nespokoiiu," in Lavrinenko, *Zrub i Parosty*, (Munich: Suchasnist', 1971), 53.

generation of the Ukrainian communists, represented by Khvyl'ovyi and embodied by his fictional characters.

In numerous short stories, Khvyl'ovyi accounted for the fates of the revolutionary romanticists during NEP. Those enthusiasts, adherents and believers in socialist utopia in post-revolutionary everyday life were set aside; they were excluded from the process of socialist state-building. At the time of reversed morals and ethics, death became the way to prove loyalty to former integrity, and suicide became a means to protest against the betrayal of the revolution. The epidemic of suicides among military youth and party members widely recorded in NEP years<sup>449</sup> was also echoed in Khvyl'ovyi's novels. Some of his characters in the post-revolutionary hangover mood were portrayed on the verge of taking their lives (e.g., the Editor Kark with his Browning or Mar"iana, who decided to hasten her death by getting infected with syphilis (*Zaulok*, [A Back Street], 1923); others are presented on their deathbeds, happy to be dying in the name of the idea (like, Vadym (*Synii Lystopad*), who asks "what are our tragedies against this great symphony towards the future?"<sup>450</sup>); or simply pushed to suicide being unable to break a cynical cycle of everyday existence (e.g., Khlonia, a former Communist idealist, who understood that "Lenin repeats only once in five hundred years"<sup>451</sup> (*Povist' pro Sanatoriinu Zonu* [A Novel about a Sanatorium], 1924).

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<sup>449</sup> About suicides in the Soviet Union in the 1920s see, e.g.: Kenneth M. Pinnow, *Lost to the Collective: Suicide and the Promise of Soviet Socialism, 1921–1929* (Ithaca; London: Cornell UP, 2010); "Violence against the Collective Self: Suicide and the Problem of Social Integration in Early Bolshevik Russia," in *Histories of Suicide: International Perspectives on Self-Destruction in the Modern World*, ed. John Weaver and David Wright (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2009), 201–230.

<sup>450</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Synii Lystopad*, 224.

<sup>451</sup> Undoubtedly, in the words of Khlonia, Khvyl'ovyi expressed his own compassion in regard to Lenin's death. In the letter to Mykhailo Mohylians'kyi dated from 25.01.1924, Khvyl'ovyi wrote: "All our romantic age is linked with the name of Lenin. For me, a romanticist, 'Lenin' recalls of our sweet-scented years of [19]17, 18, 19, 20. Lenin – is that thorny path to those "peaceful lakes of the Commune behind the hills". I cannot find the words to express what I feel at the moment". Instytut Rukopysu, F. 131, od. zb. 183.

The feeling of those betrayed and neglected enthusiasts, unable to compromise and to adapt to the post-revolutionary routine is expressed in *Sentymental'na Istoriia*:

The thing is that you never played Eva's part and you cannot long for paradise, as myself or as thousands of those broken down by the civil war, do. [...] You have never been on the other side, and you do not know a thing. Only we and only we were driven away from there. That is why we are living in longing.<sup>452</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi's romanticists were possessed with melancholy. This feeling was provoked by the idealised remembrance of the past and its unbridgeable distance from the present. Khvyl'ovyi's heroes did not belong to reality since it does not correspond to their ideals. Similarly, the new reality did not need those dreamers. Hence, the revolutionary romanticists became alienated from their reality; they were groundless, disconnected from time and space. Most painfully, their lost paradise was nothing more than "a mirage of the past that [they] will never be able to recover".<sup>453</sup>

Symbolically, Khvyl'ovyi gathered all those uprooted revolutionary romanticists in a sanatorium for 'patients with mental disorder' (*Povist' pro Sanatoriinu Zonu*). The topos of a 'sanatorium' was used ambiguously. On the one hand, its inmates were seen as almost deviants, phantoms, hardly recognisable in 'the real world'. In the 'sanatorium', in this Foucault's *panopticon*, they were constantly observed; even their interactions with the outer world were controlled to prevent the negative influence of their 'false idealism' on the new Soviet citizens. On the other hand, however, this confined space can be regarded as an experiment, a model of the socialist society, of a Soviet state itself, where each character presented a type, every interaction contained a statement, and every decision had universal meaning.

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<sup>452</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Sentymental'na Istoriia*, 192.

<sup>453</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991), 9-10.

The sanatorium inmates had similar ‘symptoms’: their idealisation of the civil war did not allow them to accept the post-revolutionary normalisation; their extremism could not be channelled within the expected moderation and discipline of the new social order. In the NEP society, they became socially superfluous, incompatible or even harmful. Since their pessimism could not be reconciled with the prevalent optimism of the decade, they were isolated from ‘healthy’ Soviet citizens. The main ‘patients’ of the ‘sanatorium’ were: the *anarkh*, an anarchist with a ‘hairy nature’, a former leader of a Ukrainian peasant revolt who “burned a black banner and bravely unfurled a red-crimson one”;<sup>454</sup> Khlonia, a betrayed Communist idealist; and a typesetter (*metranpazh*) Karno, a mysterious figure, “provincial Mephistopheles”;<sup>455</sup> wild and violent, who was incarcerated (how trivial!) for the murder of his wife’s lover. They are supervised by Katria, a sanatorium nurse, herself an idealist who dreams of escaping that “grey sanatorium everydayness” somewhere in Siberia, “in a remote taiga, at the end of the earth”;<sup>456</sup> and Maiia, a secret police officer, who “gave all she could to that secret police and then not only began to love this job, but cannot even live without it”.<sup>457</sup> Although, Katria and Maiia are presented as superior to the inmates, they were similarly trapped in the sanatorium, being unable to fit-in in the outside world.

The former revolutionaries, the *anarkh* and Klonia, could not reconcile their past and the reality that they had left behind the sanatorium’s walls. They were sent to the sanatorium to find a rational explanation for their frustration. However, the melancholy took them over. Metaphorically, Khlonia, who had admitted that he “[would] not see Lenin

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<sup>454</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Povist' pro Sanatoriinu Zonu*, vol. 2, 67.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid*, 145.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

<sup>457</sup> *ibid*, 163.

again”,<sup>458</sup> in despair, committed suicide. The *anarkh* was forced into the same impasse. He wrote a letter to his sister confessing his alienation and disillusionment. The reply was, however, straightforward. The sister, as depicted, was one of those builders of socialism, for whom in the age of industrialisation there could be no place for mental disorder or “sloberly symbolists”.<sup>459</sup> The sister advised to accept the new society: “to live, to read newspapers, magazine ‘Ogoniok’ etc., to enjoy picturesque view from the hill, to eat *borshch* and meatballs [...] and not to recall his past”.<sup>460</sup> Symbolically, having read the letter, the *anarkh* felt thirsty. He tried to quench his thirst, but instead followed Khlonia to “another side of reality”.<sup>461</sup> These suicides, nonetheless, did not provide an easy explanation. Were they evidence of the characters’ accepting or rejecting the new reality? Had they attempted to leave the sanatorium and join those in ‘the real world’ or had they simply given up any hope to fit in the society which had already rejected them once?

Dolly Ferguson placed all the characters in the novel within one ‘circle of cynicism’,<sup>462</sup> where Katria, Khlonia and the *anarkh* represented the initial idealism of the revolution (“And only I, restless Don Quixote, am still in search of new illusions of new unknown shores”<sup>463</sup>) in contrast to cynicism and the materialistic interest of Karno and Maiia. The rule for the circle of cynicism is easy: “the greater his idealism, the less satisfied he is with his cynical era and the more prone he is to be torn between his ideals and reality. Conversely, the more modified his idealism, the less likely he is to give up in despair”.<sup>464</sup> Accordingly, Khlonia and the *anarkh*, incapable of compromise, took their own lives;

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>459</sup> ibid, 141-143.

<sup>460</sup> ibid, 146.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>462</sup> Ferguson, 436-37.

<sup>463</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Na Ozera*, vol. 1, 259.

<sup>464</sup> Ferguson, 436-37.

Maiia and Katria, unable to face the reality, decided for the safety of the sanatorium; whereas Karno embraced the decade of an absolute cynicism and eventually was set free.

It must be admitted that Khvyl'ovyi himself could have easily become one of the inmates in a sanatorium not only because of his superfluous ideological convictions, but his mental health. The experiences of the First World War, the Revolution and the civil wars influenced Khvyl'ovyi's state of mind. In the letter to Mohylians'kyi dated from June 1924, the writer confessed that his neurasthenia had got worsened: "fits of hysterics sometimes were so intense that I hit my head against the wall."<sup>465</sup> In other letters, Khvyl'ovyi mentioned his hallucinations; he continuously spoke of suicide. In his letters to Zerov, he spoke of his intention to take his life: "In a word, it is a Dostoevsky style, pathology, but there is no way I can shoot myself. I went to the field already twice but came back safe and sound both times: evidently I'm a big coward and good for nothing".<sup>466</sup> According to the writer, doctors found thinking dangerous for his health.<sup>467</sup> Perhaps, these mental health issues had influenced the way the writer responded to the current events both in his creative writings and journalist contributions.

Nonetheless, subsequently all the unsuitable revolutionaries were substituted by the myriads of submissive and obsequious 'timeservers', those philistines, bureaucrats "serving only to that class, which is in power".<sup>468</sup> The class of "respectful people" ("there was a time when our circle produced chaste apostles and saintly preachers"<sup>469</sup>) was transformed into a group of dishonourable opportunists: "now every former giant is nothing more than a nasty intellectual (*intelligentishka*), parvenu, scum who impudently bridles up and even more

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<sup>465</sup> Instytut Rukopysu, F. 131, nos 183-195; Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, "Lysty", *Spadshchyna. Literaturne Dzhereloznavstvo*. Vol.VIII (2013), 255.

<sup>466</sup> Khyl'ovyi, *Lysty do Zerova*, 835.

<sup>467</sup> Instytut Rukopysu, F.131, nos 183-195; *Spadshchyna*, 255.

<sup>468</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Povist' pro Sanatoriinu Zonu*, 133.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

impudently avouches 'we' ('we' to define not those who struggled, but those who are in 'power').<sup>470</sup> In the 1920s, those opportunists, dubbed by Daniels as rootless quasi-intelligentsia,<sup>471</sup> systematically took revenge on the "former" people (*byvshi liudy*), among whom one could often encounter those dissenting revolutionary romanticists. The decade-long transformation of the Soviet society was eventually completed during the first Five-Year Plan.

The NEP years witnessed not only banishing of the old heroes but they also set the stage for a new pantheon. With the rise of bureaucracy, loyalty to the party no longer required idealistic sacrifices; loyalty started to be defined through unquestionable service and submission. Those newly promoted to power wished to gain immediate benefits rather than wait for a socialist utopia to come true. Stefan (*Syliuety*) embodied those new virtues and expectations. He managed easily to adapt to the new realities: his life became comfortable, quiet, and well-organised: office work, agitation among factory youth, lecturing, reading newspapers. All this he achieved because he learned how "to understand things profoundly";<sup>472</sup> that was not to dissent but to adjust to the situation. Similar transformation occurred to a former Ukrainian SR Shkits (*Redaktor Kark*). With time, Skits "began to dress up better, even too much"; he wished to implement socialist slogans in practice: "he was organising a trust and already does not speak about Ukraine, only sometimes, a little".<sup>473</sup>

In his prose, Khvyl'ovyi reflected and reported on the social developments of the decade, on the predominant attitudes and the atmosphere of the growing mismatch between

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>471</sup> Robert V. Daniels, 'Intellectuals and the Russian Revolution,' *American Slavic and East European Review* 20, 2 (1961), 270-278.

<sup>472</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Syliuety*, 201.

<sup>473</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Redaktor Kark*, 146.

the ideals of the revolution and the post-civil war reconstruction. However, his prose can hardly be used as evidence of his own ideological evolution. In his letter to Mohylians'kyi written some time in April-May, 1924 Khvyl'ovyi critically addressed his early prose: “I want to share my thoughts about my second book ‘*Syni Etiudy*’ [...] I am sure that my ‘*Syni Etiudy*’ were “out-voiced” (*perekrychaly*), they were not worth that great (indeed, great) attention. This book includes pieces that I wouldn’t have acknowledged now. Honestly, I am ashamed to reread such things as “*Baraky, shcho za mistom*” etc. This is a literary scandal! If I were a critic, I would have taken the book apart so that only bits and pieces have remained. But this is not what I’d like to say. I assume, at the time there was a need for those short stories, and there was a need to shout about them. But you see how I feel? Suddenly, I feel such a huge responsibility hanging over me and I feel my little talent will never be able to handle it. [...] In a word: by the virtue of fate and due to the generosity of my critics I have become ‘the first novelist of Ukraine’, and I am confused. My vanity is satisfied. But my mind protests: I don’t have the right to be called this way, my literary merit does not live up to those critics’ opinion”.<sup>474</sup> Obviously, even for a writer himself there was hardly a straight line between him a revolutionary romanticist, and his later, more prosaic writings.

In 1927, Khvyl'ovyi concluded: “to my arabesques – *finis*”.<sup>475</sup> This meant the end of his romanticism, to his characters who were full of illusions, to his anxious anticipation of the communist future. However, the end to his revolutionary romanticism was determined already in 1925, when the writer exhausted his glorification to the civil war years and turned to political and social essays. The prose, written during the second half of the 1920s, hardly resembled his previous manner and style. Khvyl'ovyi resorted to realism, writing

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<sup>474</sup> Instytut Rukopysu, F.131, nos 183-195; *Spadshchyna*, 252-253.

<sup>475</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Arabesky*, vol.1, 414. (Italics in the original)

reportage-like stories, observations and political interventions. As it will be shown below, the growing political discord between the promoters and managers of Ukraine's cultural affairs influenced Khvyl'ovyi's evolution from creative writing to journalism and political interventions. By mid-1920s, the debates about the status of Soviet Ukraine, the KP(b)U and Soviet culture in Ukraine (as discussed in Section One) were gaining momentum and literature became a medium to voice political concerns against the growing centralisation of the Soviet leadership in the centre.

In his prose of the late 1920s Khvyl'ovyi became highly critical. *Ivan Ivanovych*, a short story published in 1929, stands out among his later texts. In it, Khvyl'ovyi aptly responded to the sectarian concept of the Communist party, which it had acquired by the end of the decade, and its growing bureaucratisation. The story reflected the transformation of the communist party from a political organisation to a mere distributor and guarantor of its members' status and wealth. *Ivan Ivanovych* is an example of a deliberate political satire on the whole social order as well as its implementers, who, according to Khvyl'ovyi, became detached from real life and existed in some parallel world where it seemed, communism had already triumphed. As stated by Iurii Boiko, the author "found strength to apprehend the Soviet reality as tragicomedy; he depicted the reality, defined by simple formulas, covered with masks, and [represented by] people, used on the stage of life as marionettes".<sup>476</sup>

With artificial sincerity, Khvyl'ovyi portrayed the lifestyle of an average communist cell leader, Ivan Ivanovych, who genuinely lived under communism, symbolically on the Thomas More street. Ivan Ivanovych had already witnessed the "new revolutionary interpretation" of a social order with asphalt on the pavements, taxis, and flowerbeds in

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<sup>476</sup> Iurii Boiko (-Blochyn) *Vybrani Pratsi*, (Kyiv: Medykom, 1992), 276.

front of each house.<sup>477</sup> He ‘courageously’ dealt with the housing crisis: Ivan Ivanovich, content only with four rooms, had never demanded a separate bedroom for his cook. Also, his financial situation was rather moderate, earning only 250 *karbovanets* to preserve “the feeling of proletarian equality”.<sup>478</sup> To complete the picture, Ivan Ivanovych had a model family: his wife Comrade Halakta, “love[d] to read Lenin and Marx, though her hand [was] stretching involuntarily for a volume of de Maupassant”, a son with a revolutionary name Mai and daughter Violeta, brought up by Mademoiselle Lucy, the governess, and a cook, Iavdokha.

In this ‘genuine’ communist atmosphere, Ivan Ivanovych was ardently fighting every day for the future of social justice. With revolutionary zeal, Ivan Ivanovych challenged ‘reactionary’ movements and opposition within the party. Rhetorically, he questioned his opponents:

What do they want from us? Is there a dictatorship of the proletariat? Yes, there is! Is the power in our hands? Yes, it is! Have the factories been nationalised? Yes, they have! Is there a Red Army? Yes, there is? Is there a Comintern? Yes, there is? [...] Are we approaching socialism? Yes, we are! [...] What else do they want? I simply cannot understand.<sup>479</sup>

These were the convictions, with which party cell activists gathered to discuss a construction of the first Soviet republic. The party meetings were also held in some artificial, even surreal atmosphere. The ambience of party cell meetings contradicted entirely the atmosphere in which the builders of communism lived: with their shabby clothes, “well aware of the transitory nature of the period in which they lived”,<sup>480</sup> in a room where every corner “is not just an ordinary corner but above all, a “red corner”,<sup>481</sup> a ‘noble

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<sup>477</sup> Khvylovy, “Ivan Ivanovich,” in *Stories from Ukraine*, 161-162.

<sup>478</sup> *ibid*, 172.

<sup>479</sup> *ibid*, 168-69.

<sup>480</sup> *ibid*, 184.

<sup>481</sup> *ibid*, 187.

fight for social justice’ was taking place. That time, the ordinary party cell faced the mission of the universal meaning: to find the one sabotaging the socialist building. Khvyl'ovyi lampooned this ridiculous ‘witch hunt’: while choosing between a cleaning woman and some party activist, the lot unexpectedly fell to a Jewish member of the cell, Comrade Leiter.

The accusation was random, groundless. Hence, reversible. At the next meeting, the accusation of sabotage befell the former accusers. Later on, Comrade Leiter was announced “not a wrecker or bandit, but a devoted Communist”,<sup>482</sup> whereas his opponents, Ivan Ivanovych and other members of the presidium, were forced to leave the party. Ivan Ivanovych found out that he had betrayed the party not through a public process or a hearing, but through an article in ‘*Visti*’ newspaper: “Betrayal of the Revolution. Clear betrayal. Unless the paper is lying? But I always believed in it!”<sup>483</sup> Thus, justice became a sham, a whim of those who are in charge of issuing orders.

Similar to *Povist' pro Sanatoriinu Zonu*, the story *Ivan Ivanovych* offered another example of a confined place. Although the characters were not restrained from the outside world by the sanatorium walls, the inhabitants of the Utopia were secluded from ‘the rest’ with only occasional interactions with their cook or a weekly travesty before a party cell meeting. With the help of satire, Khvyl'ovyi uncovered the pervasive corruption of the long anticipated social order, where suddenly every opportunist started to consider himself as being protected by a membership card, where the absolute truth existed on the pages of a party newspaper, where moral norms were irrelevant or acquired “new revolutionary interpretation”, where communism had already flourished, but only for the chosen few.

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<sup>482</sup> *ibid*, 213.

<sup>483</sup> *ibid*, 208.

Khvyl'ovyi, with his own revolutionary experience, represented the generation of the 1920s. It was characterised by the idealistic belief in providence as promised by the revolution, and the consequent complete disillusionment after these expectations were betrayed. Throughout the 1920s, Khvyl'ovyi was forced to gradually denounce the myth he himself had created: the myth of “a revolution without buttons”, of a “blue Savoy”, of an “intangible Commune behind the hills”. In his early prose, he provided a set of options on how to deal with the total disenchantment of the NEP years, caused by “Thermidorian bureaucracy“, degeneration of the workers’ democracy, revisited moral norms and social values. His revolutionary romanticists were faced with the necessity to decide either to accept the new reality (to compromise or to re-estimate their values and beliefs) or to denounce the world after the prophecy did not come true (suicide or seclusion). The writer also emphasised another peculiarity of his age: the power, gained through the revolutionary struggle by militant youth, romanticists and idealists, was appropriated by state functionaries, opportunists, bureaucrats and managers. Whereas those revolutionaries were discarded as superfluous, the new elite had already gained their Utopia with an abundance of goods and services, not to say a new morality.

The tragedy of Khvyl'ovyi’s characters is that they, after having zealously dismantled one social order, found themselves incapable of introducing another. The social construction was, therefore, picked up by pragmatists, who succeeded in establishing a social order with only a nominal reference to popular revolutionary slogans. That new society appeared for its strugglers a farcical one, a parody on what they had anticipated. Instead of bringing the system into correspondence with their beliefs and expectations, social norms were re-evaluated. Hence, new ideologems and mythology were elaborated

stating that the prophecy, promised by the revolution, could happen only through discipline, obedience, loyalty and everyday toiling.

In his early prose, Khvyl'ovyi exposed the potential of revolutionary literature in Ukraine. Obviously, one could not exploit themes and devices of revolutionary romanticism for long: the time of post-revolutionary social normalisation, economic recovery and political stabilisation required new themes and different attitudes, ethics and characters. Nevertheless, the short period, during which revolutionary romanticism flourished in Ukraine, brought to the fore a number of important cultural and social issues. Khvyl'ovyi and his followers (the Olympians, as will be discussed in the next chapter) adhered to high culture and works of distinct literary merit and raised the qualification standards for their contemporaries and future writers. Similarly, as the conflict with the Proletkult had proven, language became an important issue not to be neglected in literary works. To answer these questions, broached with the help of imaginative literature and exacerbated during the debates between the representatives of competing literary groups, a different forum was required. The Literary Discussion of 1925-1928, discussed in the next sub-chapter, offered different sides of the debates a required setting to voice, dispute and negotiate their visions of Ukrainian literature and culture.

### **2.2.2. “Ukraine or Little Russia?”: Rethinking Ukraine’s Autonomy during the Literary Discussion, 1925-28**

In the 1920s, as in Russia, revolutionary and proletarian literature in Ukraine manifested itself almost exclusively through different literary organisations, unions and groupings. Such institutional setting of the world of letters shifted the focus from individual contributions and their value to organisational structure and ideological purity, emphasising intergroup rivalry, rather than quality of work. The existing literary organisations in Ukraine presented different, often opposing, visions of proletarian and Soviet literature and culture. Their rivalry defined the content of the Literary Discussion of 1925-1928. The debates, which had had initially been concerned with cultural issues, soon shifted into the political domain. The main opposition was defined as “*prosvita* vs. Europe”, or mass culture vs. the elitist concept of art.

The need to satisfy the growing expectations of the new readership was advocated by the first mass literary movements: the All-Ukrainian Peasant Writers’ Union *Pluh* (Plough), founded by the editor-in-chief of Kharkiv newspaper *Sil's'ki Visti* (Rural News) Pylypenko in April 1922; the Association of the Proletarian Writers *Hart* (Tempering), initiated by the editor-in-chief of the Kharkiv-based governmental newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* Ellan-Blakytnyi in January 1923; and the All-Ukrainian Association of Proletarian Writers (*VUAPP*, *Vseukraïns'ka Asotsiatsiia Proletars'kykh Pys'mennykiv*) formed in 1924 under the auspices of the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP). The concept of mass culture, promoted by these literary groupings, was opposed by the Ukrainian writers, united around *Khvyl'ovyi*. Already in 1923, as a protest against *Hart* enlargement, *Khvyl'ovyi*, *Dosvitnyi* and *Ialovyi*, the three members of *Hart*, the so-called “Olympians,”

created a faction with a symbolic name “Urbino,”<sup>484</sup> arguing that art could not be used as a means of general enlightenment. This group defended the idea that literature should not be diminished to suit middle-brow tastes but, on the contrary, should set up certain standards to encourage readers to raise their preferences.

Khvyl'ovyi was probably the most established disputant among the participants of the Literary Discussion. His contribution (mostly journalist style pamphlets and political polemics) was rather vast: three cycles of essays (*Kamo Hriadeshy?*<sup>485</sup> [Quo Vadis?] (April–June 1925), *Dumky proty Techii*<sup>486</sup> [Thoughts against the Current] (November–December 1925) and *Apologety Pysatysmu*<sup>487</sup> [Apologists of Scribbling] (February–March 1926); a censored pamphlet *Ukraïna chy Malorossiiia*<sup>488</sup> [Ukraine or Little Russia] (1926); single polemic articles, published in the party newspapers; and the editorials in the almanacs and journals *Vaplite* and *Literaturnyi Iarmarok*, *Prolitfront*. Khvyl'ovyi and his position was supported by his associates and like-minded colleagues, most importantly Zerov, a Kyivan poet and academic, who initiated the public debates within the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv.<sup>489</sup> At the same time, these essays were written in response to his opponents, who mainly represented an official, party-authorised position. The most important of them were Khvyliia, Pylypenko, and Ievhen Hirchak. The fairly complete bibliography of the Literary Discussion (around 600 items in total) can be found in the

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<sup>484</sup> A reference to the Italian city Urbino which became the predecessor of the Renaissance culture.

<sup>485</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, “Kamo Hriadeshy?” in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 67-141; Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis?*, 39-93

<sup>486</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, “Dumky proty Techii,” in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 141-239; Khvylovy, “Thoughts against the Current,” in Khvylovy, *Cultural Renaissance*, 95-167.

<sup>487</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, “Apologety Pysaryzmu,” in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 239-323; Khvylovy, “Apologists of Scribbling,” in Khvylovy, *Cultural Renaissance*, 169-224.

<sup>488</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, “Ukraïna chy Malorossiiia?” TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, spr.2257; Khvyl'ovyi, “Ukraïna chy Malorossiiia?” in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u dvokh tomakh*, vol. 2. 576–621; Excerpts in English: Khvylovy, “Ukraine or Little Russia,” in Khvylovy, *Cultural Renaissance*, 225-232.

<sup>489</sup> *Shliakhy Rozvytku Suchasnoi Literatury: Dysput 24 Travnia 1925 r.* (Kiev, 1925); In the course of the debate Zerov published three essays: “Ievropa – prosvita – osvita – liknep”; “Evraziis'kyi Renesans i Poshekhons'ki Sosny”; “Zmishchena Pozytisia”. See: Mykola Zerov, *Do Dzherel* (Krakiv; Lviv: Ukraïns'ke Vydavnytstvo, 1943).

contemporary study of the literary process in Ukraine by Leites and Iashek.<sup>490</sup> This chapter examines the key concepts developed by Khvyl'ovyi with sporadic references to other sides in the debates.

The Literary Discussion of 1925-28, regarded here as a process of negotiating different visions of Soviet Ukrainian literature, can be studied either chronologically or as a corpus of ideas. Luckyj, one of the first Western scholars to study the Soviet literary politics in Ukraine,<sup>491</sup> defined three main phases in the debates, which corresponded to the changes of the party policy in literature: 1) April, 1925 – September, 1926 (the first ideological interchanges between Khvyl'ovyi and the party spokesmen); 2) October, 1926 – December, 1927 (the climax of the discussion, the use of “*khvyl'ovizm*” as a label, the activity and dissolution of the VAPLITE); 3) January, 1928 – February, 1928 (the official termination of the discussion). A similar chronological approach was executed by Shevel'ov, Khvyl'ovyi's contemporary, a well-known Ukrainian émigré philologist and literary historian, who examined Khvyl'ovyi's ideas against historical events and political changes in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>492</sup> Shkandrij<sup>493</sup> and Mace<sup>494</sup> focused on the key concepts discussed by the sides of the debate. In this chapter, Khvyl'ovyi's four main concepts: *prosvita*, proletarian art, “Europe”, and the Asiatic Renaissance, are scrutinised. They were first introduced in *Kamo Hriadeshy?* and had by 1926 given rise to a theory of Ukrainian sovereignty and messianism.

Before analysing Khvyl'ovyi's pamphlets that were written during the period, it is important to note that Khvyl'ovyi's ideas can hardly be studied as a coherent system or

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<sup>490</sup> Leites, Iashek *Desiat' Rokiv*, vol.II, 323-56.

<sup>491</sup> Luckyj, *Literary Politics*.

<sup>492</sup> Iurii Shevel'ov, “Lit Ikara (Pamflety Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho),” in Shevel'ov, *Vybrani Pratsi: Literaturoznavstvo*. Kn.II (Kyiv: Kyievo-Mohylians'ka Akademiia, 2009), 287-342.

<sup>493</sup> Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists*.

<sup>494</sup> Mace, *Communism*.

well-elaborated theory. His pamphlets are hermetic, often with breaks in logic. The pamphlets are rich with free-flowing ideas and highly charged emotional images, which, at times, are hard to understand without a reference to current literary debates, existing intellectual tradition or Khvyl'ovyi's broader views. Khvyl'ovyi developed his argument while writing the essays and in response to the critics; hence, the definition of his central images was not comprehensive and was changing over time. The pamphlets offered allusions to Khvyl'ovyi's prose; it seems that the writer was using different means to communicate ideas, which had preoccupied him since the early twenties. So, his pamphlets did not depart much from literature, same as his prose contained important political messages in them (especially the novel *Val'dshnepy* [The Woodcocks], 1927). At times, it seems as if the author was more preoccupied with the style and the language of his essays than with coherence and logic of his arguments. In general, Khvyl'ovyi's pamphlets are of their time and should be read with the awareness of their historical context.<sup>495</sup>

The three cycles of pamphlets, published in mainstream periodicals in 1925-1926, received wide recognition and initiated a broad discussion about the prospects of artistic orientation, quality of literature, audience for the new Soviet culture, cultural and national developments, and conflicts underlying Russian-Ukrainian relations. Khvyl'ovyi, with his peculiar manner, sophisticated language and rich references to world cultural heritage, engaged the entire Ukrainian intelligentsia. According to one Kyivan critic, "The impression, after Khvyl'ovyi's article, was as if in the room so stuffy that breathing was difficult, the windows had suddenly been opened, and the lungs felt the air again".<sup>496</sup> Also, the ideas of Khvyl'ovyi's pamphlets reflected the zeitgeist of the 1920s with its on-going

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<sup>495</sup> Shevel'ov, *Lit Ikara*, 289.

<sup>496</sup> *Shliakhy Rozvytku*, 43.

negotiations about the amount of autonomy Ukraine could have within the Soviet Union. The public debates, initiated by Khvyl'ovyi, continued incessantly for almost three years.

### “Prosvita”: Proletarian Writers and their Readers

The Literary Discussion, the most significant intellectual development of the 1920s, began with the squib written by Hryts'ko Iakovenko entitled “On Critics and Criticism in Literature” published in *Kul'tura i Pobut* (Culture and Daily life), a literary supplement to governmental newspaper *Visti VUTSVK* on 30 April 1925. Iakovenko, a *Pluh* writer, whose short story was rejected for a literary competition, accused Khvyl'ovyi and other “grey-haired Olympians” in restricting young writers with “a proper social origin” to enter literature. He used Khvyl'ovyi's short story *Ia (Romantyka)* as an example of literature, which could only be read by “philistines and degenerates, for whom the revolution was an example of acute spiritual sadism”.<sup>497</sup> Instead, he argued, that literature should be easily understood by everyone: “proletarian literature ought to be elementary and simple, but healthy and useful.”<sup>498</sup> In the same issue of *Kul'tura i Pobut*, a reply by Khvyl'ovyi was published. His “First Letter to Literary Youth” (“On ‘Satan in a Barrel,’ Graphomaniacs, Speculators and Other *Prosvita* Types”) initiated a long debate between Khvyl'ovyi and his associates and their opponents, representing an official party-authorised position.

The main disagreement between Iakovenko and Khvyl'ovyi was about the definition of proletarian literature. Through Iakovenko, Khvyl'ovyi attacked the rhetoric of the Russian literary group October (*Oktiabr'*), which was gaining ground in the Ukrainian letters. The Octobrists, a splinter group of Russian writers formed in 1922, aimed at

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<sup>497</sup> H. Iakovenko, “Pro Krytykiv i Krytyku v Literaturi,” *Kul'tura i Pobut*, 17 (1925), 25 April 1925.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*

“strengthening the Communist line in proletarian literature”, and included irreconcilable attitudes towards fellow travellers and cultivation of literature with limited intellectual horizon.<sup>499</sup> The association of the peasant writers *Pluh* copied the main standpoints of *Oktiabr'* in its platform and promoted them in Ukraine.<sup>500</sup> Hence, throughout the debate Khvyl'ovyi was tackling the all-Union processes of realigning the forces in literature. It would be wrong, however, to deny the uniqueness of the Literary Discussion in Ukraine: during this last free debate both cultural and political, and especially national, questions were raised.

The first cycle of pamphlets, *Kamo Hriadeshy?*, published in April–June 1925, was concerned mostly with the question of orientation of Ukrainian proletarian literature. In this cycle, four main images, widely elaborated later, were sketched. The first image was *prosvita*, the name of the nineteenth-century enlightenment societies, which were used after the revolution for providing basic political education and literacy campaigns. In addition, *prosvity* became centres for propaganda work and nurturing future proletarian writers and readers. Khvyl'ovyi openly rejected this interference into literary process. For him, ‘*prosvita*’ was primarily a psychological category, referring to provincialism, parochial and utilitarian attitude towards literature, exemplified in hackwork and mass culture. *Prosvity* were set against high culture and ‘academism’, ‘Olympus’ in Khvyl'ovyi’s vocabulary. This opposition also applied to understanding creative writing (a gift or a skill); a writer (a talented individual with his own worldview or a trained one, prepared to reproduce ready-made plots); and a reader (is literature meant to entertain and reflect the objective reality or to inspire?). In theory, this dichotomy should not exhaust the options available for readers.

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<sup>499</sup> Brown, *Proletarian Episode*, 14-15.

<sup>500</sup> “Platforma Ideolohichna i Khudozhnia Spilky Selians'kykh Pys'mennykiv ‘Pluh’,” in Leites, Iashek, *Desiat' Rokiv*, vol.II, 73-77.

During the Soviet twenties, however, literature acquired two-fold meaning: either as a form of creative activity (hence, autonomous) or a reflection of the political agenda (*zaangazhovana* (engaged) literature). Khvyl'ovyi relied on the distinction between social usefulness and party-mindedness to judge on the quality of literature.

Nonetheless, Khvyl'ovyi had an elitist approach to art: he called for literature written for intelligent readers, and not for semi-educated peasants and newly promoted workers. The issue here was about the standards of literary work; Khvyl'ovyi contested demands to lower the standards in order to engage the mass audience. Instead, the latter became the main focus group of *Pluh* and *Hart*. *Pluh* envisaged creating mass literature using “the greatest simplicity and economy of artistic methods.”<sup>501</sup> Pylypenko, the *Pluh* leader, enumerated the key components of mass culture in his article “*Nashi ‘hrikhy’*” [Our ‘sins’], published in *Pluzhanyn* in 1926. These were: orientation towards mass readership; a simple and accessible style and language; common topics; priority of content over form; and frequent engagement with the readers. In general, literature was regarded as a mass movement, composed of “literary forces, from the highest in their quality and talent to the lowest, to *robsil'kory* [worker and peasant correspondents], to contributors to wall newspaper and handwritten journals.”<sup>502</sup> In contrast, Khvyl'ovyi advocated for “the new art [...] created by workers and peasants. On condition, however, that they will be intellectually developed, talented, people of genius.”<sup>503</sup>

Undoubtedly, the proliferation of *prosvity* became a by-product of the revolution, which had destroyed the established social structures and brought to the fore the lowest as well as the least educated social groups. In addition, Ukrainizatsiia exposed a shortage of

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<sup>501</sup> *Platforma Ideologichna i Khudozhnia*, 76.

<sup>502</sup> Serhii Pylypenko, “Nashi ‘grikhy’,” in *Pluzhanyn*, 4-5 (1926), 1-2.

<sup>503</sup> Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis*, 54 (here and thereafter all the quotes are from Khvylovy, *Cultural Renaissance*, if not stated otherwise).

educated Ukrainian speakers and gave way into literature to writers with little or no talent.<sup>504</sup> The *prosvita*-type organisations (such as *Pluh* and *Hart*) embraced this post-revolutionary egalitarianism and encouraged those social activists to learn how to create literature. For Khvyl'ovyi, however, these 'writers' were nothing more than "pen-pushers",<sup>505</sup> who called literature "a sign outside the State Publishing House, the aphorism on a fence, and the verse on the toilet wall".<sup>506</sup> Against the mainstream developments of the age, Khvyl'ovyi defended the idea of a hierarchy, which should be based not on the class, but on the level of education and culture. For him, proletarian literature was meant to elevate and challenge its readers, but not to descend to mass tastes and appetites. 'Proletarian' literature for Khvyl'ovyi, same as for party officials, meant literature written for the working class audience, proletarian in its spirit. However, Khvyl'ovyi had a rather idealist vision of the proletariat: highly educated, politically engaged and nationally aware. Khvyl'ovyi concluded that the idea of proletarian art was misinterpreted and misused by mass literary organisations. So, he attempted to redefine the concept and to draft a program of a new literary organisation, tasked not only with promoting revolutionary values, but also with creating the environment for young talented writers to produce literary works of high-quality. The members of the new literary organisation were supposed to confront numerous pseudo-proletarian writers, dubbed by Khvyl'ovyi as 'red graphomaniacs'. The vision of the new literary organisation was further elaborated in the second cycle of essays, *Dumky proty Techii* (November-December 1925). The organisation was envisaged to encourage:

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<sup>504</sup> The character of such writer, Stepan Radchenko, was aptly presented by Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi in his novel *Misto* (1928).

<sup>505</sup> Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis*, 53.

<sup>506</sup> Khvylovy, *Thoughts against the Current*, 109.

the concentration of creative individuals (critics, publicistic critics, creative writers) who would on the one hand satisfy the now rising demands of the worker-peasant masses, and whose distinct and clearly visible ranks would on the other hand be capable of counterpoising the new world-view of a young class to the old ideology of art.<sup>507</sup>

This vision was realised through VAPLITE, the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature (*Vil'na Akademiia Proletars'koï Literatury*), formed in October 1925.<sup>508</sup> Khvyl'ovyi was a leader of the Academy, the writer Ialovyi (replaced later by a playwright Kulish) was elected its President, and Arkadii Liubchenko became a secretary. According to the resolution of the first meeting, the organisation aimed “to unite qualified writers [...] with a [common] ideological basis, while retaining wide autonomy as far as their literary work is concerned.”<sup>509</sup> In general, the new literary organisation defended the quality of artistic activity. According to Khvyl'ovyi, VAPLITE’s mission was to revive artistic criteria, to replace the principle ‘give me quantity’ by ‘let’s go for quality’.<sup>510</sup> The Academy published a literary almanac *Vaplite* (1926) and a literary journal VAPLITE, five issues of which appeared in 1927. On its pages, prose and poetry appeared alongside critical studies, book reviews, political and social essays.

### “Europe”: the Question of Artistic Orientation

The call to orientate Ukraine’s art to Western European art, its style and techniques, advanced by Khvyl'ovyi in 1925, became, perhaps, the most debatable one. However, the idea of Western orientation of Ukrainian culture was not new. By the end of the nineteenth century, an independent tradition had been developed, which was based on close ties with Western art bypassing Russian mediation. The close relationship between Dnieper and

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>508</sup> “Protokol Narady Pys'mennykiv m. Kharkova,” in Dzherela do Istorii Vaplite, ed. Iu. Luts'kyi, *Ukraïns'ka Literaturna Hazeta* (Munchen), 3-4.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>510</sup> Khvylovy, *Thoughts against the Current*, 139.

Western Ukraine exposed national art to Polish and Austrian influences. Already in the works of Modernist artists one can find reminiscences to predominant European themes and style. Also, by the 1920s, due to considerable independent travel and study abroad, Ukrainian artists had become rather well acquainted with Europe. For instance, the founders of the Ukrainian Avant-Garde, Vasyl' Iermilov, Alexander Bogomazov, Kazimir Malevich, David Burliuk, Vladimir Tatlin, and Aleksandra Ekster, who were either by birth, education, national tradition or identity connected to Kyiv, as well as Kharkiv, L'viv, and Odesa, had been trained and maintained their own studios in different European cities. The most famous Ukrainian theatre director of the 1920s Les' [Oleksandr] Kurbas, who was influenced by the experimentalism during his studies in Vienna, introduced Western traditions into national theatre. Moreover, the Ukrainian Commissariat for Education in the second half of the 1920s initiated a campaign to entice émigrés, such as Tatlin, Vasyl' Kasiian, and Malevich, to return to Soviet Ukraine.

It should be admitted that in Ukraine there was a strong intellectual tradition in opposing Russian cultural dominance. Before the First World War, there were three dominant cultural attitudes: 1) an ambivalent “Little Russia” approach (regarding Ukrainians as “little Russians” and Ukraine as a part of Great Russia); 2) search for *modus vivendi* with the progressive side of Russian culture; and 3) cultural nationalism calling for complete break from Ukrainian subordinate status. These attitudes had deep roots in Ukrainian history and cultural tradition. The first tradition was represented by a Ukrainian-born Russian writer Nikolai Gogol' (1809-1852), who in his numerous literary works cemented Ukrainian provincialism and its submission to the Great Russian imperial culture and its standards. The second camp, led by a Ukrainian philosopher Mykhailo Drahomanov (1841-1895), believed in a nationally unbiased imperial Pan-Russian culture, under whose

umbrella local Ukrainian and Russian cultures could be developed. On the other hand, the third camp, initiated by the activity of a literary journalist, historian and academician Iefremov (1876-1939), advocated a complete divorce from Russian imperial culture. This approach in 1917 evolved into “cultural nationalism” proclaiming that Russian culture was no longer the intellectual currency for Ukrainians.<sup>511</sup> Hence, Khvyl'ovyi continued the tradition of cultural nationalism in Ukrainian intellectual history, albeit he enhanced it with the Marxist dialectics.

Thus, Khvyl'ovyi's audacious statement of “storming Europe!”<sup>512</sup> expressed in one of his pamphlets, was not without a sound basis. Khvyl'ovyi and his fellows had the first-hand knowledge of what Europe could offer to the young Soviet Ukrainian republic and its cultural development. Nonetheless, Khvyl'ovyi's concept of ‘Europe’ was hard to define. In the first cycle of pamphlets, ‘Europe’ was simply associated with high standards of artistic work and set against torrents of low-quality literature, which had inundated the republic's bookstores and libraries during the 1920s. The concept of ‘psychological Europe’ was used to counterweight provincialism and epigone art, initiated by the *prosvity*:

Europe is the experience of many ages. It is not the Europe that Spengler announced “in decline”, not the one that is rotting and which we despise. It is the Europe of a grandiose civilisation, the Europe of Goethe, Darwin, Byron, Newton, Marx and so on and so forth.<sup>513</sup> Einsteins, both great and small, are Europeans, and half-baked professors are *prosvita*-types.<sup>514</sup>

In *Dumky proty Techii*, Khvyl'ovyi added further definitions to ‘Europe’:

You ask: “Which Europe?” Take whichever you like, ‘past or present, bourgeois or proletarian, eternal or ever-changing’. Because, to be sure, Hamlets, Don Juans or Tartuffes

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<sup>511</sup> Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists*, 3-10.

<sup>512</sup> Khvylovy, “Addendum the ‘Automobile’ of the Present day,” in Khvylovy, *Cultural Renaissance*, 148.

<sup>513</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Dumky proty Techii*, 110.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

existed in the past, but they also exist today, they used to be bourgeois, but they are also proletarian, you can consider them 'eternal,' but they will be 'ever-changing'.<sup>515</sup>

His understanding of 'psychological Europe' was not bound to a political system or geographical borders. Instead, 'Europe' was defined through certain qualities, the total of which contributed to the creation of a "grandiose civilisation," as Europe was regarded. This advance was attributed to, firstly:

*the ideal of a civic person, who over the course of many ages has perfected his biological, or more accurately his psycho-physiological nature, and who is the property of all classes.*<sup>516</sup>

The second constituent of 'psychological Europe' was an intellectual one as such and the value attached to any intellectual activity, as said:

this is the European intelligent in the best sense of the word. This, if you like, is the sorcerer from Wüttemberg who revealed a grandiose civilization to us and opened up limitless vistas to our gaze. This is Doctor Faustus, if we conceive of the latter as the inquisitive human spirit.<sup>517</sup>

Khvylovyyi's 'Europe' was clearly an elitist idea, addressed to those well-aware of European intellectual tradition and Western culture. While defining the concept, Khvylovyyi constantly polemicised with the German philosopher Oswald Spengler and his vision of "Europe in decline". He did not agree with Spengler's definition of the third cycle of cultural development (European-Faustian). For the writer, Europe was the Faustian civilisation per se, and "the inquisitive human spirit" was "the property of all classes" and all cultural types. Similarly, the pamphlets have abundant references to *Sturm und Drang*, the German late eighteenth-century literary movement, inspired by J. G. Herder and led by Goethe. In addition, he alluded to Nietzsche and Wagner. His readers were meant to follow his free flow of thoughts and be comfortable with all the references and allusions.

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<sup>515</sup> Khvylovyyi, *Thoughts against the Current*, 120.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid, 120 (italics in original).

<sup>517</sup> Ibid, 120.

Obviously, Khvylyovyi's pamphlets were not targeted at laymen. It was directed towards both young intellectuals and the old-line intelligentsia. His image of 'Europe' became associated with Zerov, the literary critic, a translator of the ancients and an outstanding poet. The reference to a particular individual quickly became an abstract idea by the use of the plural "Zerovs", meaning those intellectuals, who resembled the Western type of an intellectual:

[...] we have to use our Zerovs not only for their technical skills, but also in their psychological dimension. The single, at first glance insignificant (and, in the opinion of some, counter-revolutionary) fact – that they are so resolutely going "against the current" in translating the Romans, gives us the right to view them as real Europeans.<sup>518</sup>

Khvylyovyi was well aware of Ukraine's backwardness. He linked it primarily to the lack of a Faustian activist attitude, of that 'inquisitive human spirit'. He often defined Ukraine as a '*Khokhliandia*' (from '*khokhol*', an exonym to denominate Ukrainians, which dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century), 'classic country of cultural epigonism', of 'servile psychology',<sup>519</sup> which kept producing 'a sluggish artist

capable only of repeating what has already been gone before, of aping. He simply cannot grasp that a nation can express its cultural potential only if it discovers its own particular path of development. He cannot grasp this, because he is afraid *to dare!*<sup>520</sup>

Eventually, in the most explosive third cycle of pamphlets *Apologety Pysarysmu*, he openly attacked Russian chauvinism and its unfavourable influence on Ukraine as reasons for such adverse state of affairs. Still, the writer attempted to separate culture from politics: "one should not confuse our political union with literature".<sup>521</sup> His primary concern was how to make new Soviet Ukrainian literature original, self-sufficient and independent from the

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<sup>518</sup> Khvylyovyi, *Thoughts against the Current*, 91-92.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid, 124 (italics in original).

<sup>521</sup> Ibid, 124.

‘Russian conductor’.<sup>522</sup> His non-political attitude was, of course, a matter of perspective. For the central party leadership, communist Khvyly'ovyi was definitely crossing the line and it was simply a matter of time when it would be subdued.

Khvyly'ovyi questioned: “by which of the world’s literatures should we set our course?” and immediately provided a definite and unconditional answer: “On no account by the Russian. [...] Ukrainian poetry must flee as quickly as possible from Russian literature and its styles.”<sup>523</sup> His determination was caused by a number of factors, the combination of which made cultural orientation towards Moscow detrimental for the new Soviet Ukrainian culture. He admitted the high quality of Russian great literature, but rejected it being a mediator for Ukrainian literature in its evolution.<sup>524</sup> First of all, as believed, there was nothing to learn for young Ukrainian writers from their Russian fellows. Russian great literature, written during the nineteenth century, according to Khvyly'ovyi, had no examples of an active citizen. A “passive pessimism,” claimed to be an inherent feature of the Russian classics, led to producing “cadres of ‘superfluous people’, or to put it simply parasites, ‘dreamers’, people ‘without any given responsibility’, ‘whimperers’, ‘grey little people’ of the ‘twentieth rank’.”<sup>525</sup> Russian literature had already reached its golden age in times of “feeble nobility” and feudalism. So, it had approached its limits and stopped on a cross-road. Hence, “Death to Dostoevskism! Up with the cultural renaissance!”<sup>526</sup>

Similarly, Russian proletarian literature had nothing to offer. For the writer, Moscow was a centre of “all-Union Philistinism” that “essentially never saw the October revolution

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<sup>522</sup> Khvylyovyi, *Apologists of Scribbling*, 222.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid*, 222.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid*, 317.

<sup>525</sup> Khvylyovyi, *Ukraine or Little Russia*, 229.

<sup>526</sup> Khvylyovyi, *Apologists of Scribbling*, 223-224.

and its heroic struggle.”<sup>527</sup> Moscow, a new Soviet capital, for Khvyl'ovyi was a centre of bureaucracy and perverted revolutionary slogans. Since the new proletarian ethos was borrowed, Russian literature was unable to kindle the belief in the ‘commune behind the hill’. Overall, Khvyl'ovyi was extremely critical of the Russian Proletkult-type writers (the Smithy (*Kuznitsa*) and the Octobrists, and the *Na Postu* circle), for whom Soviet Ukraine was a mere province of Russia. He opposed the dominant Russian (and often Ukrainian) perspective that Ukrainian literature was subservient and hence could not be original. In fact, Khvyl'ovyi was tackling, as defined in his pamphlets, the colonial condition of Ukraine, exposed at around the same time in economic matters by Volobuiev and in political sphere by Shums'kyi.

For this reason, the relationship between the Ukrainian and Russian writers often acquired political undertones. For instance, Khvyl'ovyi took any comparison of Ukrainian writers to the Russian ones painfully. Khvyl'ovyi was well aware of the fact that he himself was often called a “Ukrainian Pil'niak”. However, he detested this comparison not because of Pil'niak’s merit, whose early prose he admired (“where in each line one can see an artist”<sup>528</sup>), but due to the suggested subordinate status of Soviet Ukrainian literature, as seen from the Moscow perspective. The visit of Pil'niak to the capital of Soviet Ukraine in March 1924 could serve as the best example of how tense the literary liaisons between the two Soviet republics were. The literary evening was organised to show both the “urban (*mishchans'ka*) intelligentsia, defined as ‘the patron of the genuine Russian culture’, and to Pil'niak that Kharkiv was not a Russian (*russkaia*) province but a capital of the Soviet Ukrainian Republic. The literary evening concluded with a scandal. The Ukrainian writers did not appreciate the prose of Pil'niak, presented at the evening. Consequently, Khvyl'ovyi

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<sup>527</sup> Khvylovy, *Ukraine or Little Russia*, 228-229.

<sup>528</sup> Instytut Rukopysu, F.131, nos 183-195; *Spadshchyna*, 251.

published a scathing review on the event in the literary supplement to *Visti VUTsVK*, calling Pil'niak “a bard of the moribund noble estate”.<sup>529</sup> In a private letter to Mohylians'kyi, Khvyl'ovyi stated that Kharkiv writers took a militant stand against all “the brazen fellows Mayakovskys, who claim that ‘There is no Ukrainian literature’ [...] all the dandies from the Moscow bohemia”.<sup>530</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi believed that the revolution had initiated a distinct current in Ukrainian literature, which took a completely separate path from Russian literature. What was lacking, however, is civic values offered by the European civilisation. Such re-orientation from Russian patterns towards Western techniques and manners was conditional. Khvyl'ovyi did not just want to change “the conductor” for young Ukrainian literature; his idea was to adopt only those characteristics, which were in short supply among Ukrainians (namely an active citizen, value of intellect, intellectual activity, and civil society) and to enhance them with romantic *vitaism*, the current he and his followers had been perfecting. His idea was as follows:

When we steer our course toward Western European literature, it is not with the goal of yoking our art to some other wagon bringing up the rear, but with the aim of reviving it after the asphyxiating atmosphere of backwardness. We will travel to Europe to study, but with a secret idea – after several years to burn with an extraordinary flame.<sup>531</sup>

Overall, the pamphlets challenged the intelligent readers and made no concessions to the ignorant ones. This elitist perspective, however, ran counter to the main social developments and political interests of the time. Khvyl'ovyi denounced the democratisation of the Soviet culture, which came hand-in-hand with accommodating mass audience and middle-brow tastes. Indeed, the criticism against Khvyl'ovyi exposed the narrow-mindedness of the majority of Ukraine’s politicians and literary activists, who did not want

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<sup>529</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, “Pil'niak, ‘Slovobludie’ i ‘Niekii’ Retsensent,” *Kul'tura i Pobut*, 11 (1924), 3.

<sup>530</sup> Instytut Rukopysu, F.131, nos 183-195; *Spadshchyna*, 251.

<sup>531</sup> Khvylovy, *Apologists of Scribbling*, 223-224.

to be taught or challenged by another “grey-haired old man” and “Olympians”.<sup>532</sup> Needless to say, an approach elaborated by the card-carrying communist Khvyl'ovyi in the 1920s was bizarre, to say the least, within Soviet ideological framework of the time. With the course on industrialisation, adopted in 1925, literature was slowly becoming subordinate to this envisaged grand social and economic transformation. This view could not tolerate the elitist understanding of art, so ardently advocated by Khvyl'ovyi and other Vaplitians.

The public campaign against Khvyl'ovyi and his supporters exposed the unbridgeable differences between the promoters of elitist and mass conceptions of Soviet culture. The main concern of the debate was the social role of literature: should art be subordinated to political imperatives and be didactic and useful, or should it merely be imagination's plaything, detached from social conditions? A letter from the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education (formerly Kharkiv University) dated from May 1925 condemned Khvyl'ovyi's “unpatriotic orientation on literary standards set by Western Europe”. Instead of highbrow writing and elitist literature, the Kharkiv Institute's staff called for “a mass literature accessible to and so badly required by workers”.<sup>533</sup> A similar opinion was voiced by the members of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv. On 24 May 1925 the public discussion “Paths for the Development of Contemporary Literature” was hosted by this authoritative scientific institution. One of the questions submitted was: “Which Europe does Khvyl'ovyi want to follow?” The critique was overwhelming; Khvyl'ovyi was accused of advocating ‘bourgeois, philistine, and hostile to the goals of Communism’ Europe. As one participant questioned: “Should one prefer the Tarzan novel of Edgar Rice Burroughs to the poetry of Mayakovsky?”<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> Iakovenko, “Pro Krytykiv i Krytyku v Literaturi,” *Kul'tura i Pobut*, 30 April 1925.

<sup>533</sup> Quote in Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists*, 54.

<sup>534</sup> *Shliakhy Rozvytku*, 7.

Among Ukraine's intellectuals, however, there were those who supported Khvyl'ovyi's stance. Zerov made an attempt to deprive Khvyl'ovyi's images of political implications. According to the literary critic, 'Europe' in Khvyl'ovyi's approach was nothing more than a strong cultural tradition. From this point of view, the opposition of 'Europe vs. Prosvita' was framed as *kul'tura* vs. *khaltura*, a culture of lasting values vs. hackwork.<sup>535</sup> In one of his essays, Zerov observed:

In our literary life there is still very little real culture, little knowledge, little education, while our scholarship is at a disadvantage. [...] Khvyl'ovyi is right. A young writer must get rid of his illiteracy in the field in which he wishes to work. [...] Such self-education will be the first step to what Khvyl'ovyi called 'Europe'. We can conquer Europe only when we make their achievement our own"<sup>536</sup>

Indeed, Khvyl'ovyi's abstract idea of 'Europe' corresponded to a set of values, which would be indisputable in any other social order. The value of education, intellectuality, high-quality culture, social activism could only be opposed in a society that had experienced and legitimised the revolt of the masses.<sup>537</sup> To a certain extent, Khvyl'ovyi was a provocateur. Unsurprisingly, his 'Europe' was attacked from all sides. Firstly, those least educated party members and workers, brought to the fore by the revolution and whose status was codified by the Soviet promotion campaigns and nationalities projects, could not accept Khvyl'ovyi's demands. Similarly, his non-political idea of "psychological Europe" was doomed by its ideological connotations: one could not expect that the opposition 'Moscow vs. Europe' would not gain political sounding in a country whose entire existence was based on this dichotomy. In the end, Khvyl'ovyi, could reflect the position of only a minority of the Ukrainian old-line intelligentsia and artists, dedicated to creating high-brow culture for the elite and by the elite. Khvyl'ovyi continuously emphasised that his idea of

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<sup>535</sup> Mace, *Communism*, 141.

<sup>536</sup> Zerov, *Do Dzherel*, 256.

<sup>537</sup> Reference to José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930).

proletarian literature was based not on the class origin or ideology of writers, but on their skills and artistic potential. As he explained, “the Soviet *intelligent* Zerov, who is armed with the higher mathematics of art is – hyperbolically speaking – a million times more useful than a hundred *prosvita*-types, who are about as well versed in this art as a pig in orange-growing.<sup>538</sup> Nonetheless, these single *inteligenty* could hardly compete with the predominance of mass culture, gaining ground in the second half of the 1920s. This incompatibility doomed any prospects of a different Soviet literature in Ukraine.

### “Asiatic Renaissance”: Ukrainian Messianism

Another image introduced in *Kamo Hriadeshy?* was ‘Asiatic renaissance’. This was the most illogical and emotional concept, to which the polemicist recurred constantly in all his pamphlets. In general terms, Khvyl'ovyi developed the concept of the ‘Asiatic renaissance’ as a response to Spengler’s vision of “Europe in decline”. The Ukrainian theorist made a daring attempt to challenge Spengler’s theory of three cycles in cultural development (the Ancient-Apollonian, the Arab-Magic, and the European-Faustian) and enhance them with Marxist principles of causality and historic materialism, adding the fourth, “proletarian” cultural-historical type.<sup>539</sup> Khvyl'ovyi seconded Spengler that Europe, which had produced “feudal” and “bourgeois” cultural types, had exhausted its powers and hence could not produce the fourth, “proletarian” cycle. Thus, Khvyl'ovyi agreed with Spengler that Europe approached its decline “not, however, as the Faustian culture but as the bourgeois type.”<sup>540</sup>

The fourth cultural type, according to Khvyl'ovyi, was to be initiated in Asia, where another human energy had started to grow: ‘the yellow peril,’ “symbolising the real force

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<sup>538</sup> Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis?* 45-46.

<sup>539</sup> See, footnote 1 in Shevel'ov *Lit Ikara*, 309-310; V. Holubenko, “Khvyl'ovyi i Shpenhler,” *Suchasnist'*, 5 (1963), 53-70.

<sup>540</sup> Khvylovy, *Ukraine or Little Russia*, 231.

which will solve the problem of Communist society.”<sup>541</sup> Attention to Asian countries, considered able to approach worldwide socialism was not new. The role of national liberation movements in destroying imperialism and capitalism had already been brought up by orthodox Marxists and partially implemented by the Comintern.<sup>542</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, in turn, offered an approach of cultural decolonisation. Hence, the awakening of European creative energy was bounded to cultural ‘Asiatic Renaissance’. In the long run, he anticipated “the future unheard-of flowering of art among such nations as China, India, and so forth [...] because Asia, realising that only Communism will liberate it from economic slavery, will utilise art as a factor in the battle.”<sup>543</sup>

In the short run, however, Asiatic renaissance was meant to be triggered by the cultural revival in the Soviet Union. Khvyl'ovyi predicted that the “mysterious country that will solve the great world problem” already existed within the borders of the Soviet Union, the first and the only country of ‘victorious socialism.’ Khvyl'ovyi obviously was well-aware of the Russian intellectual current of Eurasianism, which he, however, treated rather flexibly, same as the ideas of Spengler, Lenin or Marx. It is noteworthy that Khvyl'ovyi assigned an exceptional part in disclosing this great Asiatic potential to Soviet Ukraine. He explained:

In the fact the spiritual culture of Bolshevism can only express itself clearly in the young Soviet republics and in the first place under the azure skies of the South-Eastern republic of the Communes, which has always been an arena of civil strife and which has raised on its luxuriant steppes the type of the revolutionary conquistador. [...] Inasmuch as Eurasia [*surprisingly often used by the writer as a synonym for Soviet Ukraine*] stands on the boundary of two great territories, of two energies, the avant-garde of the fourth cultural-historical type is constituted by us.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>542</sup> E.g., the position of M. N. Roy, who advocated that capitalism could be shaken only by the support of the national-liberation movements in the colonies. See, Demetrio Boersner, *The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question (1917-1928)* (Geneva: Libraire E. Droz, 1957).

<sup>543</sup> Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis*, 67.

<sup>544</sup> Khvylovy, *Ukraine or Little Russia*, 232.

The new art that Europe is awaiting will issue from the South-Eastern republic of the communes, from none other than Soviet Ukraine.<sup>545</sup>

The messianic role of Ukraine, as predicted by Khvylovyyi, suggests at least one main question: why Russia, the country which possessed the same necessary attributes as Ukraine, was unable to spark this great cultural revival of the West? For contemporaries, the reason was irrational, Khvylovyyi simply did not like Russia,<sup>546</sup> which he once defined “the old mother Kaluga”.<sup>547</sup> Khvylovyyi’s partiality was well-known. In one of the reviews, Skrypnyk provocatively asked: “Is he [Khvylovyyi] against Russian literary trends and their forms because the latter are bad or because they are Russian?”<sup>548</sup> Clearly, Khvylovyyi’s argumentation did not stand up to criticism and rational explanation.

Khvylovyyi bound the messianic role of Ukraine with the optimistic belief in the grand potential of Soviet Ukrainian literature and the new proletarian elites in Ukraine. As mentioned above, he was sceptical about the potential of Russian Soviet literature, which itself could “only find the magical balm for its revival beneath the luxuriant, vital tree of the renaissance of young national republics, in the atmosphere of the springtime of once oppressed nations”.<sup>549</sup> So,

Romantic *vitalism* [...] is the art of the first period of the Asiatic renaissance. From Ukraine it must flow forth to all parts of the world and play there not a local, limited role but one of the significance for humanity in general.<sup>550</sup>

Another question, which suggests itself, however, is whether in Ukraine in 1926 there were any prerequisites to claim such predestination. Khvylovyyi somewhat optimistically believed that all the necessary components for Soviet Ukraine to steer the process of world socialist liberation were about to be in place. Firstly, he believed in the potential of the new

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<sup>545</sup> Khvylovyyi, *Quo Vadis*, 85.

<sup>546</sup> Shevel'ov, *Lit Ikara*, 309.

<sup>547</sup> Khvylovyyi, *Quo Vadis*, 70.

<sup>548</sup> Mykola Skrypnyk, *Do Teorii Borot'by Dvokh Kul'tur* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1926), 25-26.

<sup>549</sup> Khvylovyyi, *Ukraine or Little Russia*, 229.

<sup>550</sup> Khvylovyyi, *Quo Vadis*, 70.

Ukrainian proletarian intelligentsia. Similarly to the idea of the *Geniezeit* (the Age of Genius), developed by the *Sturm und Drang* group,<sup>551</sup> Khvyl'ovyi entrusted this task to numerous 'rebellious geniuses' (*m''iatezhni henii*), who went through the revolution and the civil wars and used their first-hand experience to create world class literature. The group of talented Ukrainian proletarian writers, the Olympians, had already gathered around Khvyl'ovyi in the VAPLITE. Khvyl'ovyi explained:

the powerful Asiatic renaissance in art is approaching and its forerunners are we, the 'Olympians.' Just as Petrarch, Michelangelo, Raphael and others in their time from a tiny corner of Italy set Europe afire with the flame of the Renaissance, in the same way the new artists from the once oppressed Asiatic countries, the new artistic-communards who are travelling with us will climb the peak of Mount Helicon and place there the lamp of renaissance, and, under the distant thunder of fighting on the barricades, it will cast the light of its fiery purple-blue pentangle over the dark European night.<sup>552</sup>

The Vaplitiens were to break the centuries-old provincialism of Ukrainian culture and initiate the new civilizational cycle, the "proletarian" cultural-historical type. The new cultural and political elites and promoters of a distinct Soviet Ukrainian literature were tasked to spread the new ethos among Ukraine's workers. Unfortunately, the VAPLITE with its scant membership, personally selected by Khvyl'ovyi,<sup>553</sup> could hardly compete for the minds of Ukraine's working class with such mass literary organisations as *Pluh* and VUSPP (All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers (*Vseukraïns'ka Spilka Proletars'kyh Pys'mennykiv*, 1927-1932), who had also secured the support of the establishment.

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<sup>551</sup> Hryn, 78-79.

<sup>552</sup> Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis*, 65-66.

<sup>553</sup> According to the memoirs of Liubchenko, Khvyl'ovyi carefully selected members of his Academy. The "application process" consisted of one-to-one conversations, provocative questions, and, of course, the literary merit of every potential candidate. See: Arkadii Liubchenko, "Spogady pro Khvyl'ovogo: Iz Zapysnoi Knyzhky," in *Vaplitiens'kyi Zbirnyk*, ed. Iu. Luts'kyi (Oakwill: Mosaïka, 1977), 44).

### *Ukraine or Little Russia: the Political Dimension of the Debate*

With every new cycle of pamphlets, Khvyl'ovyi's views were becoming more political. Already in *Apolohety Pysaryzmu*, the underlying question of causes for Ukraine's cultural backwardness assumed a political aspect. The question became explicit: whether any independent cultural policy in Ukraine was possible while the republic remained politically and economically tied to Russia? The last essay of *Apolohety Pysaryzmu* 'Moscow's *Zadrypanky*' (March 1926), contained an open demand for political autonomy. Khvyl'ovyi developed his views in line with the demands of national communists and those KP(b)U members who belonged to what was defined as "a separatist Ukrainian horizon". Hence, the politicisation of the literary debate in the beginning of 1926 reflected the aggravation of the power struggle between local and central elites and within them. Khvyl'ovyi's open attacks against Russian domination and Ukraine's subordinate status should be read in line with the campaign against Shums'kyi and the conclusions drawn by Volobuiev about the economic exploitation of Ukraine (see Section One). Khvyl'ovyi summarised:

Of course, the development of culture is "dictated by economic relations." But the point is precisely that these relations are not at all "the same in both countries." [...] In a word, the Union nevertheless remains a Union and Ukraine is an independent entity. [...] Under the influence of our economy, we are applying to our literature not 'the Slavophile theory of originality,' but the theory of Communist independence. [...] Is Russia an independent state? It is! Well, in that case we too are independent."<sup>554</sup>

Later on, Khvyl'ovyi deplored Moscow's patronising attitude, worded in the dichotomy, "*Ukraïna chy Malorosïia*" [Ukraine or Little Russia]. He pinned his hopes on those young communists and state functionaries, who would be "first communards and then Ukrainians", who would challenge Ukraine's subordinate status and its colonial condition.

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<sup>554</sup> Khvylovy, *Apologists of Scribbling*, 222.

In his censored pamphlet *Ukraïna chy Malorosiia* (written in summer 1926), Khvyl'ovyi concluded:

We are indeed an independent state whose republican organism is a part of the Soviet Union. And Ukraine is independent not because we, communists, desire this, but because the iron and irresistible will of the laws of history demands it, because only in this way shall we hasten class differentiation in Ukraine. [...] To gloss over independence with a hollow pseudo-Marxism is to fail to understand that Ukraine will continue to be an arena for counter-revolution as long as it does not pass through the natural stage that Western Europe went through during the formation of nation-states.<sup>555</sup>

Primarily, the writer appealed that the national question was not solved in the Soviet Union. Soviet Ukraine, perhaps similar to other republics, continued to suffer from Russian chauvinism. These blames were directed towards the implementers of the korenizatsiia policy, adopted in 1923 ostensibly to fight both the Great-Russian chauvinism as well as any manifestations of local nationalism.<sup>556</sup> Not surprisingly, the views of Khvyl'ovyi, the writer, were likened to those of Shums'kyi, the politician. They were both addressed in the letter of Stalin to Kaganovich (26 April 1926). A significant part of the letter, which was mainly concerned with the errors of the Commissar for Education Shums'kyi, was devoted to the pamphlets of “a noted Communist” Khvyl'ovyi. Stalin pedantically went through Khvyl'ovyi's three cycles of pamphlets (*Kamo Hriadeshy*, *Dumky proty Techii* and *Apolohety Pysarysmu*), highlighting the ideas of distancing Ukrainian literature from Russian literature and style, promoting a messianic role of Ukrainian intelligentsia, and ‘non-Marxist attempts’ to divorce culture from politics. The letter read:

At a time when the proletarians of Western Europe and their Communist Parties are in sympathy with ‘Moscow,’ this citadel of the international revolutionary movement and of Leninism, at a time when the proletarians of Western Europe look with admiration at the flag that flies over Moscow, the Ukrainian Communist Khvilevoy has nothing better to say in favour of ‘Moscow’ than to call on the Ukrainian leaders to get away from ‘Moscow’ ‘as fast as possible’. And that is called internationalism! What is to be said of other Ukrainian

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<sup>555</sup> Khvylovy, *Ukraine or Little Russia*, 227.

<sup>556</sup> Stalin, *National Factors*.

intellectuals, those of the non-communist camp, if Communists begin to talk, and not only to talk but even to write in our Soviet press, in the language of Khvilevoy?<sup>557</sup>

The authorities feared the influence of Khvyl'ovyi on Ukraine's artistic circles. Hence, the campaign persisted. In the article published in the newspaper *Komunist* on 30 May 1926, the head of the Ukrainian Radnarkom Chubar attacked Khvyl'ovyi for his views. Further on, Khvyl'ovyi was reproached numerously at the June 1926 TsK KP(b)U Plenum, dedicated to discussing the results of Ukrainizatsiia. The Thesis on the Results of Ukrainizatsiia read: "The slogans of orienting towards Europe, "Away from Moscow", etc., are telling; albeit until now they are limited only to culture and literature. These slogans can only be ascribed to the Ukrainian petite intelligentsia, which continues to grow under NEP. [They] understand the national revival only as a bourgeois restoration, and under the orientation towards Europe they, indeed, see the orientation towards a capitalist Europe and [promote] distancing from the fortress of the international revolution, the capital of the USSR, Moscow".<sup>558</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi's alleged ideological errors were continuously linked to the ambiguity of the NEP decade. Zatons'kyi voiced his concerns that young communists clearly became confused and should be given a helping hand in telling right from wrong. He tried to excuse Khvyl'ovyi by emphasising his ambiguity: "one cannot be born a Bolshevik, instead one becomes a Bolshevik. Out of Khvyl'ovyi and Khvyl'oviyis we should harden communists [...] we should train people, who are useful for the revolution, who would not spread the poison of disbelief and liquidationism, but who would instead help the proletariat in its arduous everyday battle."<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, Spr.2248; On Khvyl'ovyi and Shums'kyi, ark.1-7; For English translation see: Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 66-68.

<sup>558</sup> Leites, Iashek, *Desiat' Rokiv*, vol.II, 300.

<sup>559</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.1, spr.208, ark.45.

At the Plenum, Shums'kyi, who was criticised for ignoring Khvyl'ovyi's deviations,<sup>560</sup> publicly addressed ideological inconsistency of the latter. He continuously defended Khvyl'ovyi, "a Ukrainian communist, "a person with a well-developed Marxist and materialist world-view".<sup>561</sup> At the June Plenum Shums'kyi answered the party allegations towards the writer:

If only for a moment I could have imagined that the communist Khvyl'ovyi could promote or agitate the idea of Ukraine as a bourgeois republic and her capitalist and nationalist renaissance, I would have immediately suggested excluding him from the Party. But I am truly convinced that these assumptions are false. [...] However, I am also aware that Khvyl'ovyi has no clear perspective as for developing Ukraine's culture and literature. [...] And this might have been the reason for his confusion.<sup>562</sup>

With this comment Shums'kyi also suggested that the project of Soviet Ukrainian culture, ardently promoted by Khvyl'ovyi and himself did not yet become a cohesive program. It was becoming clear, with the incipient political campaign against the two that the ambitious vision of Soviet Ukrainian culture could hardly succeed. On the last day of the party session of the Plenum, Khvyl'ovyi was given the floor to justify himself. However, he capitulated:

I concede that there could be some exaggerations in the ideas and concepts I have developed [...]. However, overall, I believe there are grains of truth. [...] Nonetheless, if the entire Plenum agrees on my errors, I should acknowledge them and stop. First of all, I am a disciplined member of the Party.<sup>563</sup>

After the plenum, Khvyl'ovyi stopped appearing in the national press. His capitulation was most probably linked to the overall downfall of the significance of the Ukrainian horizon in the party and the lack of support for his critical stand. Amidst the spiralling campaign against Shums'kyi, those 'dissented' communists needed to declare their loyalty. So, in

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<sup>560</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.1, spr.208, *Stenograficheskii Otchet Plenuma TsK KP(b)U*, ark.76.

<sup>561</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.6, spr.88, ark.128-zv.

<sup>562</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.13, spr.199, ark. 59.

<sup>563</sup> TSDAGO, F. 1, Op. 1, Spr. 208, Ark. 79-zv.-80-zv.

December 1926, Khvyl'ovyi submitted his first letter of recantation. The repentant Declaration of the Group of the Communists and VAPLITE members, signed by Khvyl'ovyi, Dosvitnyi and Ialovyi was published in the newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* on 4 December 1926. In it, the three VAPLITE leaders repeated all the charges issued against Khvyl'ovyi on the June KP(b)U Plenum. They acknowledged their “ideological and political errors” and reaffirmed that their activity was in line with the party agenda on cultural building.<sup>564</sup> Despite the recantation, the writers were dismissed from the *Vaplite*'s editorial board and replaced by candidates who were previously approved by the KP(b)U. Further on, in January 1927 all three were unanimously expelled from the VAPLITE in order “to negate any harmful effect that those members could have on the entire organisation”.<sup>565</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi, nevertheless, continued to publish in the VAPLITE periodicals. On its pages he proceeded, although in a more moderate manner, with his critique of the literary establishment. The three pamphlets, published in the first issues of the VAPLITE journal, were directed towards the party-sponsored *VUSPP*, whose first congress took place on 25-28 January 1927.<sup>566</sup> Similarly, although in a fictional form, his political concerns once again were conveyed in the novel *Val'dshnepy* [The Woodcocks]. Written during summer 1926, the first part of the novel was published in the fifth issue of the VAPLITE journal in 1927. In it, the writer addressed the legacy of the revolution, the detrimental changes in social and political spheres, provinciality and the cultural backwardness of Soviet Ukraine. Consequently, the second part of the novel was confiscated before it reached print and has not been found in any of the archives up to now. The excerpts from the second part were

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<sup>564</sup> Leites, Iashek *Desiat' Rokiv*, vol.II, 205-206.

<sup>565</sup> “Postanova Zagal'nykh Zboriv VAPLITE vid 25. I. 27 r.” in Luts'kyi, *Dzherela*, 4-5; Lyst do Redaktsii. *Komunist*. March 18, 1927.

<sup>566</sup> See: Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol.4, 347-413.

quoted in Khvyliia's extensive critical review *Vid Ukhylu – u Prirvu* [From Deviation into Abyss] (1928).

In the novel, Khvyl'ovyi expressed his concerns through continuous political and philosophical debates between Dmytrii Karamazov, a former Ukrainian revolutionary and Ahlaia, a young Russian holidaymaker.<sup>567</sup> The official critics instantly picked up on an alleged alter ego of Khvyl'ovyi, a communist Karamazov, who constantly dreamed of Ukraine's national revival. Indeed, Karamazov was similarly preoccupied with Ukraine's backwardness, the reason for which he saw in a "kobzar-ised psyche" (reference to Taras Shevchenko's *Kobzar*), which is deeply rooted in Ukrainians: "Wasn't it he, this serf, who taught us to berate the lord behind his back, so to speak, and drink vodka with him and grovel before him when he slaps us familiarly on the shoulder."<sup>568</sup> Nevertheless, Karamazov was a negative character. As summarised by Ahlaia: "In short, you are an 'abortion' of the thirties [...] for these years will be characterised by historians by this very label."<sup>569</sup>

Overall, Karamazov embodied the Ukrainian revolutionary, who "jumped out of his grey gymnasium shorts and immediately landed in the era of revolution", that semi-educated oppositionary, who "has accepted the events through the prism of his romantic view of the world". Being fascinated by the scope of the social revolution, by social ideals emblazoned on its banner, he committed to die "in the name of these ideals and he would have been prepared to face a thousand more deaths".<sup>570</sup> But afterwards, when it became obvious that nothing had emerged from that social revolution and the communist party

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<sup>567</sup> The choice of the protagonists' names is a clear reference to Dostoevsky and his Aglaia Epanchyna (*Idiot*) and Dmitrii Karamazov (*Brat'ia Karamazovy*). See: Danylo H. Struk, "Tupyk or Blind-Alley: 'Val'dshnepy' of M. Khvyl'ovyi," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, II, 2 (1968), 244.

<sup>568</sup> Khvylovy, Woodcocks, in *Before the Storm*, 29-30.

<sup>569</sup> *ibid*, 56.

<sup>570</sup> *ibid*, 63-64.

“very quietly and gradually was being transformed into an ordinary ‘gatherer of the Russian land’ and it had lowered itself, so to speak, on its own initiative to the interest of the cunning philistine bourgeois class”, those Karamazovs concluded that there was no way out. It was impossible to break ties with the party, because this is not “only a betrayal of the party, but of those social ideals for which they so romantically went to their deaths; this would be in the end a betrayal of one’s own self”. And, therefore, those revolutionaries “stopped at a kind of idiotic crossroads”: being unable to formulate and form new ideologies, they are looking for “a good shepherd” or “a safety valve” in another idea, this time of the national rebirth.<sup>571</sup>

So, through Karamazov, Khvyl'ovyi attacked all those communist party members who had simply adjusted to the state of affairs and covered up their opportunism with the occasional expressions of moderate dissent or remembrance of their glorious past. Dmitrii was not a revolutionary romanticist (a type from Khvyl'ovyi’s early prose); but yet another philistine, another Woodcock – a simpleton, a gullible person, who could easily be caught with either a new idea or a new illusion. Thus, Karamazov was an embodiment of those revolutionaries, who “lack that individual initiative and even the proper terms to create the program of their new outlook”.<sup>572</sup> By means of the fictional novel, Khvyl'ovyi suggested that the failure of an alternative project of a Soviet Ukraine was caused not (or not only) by external pressure (the strength of the Russian counterpart), but by the internal weakness and ineffectuality of the Ukrainian nation-builders.

The Soviet critics immediately interpreted the novel as evidence of Khvyl'ovyi’s persistence in leaning towards nationalism. As reviewed, the intention of the novel was to show that “Soviet Ukraine is not Soviet, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not real, that

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<sup>571</sup> *ibid*, 63-64.

<sup>572</sup> *ibid*, 64.

the nationalities policy is a sham, that the Ukrainian people are backward and will-less, that the great rebirth is still to come, and finally, that the party itself is an organisation of hypocrites".<sup>573</sup> For Khvyliia, the assigned critic of the novel, it was obvious: through the fictional form of *Val'dshnepy*, Khvyl'ovyi tried to repeat the main concepts of his censored brochure *Ukraïna chy Malorosïia*.

Khvyl'ovyi at the time of the unfolding campaign was living in Vienna and Berlin. In the early 1927, the writer was allowed to go abroad with his family allegedly to undergo a course of medical treatment for tuberculosis. However, taking into account Khvyl'ovyi's influence in the artistic milieu, his trip could have as well been an exile.<sup>574</sup> From Europe, the writer could hardly influence or address the flow of criticism. The critique, however, as seen from the letter to Ialovyi (dated from 7 February 1928), was received with anger.<sup>575</sup> In the private correspondence, the writer suggested that only those who wanted to corner him would call Karamazov, a completely negative character, his alter ego. He also addressed the recurrent persecution against him: "Did we write 'a recantation'? [*the letter to Visti VUTsVK form 4.12.1926*] We did. What else do they want from us? To lick their butts? If there was no *Val'dshnepy*, they would have found something else to accuse me of".<sup>576</sup> At the same time, Khvyl'ovyi refuted any rumours about his political dissent from the KP(b)U: "I not only was not thinking of giving back my party card, but I will appeal to Stalin himself if anyone should think to take it from me."<sup>577</sup> The letter to his close friend showed how ambivalent Khvyl'ovyi was in his views on the party. On the one hand, he opposed

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<sup>573</sup> Andrii Khvyliia, Vid Ukhylu u Prirvu, in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol.5, 566.

<sup>574</sup> Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi*, 35. In numerous private letters Khvyl'ovyi mentioned his illness and inability to write because of this (See letters to Mohylians'kyi (Instytut Rukopysu, F.131, nos 183-195), to Arkadii Liubchenko (in Luts'kyi, *Vaplitians'kyi Zbirnyk*).

<sup>575</sup> HDA SBU, Sprava-Formuliar C-183, ark.17-20: Excerpts from the censored letter of Khvyl'ovyi to Ialovyi, dated from 7 February 1928.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid, ark.19.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid, ark.19.

their onslaught on the autonomy of the cultural sphere and yet, on the other hand, he believed that the change could be introduced only from within. Hence, his party membership did not only suggested his ideological preferences (even if the way of its implementation started to contradict his vision of Soviet Ukraine), but also ensured his ability to influence the politics in the country.

Eventually, the whole VAPLITE was targeted in connection to Khvyl'ovyi.<sup>578</sup> Trying to rescue the organisation from further persecutions, Kulish, the president of the Academia, publicly recognised his mistakes in managing the group. In his open letter to *Komunist*, he confessed his own oversights: by expelling Khvyl'ovyi and his followers he did not restrain them from being published in its periodicals (referring to the publication of *Val'dshnepy*). The open letter was used to reproach Khvyl'ovyi and his influence on the VAPLITE writers: “The personal influence of Khvyl'ovyi, the literary authority he had at the time, our personal sympathies, the very organisational structure of the VAPLITE [...], - all this helped *khvyl'ovizm* to develop and spread out among us.”<sup>579</sup> In January 1928, the VAPLITE general meeting voted for voluntary liquidation. Its last publication stated that the atmosphere created in Soviet Ukraine was “too oppressive for our writings”<sup>580</sup> and unfavourable for the comprehensive development of national culture. Needless to say, the VAPLITE’s dissolution had important political implications, it was deemed generally as a protest against Moscow centralisation in Ukraine, since “the authority expected obedience, but not this kind of even though harmless resistance.”<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> Andrii Khvyliia, “Do Stanu na Literaturnomu Vidtinkovi,” TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, spr.2257, ark.94-97.

<sup>579</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, spr.6218, ar1149-157; ark.151.

<sup>580</sup> “Rezoliutsia Zagal'nykh Zboriv Vil'noi Akademii Proletars'koï Literatury “VAPLITE” vid 14 sichnia 1928 roku,” in Luts'kyi, *Dzherela do Istorii*, 14.

<sup>581</sup> Iefremov, *Shchodennyky*, 580

After the VAPLITE dissolution, Khvyl'ovyi needed to return to Ukraine to assure his fellow-writers that the battle for Soviet Ukrainian literature had not yet been lost. In the letter to Liubchenko, dated from 2 March 1928, Khvyl'ovyi assured his colleagues that he did not give up: “The Free Academy of Proletarian Literature is dead – long live the State Academy of Literature!”<sup>582</sup> His return to Ukraine was, however, conditional. The writer needed to submit another recantation to assure the party of his loyalty and readiness to cooperate. In the Letter to the Editorial Board of *Komunist*, published on 22 February 1928, he responded to the main points of criticism of *Val'dshnepy*. Khvyl'ovyi conceded on the link between the ideas expressed in the novel and his brochure *Ukraïna chy Malorosïia*.<sup>583</sup> He acknowledged that the ideological errors, found in *Val'dshnepy*, were caused by the fact that he was still under the influence of his earlier ideas. Having recognised his mistakes, the writer threw himself upon the mercy of the party and apologised to all his former ideological opponents: “This statement is a result of a psychological break. [...] What I have observed abroad made me finally realise that all this time I was following the wrong path, not the one I should have taken as a communist.”<sup>584</sup>

The letter of recantation was taken ambiguously. On the one hand, the sincerity of his recantation was doubted. As seen from the secret reports, Khvyl'ovyi was suspected of being cunning. In the typescript entitled “The New Role of Mykola Khvyl'ovyi” submitted to the Secret Services by some “L.S.” it was said that “One should acknowledge that Khvyl'ovyi is not only a clever, but a very clever man. Besides, he is an extremely sly and diplomatic person. Khvyl'ovyi is a ‘tsar and slave of wiles’”.<sup>585</sup> For another informer, the

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<sup>582</sup> Luts'kyi, *Vaplitiants'kyi Zbirnyk*, .210.

<sup>583</sup> TsDAMLM, F.1208, op.1, spr.5: Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, “Lyst do gazety ‘Komunist’”. Also in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 571.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid*, 573.

<sup>585</sup> HDA SBU, Spr. C-183, ark. 51.

letter to *Komunist* exposed more of Khvyl'ovyi's "fear or tactics than of his sincere recognition of the counter-revolutionary character of nationalism".<sup>586</sup> On the other hand, his VAPLITE fellows, as seen from the GPU *svodki* (reports), accused Khvyl'ovyi of betrayal. Oleksandr Kopylenko called Khvyl'ovyi a "hysterical man and a son of a bitch", who had doomed the VAPLITE for decline.<sup>587</sup> The informer concluded that Khvyl'ovyi's recantation marked the line under the cultural opposition of the young Ukrainians to the Russians.<sup>588</sup>

Despite the ambiguity of his surrender, Khvyl'ovyi was allowed to return to Ukraine. As he pledged to his friend Liubchenko, he initiated a new periodical *Literaturnyi Iarmarok* [The Literary Bazaar] straight after his return and organised around it the former VAPLITE writers. Despite Khvyl'ovyi's continuous attempts to oppose the VUSPP, whose claims for monopoly in literature became much stronger since the introduction of the first Five-Year Plan, the intensity of the Literary Discussion did, however, subside. There were still some single essays published in *Literaturnyi Iarmarok* and *Prolitfront* (the successor of *Literaturnyi Iarmarok*) journals. Nonetheless, in the later essays neither in style, nor manner resembled Khvyl'ovyi's earlier contributions.

The Literary Discussion, however, was not only about Khvyl'ovyi and his views on Ukraine's cultural and political development. It is for a good reason that the Literary Discussion is called the "last free debate" in Soviet Ukraine. This debate became a climax of the on-going negotiations between local elites and the central party establishment over the degree of autonomy that the republic could enjoy while being a part of the Soviet Union. The position of Khvyl'ovyi, therefore, was made possible not because of his personal confusion, the influence from the nationalist camp or the bourgeois West (as

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<sup>586</sup> HDA SBU, Spr. C-183, арк. 35.

<sup>587</sup> Danylenko, *Ukrains'ka intellihentsiia*, 305.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid*, 306.

perceived by the party<sup>589</sup>), but was rather a result of a particularly tolerant atmosphere in Soviet Ukraine in the first half of the 1920s.

Khvyl'ovyi's negative reaction to the party decisions condemning his theories as "national bourgeois" or even as a form "of Ukrainian fascism",<sup>590</sup> raise the question of whether he himself believed in crossing the line of what was allowed and expected from a KP(b)U member. From personal correspondence and official speeches, it is obvious that Khvyl'ovyi did not agree with the critical position of the party and was even appalled at the possibility of being expelled from the KP(b)U. This, to my mind, suggests that his convictions were not necessarily as deviationist as the party leadership was trying to present. His position was determined and in line both with the programs of the Ukrainian communist parties, who were seeking an independent Soviet Ukraine, and with the KP(b)U members who were advocating Ukraine's autonomy in the broadest sense.<sup>591</sup> In the early 1920s, with all its inconsistencies and social experiments, this project of statehood was seen as realistic and feasible, as the discussion of national communism in Section One has shown.

Khvyl'ovyi, although a member of the Bolshevik party since 1919, sympathised with the former members of the Ukrainian communist parties, a number of whom for example, Ellan-Blakytnyi or Shums'kyi were his close friends, colleagues and defenders in the time of incipient party criticism in 1926. Thus, the examination of Khvyl'ovyi's position,

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<sup>589</sup> One of the commentators at the June 1926 TsK KP(b)U plenum linked Khvyl'ovyi's views to the influence of Dmytro Dontsov: "We cannot allow that the adder of Dontsov (*haddiuka Dontsovs'ka*) swallowed Khvyl'ovyi and those who walk behind him." See: TSDAGO, F.1, op.1, spr.208, ark. 45.

<sup>590</sup> Based on the resolution of the June 1926 Plenum, Khvyl'ovyi was accused of "disseminating the ideas of Ukrainian fascism". See, TSDAGO fond 1, op. 20, sprava 6218, ark. 151; Hirschak Ie., *Na Dva Fronta v Bor'be s Natsionalizmom* (Moscow; Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1930), 50. It must be admitted, however, that already in 1928 Khvyl'ovyi himself labelled 'khvyl'ovism' as "as a theory of struggle against the KP(b)U, formulated under the ideological pressure of militant Ukrainian fascism and of that urbanised Ukrainian bourgeoisie, who dreams of making Ukraine a great imperialist state". See: Khvyl'ovyi M., V iakomu vidnoshenni do 'khvyl'ovizmu' vsi ti..." in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 579-594.

<sup>591</sup> See Section One

developed within the Literary Discussion offers another approach to study Ukrainian national communism. So, Khvyl'ovyi was not the only one who at the time could not decide to what extent he was a communist and to what extent a Ukrainian. This ambivalence was a characteristic of an entire generation of the 1920s in Ukraine, caused by the very nature of the relationship between the Moscow centre and the border republics.

The perspective of ambivalence, however, also seems somewhat patronising whilst discussing the convictions of the Ukrainian-minded communists, including those in the party. To apply this approach would mean to try to excuse, justify or rehabilitate those party members “who would like to be first communards and then Ukrainians” (using Khvyl'ovyi's words). The question is, however, what was the sin they were guilty of that should require this sort of justification. So, it was not the inherent contradictions in the views of Khvyl'ovyi and his milieu that caused the complications with the party leadership. More accurately, the contradiction originated from them being Ukrainian Communists within a Russian-dominated Bolshevik Party at the time of gradual centralisation and ensuing power struggles. In more general terms, Khvyl'ovyi's prose and pamphlets of the 1920s should be regarded as a literary manifestation of a more general confusion among those former members of the nationally-oriented Ukrainian socialist parties who were co-opted by the KP(b)U. The contradiction in this broadest sense lies between their socialist vision (capable of being realised through the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and their Ukrainian national vision (not capable of being achieved through the all-Union Communist Party).

Overall, this was not the inner ideological ambivalence of every single sympathiser of an independent Ukrainian Socialist Republic, but a political struggle for authority, power and influence between the two Soviet Republics and the two horizons within the

Communist Party of the Bolsheviks. It was accompanied by the struggle in the cultural sphere, when Ukrainian artists and intellectuals were trying to define their right to an independent path of cultural development against, or parallel to the one sanctioned by Moscow. The Literary Discussion of 1925-28 exposed the intellectual potential of a separatist Ukrainian horizon in the party. Two different projects of a Soviet Ukraine were put to the test at the time. The intensity of the debates and the efforts made by the central leadership to discard and to undermine the position of the Ukrainian side both indicates how significant this current, and indeed the parallel project of a Soviet Ukraine, became. The prospects of another Soviet Ukraine dwindled during the years of the first Five-Year Plan. The intensified centralisation of the Soviet Union and the popular opposition, as will be presented in the following chapters, influenced the failure of this intellectual project.

### **Section Three: Adjusting Soviet Cultural Projects: the Working-Class Reader in the 1920s**

In the second half of the 1920s Ukraine experienced accelerated modernisation. The republic's urban population almost doubled between 1920 and 1933 and the working class grew rapidly as a result of the Soviet industrialisation drive. Simultaneously, since 1923, the Bolsheviks waged an ambitious campaign for eliminating illiteracy (*liknep*, in Ukrainian). By the decade's end, due to deliberate state measures, literacy among Ukrainians skyrocketed: already in 1926 the literacy rate increased by 42% (against 1920) amounting to 64% literacy (59% for rural areas).<sup>592</sup> The *liknep* campaign was conducted alongside the korenizatsiia project, which meant that various minority groups were becoming literate in their own language. This combination resulted in the emergence of a reading public with a distinct demand for literature in national languages. Additionally, thanks to various initiatives, which aimed at bringing culture to the workers, the creative intelligentsia, perhaps for the first time in history, came into contact with their audience. This chapter examines the emergence of the Ukraine's working-class reading public and the evolution of its reading appetites. It also accounts for the factors which influenced the aesthetic expectations of the mass audience in the 1920s. Thus, the role of the Ukrainizatsiia campaign in creating demand for publications in Ukrainian is scrutinised. Finally, the chapter looks at the interaction between Ukrainian writers and their readers in the 1920s and examines its role in establishing the Soviet cultural canon.

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<sup>592</sup> Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 23.

### Working Class as a Target of Ukrainizatsiia

In the 1920s, the social and national composition of the cities and towns in Ukraine underwent crucial changes. During the decade, there was a constant need for more workers, leading to massive internal migration within the Soviet Union. According to the 1926 census, migrants accounted for 49% of the all-Union urban population.<sup>593</sup> Industrialisation changed the migration dynamics of Ukrainians: the pre-war pattern of moving to the Far East in search of land was replaced by seeking non-agricultural employment within the country.<sup>594</sup> These processes were mirrored in the national composition of the republic's urban areas: the 1926 census revealed that ethnic Ukrainians constituted 54.6% of the working class (according to the 1897 census, there were only 16% of Ukrainians in the big cities in Ukraine).<sup>595</sup> In 1927, due to encouraged migration and targeted education, 44% of the republic's skilled workers were of peasant origin.<sup>596</sup> Hence, Ukrainizatsiia of the republic's proletariat, one of the key words of the decade, was a gradual and natural outcome of rural-to-urban migration.

Nonetheless, there were other causes contributing to rapid changes in the urban social and national composition. Apart from demographic Ukrainizatsiia, the urban landscape in Ukraine was significantly transformed by korenizatsiia. Alongside linguistic Ukrainizatsiia and party entrenchment, after 1926 this project also included Ukrainizatsiia of the industrial proletariat, higher education, all-Union institutions and the government bureaucracy (See Section One). Yet, the question of Ukrainizatsiia of the republic's working class throughout

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<sup>593</sup> William Leasure, and Robert Lewis, "Internal Migration in the USSR: 1897-1926," *Demography* 4, 2 (1967), 481.

<sup>594</sup> Liber accounts on circa 1.6 million individuals (12.8% of Ukraine's population) moving to Asiatic Russia between 1896 and 1916. See: Liber G., "Urban Growth and Ethnic Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923-1933," *Soviet Studies* 41, 4 (1989), 578.

<sup>595</sup> Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 107; 52.

<sup>596</sup> *ibid*, 77.

the 1920s was one of the most difficult ones to solve, leading to significant disagreements between the central party leadership and the local Ukrainisers.

Despite a common understanding of how important the working class was for comprehensive Ukrainizatsiia, the Party was wary of defining proletarians as its immediate target since it could make the process appear to be non-voluntary. The key predicament was the national heterogeneity of the working class, which at the time consisted of three more or less equal groups: 1) Ukrainians, whose national self-identification was the same as their native language; 2) non-Ukrainians; and 3) Russified Ukrainians, who identified themselves as Ukrainians but whose native language was Russian. The Commissar for Education Shums'kyi on numerous occasions highlighted the pivotal importance of broadening Ukrainizatsiia to those Russified Ukrainians, seen as a prerequisite for urban de-Russification. This perspective, however, ran counter to the vision of Stalin and his protégé in Ukraine Kaganovich, for whom the project had mere pragmatic significance.

Skrypnyk, who succeeded Shums'kyi in the Narkompros in 1927, maintained Stalin's view on the natural Ukrainizatsiia of the working class. His concern, however, was how to get workers to identify themselves with Ukrainian culture and language. This was to be achieved with great sensitivity. Skrypnyk was appointed in the Commissariat at the wake of the first Five-Year Plan, and his steps at the office were conditioned by the atmosphere of anti-nationalism and 'class war'. Thus, Skrypnyk shifted the emphasis towards greater ideological conformity, advancing the question of proletarian Ukrainizatsiia. This vision of Ukrainizatsiia, stripped of its rigid national connotations, could be implemented in compliance with Moscow's requirements. Skrypnyk's Ukrainizatsiia was meant to advance a new proletarian Ukrainian socialist culture, based on and conducted in favour of the industrial proletariat.

Skrypnyk developed three different approaches on how to tackle the issue of Ukrainizatsiia of the working masses. The first approach was developed for Ukrainian workers (both by origin and native language), who were to be promoted within trade unions, the party and the bureaucracy in order to overcome the inequality and national discrimination left from the tsarist regime. As for the second group of non-Ukrainians, they were to be gently introduced to Ukrainian culture without violating their own national interests. The third approach was the most complex one and tackled Russified workers of Ukrainian origin, for whom Ukrainizatsiia programmes could help to overcome their ‘ambivalence’ and return them to Ukrainian culture, namely, to ‘re-Ukrainianise’ them.<sup>597</sup>

Skrypnyk believed that the ‘re-identification’ of the working class could be achieved by combining demographic Ukrainizatsiia with the necessary promotion of Ukrainian culture. Since compulsion could not be used in respect of workers (the Ukrainian language was obligatory only for government employees), the linguistic Ukrainizatsiia of the workers could only be achieved by creating a total Ukrainian urban environment, a favourable setting, in which working masses would either convert or become inclined towards the Ukrainian language and new proletarian culture. This was to be accomplished by 1) increasing the prestige of the Ukrainian language and culture, and 2) bringing Ukrainian culture directly to the proletarians, which included evening language and country studies courses, public lectures in Ukrainian, distribution of books and periodicals, organising reading circles, concerts, theatre performances and film shows.

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<sup>597</sup> Mykola Skrypnyk, “Dlia Choho Potriben Trymisiachnyk Ukraïns'koï Kul'tury u Donbasi?” in Skrypnyk, *Statti i Promovy*, 151-152; Liber, *Nationality Policy*, 137-139.

Gradual proletarian Ukrainizatsiia did indeed occur in Ukrainian urban centres. The changing pattern in language usage among trade union members is evident from the 1929 all-Ukrainian trade union census (Table 1).<sup>598</sup>

**Table 1: Nationality Data on Ukraine's Trade Union Membership, 1926, 1929**

Type of union	Total membership enumerated		Ukrainians by nationality (as % of total)		Speak Ukrainian at home (as % of total)		Read Ukrainian (as % of total)		Write Ukrainian (as % of total)	
	1926	1929	1926	1929	1926 <sup>x</sup>	1929	1926	1929	1926	1929
Agricultural	50 820	205 241	75	80	68	78	66	81	61	80
Industrial	166 170	226 699	41	48	22	32	22	43	17	38
Transport and communication	138 394	227 081	65	73	39	50	47	65	39	56

<sup>x</sup> 1926 figures refer to mother-tongue

**Source:** *Trud i Profsoiuzy na Ukraine. Statisticheskii Spravochnik 1921-28 gg.* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1928), 110-113; *Natsional'nyi Perepys Robitnykiv ta Sluzhbovtiv Ukraïny (zhovten'-lystopad 1929)* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1930), xvi, xxv, xxix.

However, data on language usage are often misleading. The official reports from the Donbas area showed that 15% of workers of Ukrainian origin spoke Ukrainian at home. However, they spoke “people’s [*narodnyi*] Ukrainian and did not understand literary [*literaturnyi*] Ukrainian.”<sup>599</sup> The peculiarities of urbanisation and industrialisation in Ukraine resulted in a certain mixture of languages, hence identities, in the republic. In urban industrial centres a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian, “Ukrainian-Russian dialect” or *surzhyk*, was commonly in use. In addition, large groups of workers in the South-East of Soviet Ukraine regarded themselves as “*khokhol*”. As one report shows, miners in Luhansk considered themselves as “*khokhly*” and the language they spoke as “*khokhliats'ka*” and were surprised to learn that ‘*khokhol*’ meant Ukrainian.<sup>600</sup> Hence, one of the main objectives of Ukrainizatsiia was, firstly, to make people identify themselves as Ukrainians, which could be achieved by means of education, enlightenment and cultural work. The

<sup>598</sup> The table is from Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 78.

<sup>599</sup> TsDAGO, F.1, op.20, spr. 2894, ark.104

<sup>600</sup> Holub, F. “LKSMU v Kul'turno-Natsional'nomu Budivnytstvi,” *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, 7-8 (1929), 55.

demand for cultural products in the Ukrainian language could only be created once the identity of its consumer was shaped.

The role of the printed word was decisive in promoting Ukrainian culture and the workers' self-Ukrainizatsiia. Book production in Ukrainian was prioritised already in 1923 with the first decrees on Ukrainizatsiia. The TsK KP(b)U Resolutions were promptly put into action and already in April 1925 the head of the State Publishing House of Ukraine (*Derzhavne Vydavnytstvo Ukraïny, DVU*) Pylypenko reported that the DVU production was Ukrainianised by 85% (mainly due to the increase in the publication of “mass, thin books in Ukrainian”).<sup>601</sup> The book production in Ukrainian grew steadily, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Book Production in the Ukrainian SSR in Ukrainian and Russian**

		Number of titles	Per cent of titles	Per cent of copies	Copies/titles
1923	Ukrainian	419	16.3	25.3	6326
	Russian	2069	80.5	60.8	3069
1925	Ukrainian	1722	43.6	50.7	8713
	Russian	2110	53.4	45.1	6237
1926	Ukrainian	1719	50.1	60.6	8196
	Russian	1539	44.8	36.5	5506
1927	Ukrainian	2146	55.9	58.7	5861
	Russian	1575	41.0	39.2	5451
1928	Ukrainian	2679	60.9	60.2	8019
	Russian	1456	33.1	27.9	6846

Source: George Liber, *Language, Literacy, and Book Publishing in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923-1928*, *Slavic Review* 41, 4 (1982): 680-81

In 1929, the share of Ukrainian books published in Soviet Ukraine reached 70% in titles and 77% in copies against those in Russian.<sup>602</sup> Similarly, 84.8% of journal production (1929) and 68.8% of newspaper production (1930) was Ukrainianised.<sup>603</sup>

<sup>601</sup> ‘Po Vydavnytstvam U.S.S.R’, *Nova Knyha*, 4-6 (1925), 48.

<sup>602</sup> Skrypnyk, *Novi Liniï*, 212.

At face value, the statistics look quite optimistic. However, they should be treated with caution. Firstly, the announced figures were often inflated to meet the directives issued from the centre. Secondly, Ukrainian-language publications mostly comprised of agitational literature and teaching material. Russian-language publications continued to dominate the field of scholarly, scientific, and documental publication (Table 3). In addition, the statistics on book publishing did not necessarily show how many of those books published in Ukrainian actually reached their audience (through book trade and library distribution).

**Table 3: Types of Books Produced, 1926**

	Number of Titles (Ukrainian)	Folios (Ukrainian)	Number of Titles (Russian)	Folios (Russian)
Popular literature	402	2.580.600	458	3.923.160
Belles-lettres	267	1.370.450	126	766.650
Children's Literature	80	468.500	49	588.500
Teaching materials	222	7.409.000	78	992.361
Methodological literature	178	738.381	128	521.300
Scholarly works	236	460.450	285	711.225
Official Documents	245	355.110	283	461.315
Other publications	89	706.950	132	509.280

**Source:** *Litopys Ukraïns'koho Druku* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1926).

The outcomes of this state paternalism were, however, ambivalent. On the one hand, these advances created a habit of reading Ukrainian literature and a demand for it. As one worker from the Donbas mentioned to a *Visti* reporter: “Often when we see a Ukrainian book appear in the factory a mass of these [Russified] workers gravitate to the book and pass it around from hand to hand”.<sup>604</sup> The Ukrainian writer Antonenko-Davydovych recorded his impressions from visiting the Donbas in 1929:

How beautiful is the rebirth of the country! The Donbas is on the move. From below, from the mines, from the factory it draws towards Ukrainian books, towards the Ukrainian

<sup>603</sup> Ibid, 211-212.

<sup>604</sup> Quoted in Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 82.

theatre, towards newspapers. Management goes to meet this locomotive of Ukrainizatsiia from below under orders ... [and] instructions.<sup>605</sup>

On the other hand, as noted by the official study of readers' tastes, the choice of a Ukrainian book was often artificially instigated and was linked to the language courses, which workers attended at the workplace. To assess Ukrainizatsiia, it is important to look at whether it had transformed people's cultural and language preferences. Since it is almost impossible to analyse the language people used in business and home settings (due to lack of data on language usage and difficulties with their interpretations), the only feasible way to analyse how (and if) Ukraine's workers had converted to the Ukrainian ways is to examine what they read during the period, what motivated their choices, how they evaluated the books they had read and what they expected from literature and writers.

### *Library Holdings and Their Readers*

The distribution of books among the workers was organised primarily through trade union libraries, which became the main institution, tasked to convey official resolutions to the working masses.<sup>606</sup> But first, Ukraine's libraries needed to be Ukrainianised, since library holdings in Ukrainian did not correspond to the share of ethnic Ukrainians in the republic (according to the official statistics from 1926, 80% of the people in the republic identified themselves as Ukrainians, 9.2% as Russians and 5.4% as Jews.<sup>607</sup>) Libraries and librarians were seen as pivotal in "creating a demand for the Ukrainian book".<sup>608</sup> In the course of the 1920s, the Ukrainian Scholarly Institute of Book Studies [*Ukrains'kyi Naukovyi Instytut Knyhoznavstva, UNIK*], a research institute established in 1922 in Kyiv as part of the

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<sup>605</sup> Antonenko-Davydovych, *Zemleiu Ukraïns'koiu* (Philadelphia: Kyiv, 1955), 149.

<sup>606</sup> Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader*.

<sup>607</sup> Liber, *Nationality Policy*, 54 (Table 3.3).

<sup>608</sup> "Iak Vesty Bibliohrafichnu Robotu v Zv'iazku z Ukrainisatsiieiu Bibliotek," *Nova Knyha*, 4-6, (1925), 71-72.

National Book Chamber of Ukraine [*Knyzhkova Palata Ukrainy*], became the main body to monitor the process of promoting the Ukrainian language through book publishing and distribution.

In the 1920s, significant attention was devoted to studying the sociological aspect of reading. There were a number of library surveys conducted in the second half of the 1920s, aimed at accounting for the success of Ukrainizatsiia of the republic's libraries; and providing recommendations for writers and literary groupings on how to reach a wider audience. Regional library surveys were conducted in Odessa (October 1926-February 1927) and Kharkiv (1928). Separate studies were undertaken in Kyiv libraries of political education (1926-27), in the National Library of Ukraine (*VBU*) (1927), in Kharkiv Korolenko Central State Library, 1928-29, and in Kyiv libraries (three months in 1929).

Also, there were two major all-Ukrainian studies. In January-April 1928 (a sample of 6 days throughout the period), a study of all the republic's libraries was conducted by the *UNIK* special Department of Reading and Readership Studies [*Kabinet Vyvchennia Knyhy i Chytacha*] in order to examine: 1) the role of librarians in book acquisitions; 2) the quality of library services and work with the readers; 3) correspondence between library collections and readership demands; 4) the quantitative and qualitative composition of Ukrainian readers [*ukraïns'kyi chytach*]; and 5) methods to study reading and readership in the republic's libraries. One of the objectives of the survey was to offer suggestions on how to link readership demands and interests with relevant book production in Soviet Ukraine. The report of the Department was based on the data from 22 *okruha*<sup>609</sup> libraries, which constituted 54% of all the *okruhy* in the republic, with broad all-republican

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<sup>609</sup> Administrative division in 1923-1930.

representation.<sup>610</sup> Similarly, in March-April 1928 the Central Bureau of Political and Educational Work under the Narkompros [*Tsentral'nyi Cabinet Politrosvitroboty*] carried its own survey of the peasant readers in 58 libraries in 12 *okruhy*.<sup>611</sup> The survey was intended to examine the evolution of peasants' reading habits and appetites ten years after the establishment of Soviet rule. The outcomes of the Ukrainizatsiia of library work and the role of the libraries in implementing Ukrainizatsiia were discussed at the meeting of the organisation bureau of TsK KP(b)U in November 1930.

The above mentioned surveys focused mainly on a 'real' reader, possible to record by sociological methods. During the period, however, there were also attempts to identify and target, borrowing Wolfgang Iser's terminology, an 'implied' reader, and an 'ideal' or a competent reader.<sup>612</sup> While the library studies dealt mainly with 'real' readers, the interpretation of the data collected often started from an 'implied' reader, an imagined working-class consumer, with a well-developed set of proletarian values and critical thinking. At the same time, the party officials and Ukrainian writers, while preparing their directives or publishing their creative works, it seems, had an 'ideal' reader in mind. This 'ideal' reader was an envisaged product of Ukrainizatsiia, and the interpretation of this concept often depended on what the expected outcomes of the policy were. Skrypnyk together with Kost' Dovhan', a key theorist of Ukrainizatsiia in the late 1920s, made an attempt to draw together diverse understandings of an 'ideal' reader, by advocating the idea of a new proletarian Ukrainian socialist culture. This analysis will focus on the evolution of 'real' readers in Ukraine (as corroborated by library surveys) and estimate how close the 'real' reader was from the 'ideal' one as envisaged by Ukrainian writers and party officials.

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<sup>610</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb. 210, 291: Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni.

<sup>611</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, op. 8, spr. 81; spr. 352, 344, 345.

<sup>612</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Banyan to Beckett* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974); Shkandrii, *The Ukrainian Reading Public*, 161.

The above mentioned surveys can be used to track changes in: 1) the number of books in Ukrainian in the republic's libraries; 2) readership demands and preferences; 3) readership expectations from literature and reading. The main lesson of the 1928 all-Ukrainian surveys was the evident and still unresolved shortage of books in Ukrainian, since 83% of library holdings were in Russian and only 9% in Ukrainian.<sup>613</sup> According to the language of publication, the library holdings were organised as follows (Table 4):

**Table 4: Number of Copies of Books According to the Language of Publication in Ukraine's Libraries, 1928**

	Literature for adults	Literature for children	Together
Ukrainian	42,116	1,420	43,586
Russian	386,795	18,653	405,448
Polish	4,279	43	4,322
Yiddish <sup>x</sup>	17,989	523	18,512
German, English, French and in other languages	13,487	222	13,709
Total	464,716	20,861	485,577 analysed out of 1,240,181 copies in total of library holdings
<sup>x</sup> <i>Ievreis'ka</i> in the document			

**Source:** *Instytut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od. zb. 210, 291.

The language distribution of periodicals demonstrated the same pattern: out of the 212 journal titles, to which libraries subscribed, only 41 were in Ukrainian and 169 in Russian; out of 54 newspaper titles, 27 were in Ukrainian and 20 in Russian.<sup>614</sup> Such distribution did not correspond to readers' nationality (read, native language): according to the data from 13 libraries, there were 38.5% of Ukrainian, 39.4% of Russian, and 21.2% of Jewish readers.<sup>615</sup> The readers were also differentiated due to their class/social origin. The social origin of the adult readers registered was as follows (Table 5):<sup>616</sup>

**Table 5: Class Origin of the Readers in Ukraine's Libraries, 1928**

Workers	5241 (25 per cent)
Peasants	1370
Komnesam <sup>x</sup> members	125

<sup>613</sup> Frid'eva, *Tsentral'ni Biblioteky*, 68.

<sup>614</sup> *ibid*, 70-75.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

Government employees	9038 (41 per cent)
Educational workers	560
Red Army members	808
Others	4385
<b>Total</b>	21.742 (data based on the reports from 17 libraries)
x Committees of the Village Poor, <i>kombedy</i> in Russian (as in the original document)	

Source: N. Fridieva, "Tsentral'ni Okruhovii Biblioteki Ukraïny," in *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni*, (Kyiv, Kharkiv: DVU, 1930), 76.

Interest in and demands for Ukrainian publications were linked to readers' social/class origin. The combined results on social status and language preferences for Ukraine's library readers are presented in Table 6:<sup>617</sup>

**Table 6: Language Preference among the Library Readers in Ukraine's Libraries according to Their Social Status and Sex, 1928**

		In Ukrainian	In Russian	Translated literature	Total
Workers	Male	96 (11%)	372 (44%)	387 (45%)	855
	Female	15 (8)	93 (44)	101 (48)	209
Government employees	Male	114 (15)	323 (42)	327 (43)	764
	Female	100 (24)	147 (36)	167 (40)	414
Students	Male	299 (37)	301 (37)	216 (26)	816
	Female	246 (36)	285 (41)	163 (23)	694

Source: N. Fridieva, "Zapys Popytu, iak Metod Vyvchennia Chytacha, i Ukraïns'kyi Chytach za Materialamy Popytu UNIK'u," in *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni* (Kyiv; Kharkiv: DVU: 1930), 136.

Similar results were shown in Kyiv. In 1926/27 a survey of 22 city libraries and 12 district (*raion*) libraries took place, during which a total of 4247 reader requests were analysed.<sup>618</sup> The demand for books in Ukrainian depended on the social status of the library members (Table 7).

<sup>617</sup> "Zapys Popytu, iak Metod Vyvchennia Chytacha, i Ukraïns'kyi Chytach za Materialamy Popytu UNIK'u," in *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni*, 136.

<sup>618</sup> N. Fridieva, "Chytach Kyïvs'kykh Politosvitnikh Bibliotek v 1926/27 r.," *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni*, 181.

**Table 7: Language Preference among the Library Readers in Kyiv Libraries according to Their Social Status and Sex, 1928**

	Workers	Government employees	Students	Others	Working youth	Other youth
	In numbers					
Male	134	61	71	66	59	86
Female	61	46	61	150	34	90
	In per cent					
Male	12.92	14.35	17.94	11.15	11.73	13.93
Female	20.74	18.03	23.64	15.15	22.97	15.22

Source: N. Frid'eva, "Chytach Kyïvs'kykh Politosvitnikh Bibliotek v 1926/27 r.", *Biblioteka i Chytach na Ukraïni* (Kyiv; Kharkiv: DVU: 1930), 181

As one can see, demand for Ukrainian books in 1928, despite reinforced Ukrainizatsiia efforts, remained low among all social groups. Workers steadily opposed Ukrainizatsiia and were not interested in Ukrainian literature. Given the underdeveloped level of Ukrainian translation at the time, requests for fictional literature in the Ukrainian language among workers amounted to 10% against 90% for literature in Russian (original and foreign in translation). As explained by a contemporary Kharkiv reporter, such poor results could be attributed to 1) little awareness of Ukrainizatsiia policies among the workers; 2) little interest among the communist cells' members and activists in promoting Ukrainizatsiia; 3) negligence of the Ukrainizatsiia leaders as for the needs of the worker readers.<sup>619</sup>

As shown, demand for Ukrainian publications was higher among government employees, students and women. Higher indices among civil servants can be attributed to the compulsory language courses as a part of Ukrainizatsiia programmes. As reported by the Bila Tserkva regional library, demand for Ukrainian books had increased since 1926, but "for the most part it is explained by Ukrainizatsiia."<sup>620</sup> Higher interest among students corresponded to the success of targeted education campaigns and *vysuvanstvo*

<sup>619</sup> A. Mykoliuk, "Ukrainizatsiia Proletariatu," *Politosvita*, 2-3 (1927), 70-72.

<sup>620</sup> Frid'eva, *Tsentral'ni Biblioteky*, 79.

(*vydvizheniie*, in Russian) when the priority in higher education was given to students of proletarian and peasant origin. Interest of women in Ukrainian language publications matched their occupation: most of the female working class women were occupied as domestic servants or registered with *Narharch (profspilka pratsivnykiv narodnoho harchuvannia*, trade union of public catering workers), who had only recently moved to cities and had not yet lost their connection with their mother tongue. Also, the higher interest of female readers in Ukrainian-language publications (category “other” in the chart from Kyiv) could be explained by their precarious position in Soviet society: most women seeking employment were unskilled and had poor language skills. This also explained their active engagement in Ukrainizatsiia courses, seen by many as a possibility to improve their employment opportunities.<sup>621</sup>

Similar low levels of interest in Ukrainian letters were reported among party members and Komsomol activists. The 1928 survey showed that only 10% of KP(b)U and Komsomol members chose books in Ukrainian (against 20% of those who requested foreign books in translation and 23% of Russian literature).<sup>622</sup> As one reporter commented, the low percentage of books in Ukrainian read by party activists was “shameful” since it showed that “communists and *komsomol'tsi* were not only not in the forefront in this most important sphere, i.e., mastering Ukrainian cultural values, but they even significantly lag behind”.<sup>623</sup>

It should be admitted, that the reports examined readers’ requests for literature in Ukrainian, rather than what was actually issued to the readers. Across Ukraine, only 66% of readers’ requests for Ukrainian literature in public libraries were satisfied, against 70% of

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<sup>621</sup> Kogan, *Chto Chitaiut Zhenshchiny*.

<sup>622</sup> Kost' Dovgan', “Ukrains'ka Literatura i Masovyi Chytach,” *Krytyka*, 8 (1928), 38.

<sup>623</sup> Dovgan', 38.

those for original Russian and 73% for foreign literature.<sup>624</sup> Lower showings for Ukrainian literature were linked to 1) passiveness of librarians in promoting Ukrainian letters; and 2) insufficient numbers of book titles and copies in Ukrainian to satisfy the demand. The role of a librarian was seen as pivotal in creating popular demand for literature written in Ukrainian. Non-specific readers' requests were regarded as a field for library workers to promote the Ukrainian language and culture.<sup>625</sup> As seen from the inspection of library services, librarians were often reproached for dealing 'incorrectly' with requests like "give me something interesting to read" or "I'd like to read a novel", by suggesting most frequently some foreign classics. Where librarians actively offered Ukrainian books in response to such non-specific requests, this led to an increase of issues of books by Ukrainian authors and their variety.<sup>626</sup>

In addition to this indifference on the part of librarians, there was also the factor of insufficient funding of public and trade union libraries. As a result, there were simply not enough books to meet the requirements of Ukrainizatsiia and the needs of Ukrainian readers. One of the reports focuses on the shortcomings of Ukrainizatsiia in Kharkiv. The majority of Kharkiv workers were Ukrainian by origin, recent new-comers from the countryside who spoke a mixed "jargon of Kharkiv margins" (*surzhyk*).<sup>627</sup> The situation with providing resources in Ukrainian at the biggest factories in the city, nonetheless, according to the reporter, was poor. As the inspection of the holdings in Kharkiv trade union libraries had shown, in the library of the *VEK* factory, out of 7,500 volumes in total there were only 200 in Ukrainian (45% of workers were recorded as Ukrainians), in the *Serp i Molot* Factory, 150 out of 3,400 books (with more than 55% of Ukrainian workers),

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<sup>624</sup> Frid'eva, *Zapys Popytu*, 137.

<sup>625</sup> Frid'eva, *Zapys Popytu*, 116-144.

<sup>626</sup> Dovgan', 44.

<sup>627</sup> Mykoliuk, 66.

and in the Tyniakov Clothing Factory, 50 books out of 4,000 (28% of Ukrainian workers).<sup>628</sup>

Ukrainizatsiia had little influence on the Ukrainian academic community. The party did everything to introduce and even to force the Ukrainian language in most spheres of public life. However, the language was still unsuitable for research, higher education and science. The situation can be easily linked to the fact that until 1917, the Ukrainian language was hardly used beyond the private sphere and creative writing.<sup>629</sup> As shown by the survey of the items issued to readers in the National Library of Ukraine (*Vsenarodnia Biblioteka Ukraïny, VBU*), Russian language by far dominated those issued in Ukrainian. In three days of February 1925 out of 82% of requests for non-fiction (academic books, textbooks and periodicals) there was only 1% of requests for Ukrainian periodicals and 1.5% for Ukrainian literature studies (*literaturna krytyka*).<sup>630</sup> The situation with forced Ukrainizatsiia from above and its clear artificial character in academia was noted by one contemporary observer:

In theory we Ukrainians from the student body should have been pleased. In practice, we were as distressed by the innovation as the non-Ukrainian minority. Even those who, like myself, had spoken Ukrainian from childhood, were not accustomed to its use as a medium of study. Several of our best professors were utterly demoralized by the linguistic switch-over. Worst of all, our local tongue simply had not caught up with modern knowledge; its vocabulary was unsuited to the purposes of electrotechnics, chemistry, aerodynamics, physics and most other sciences [...]. [We] suffered the new burden, referred to Russian textbooks on the sly and in private made fun of the *opera bouffe* nationalism.<sup>631</sup>

As seen from these reports, despite optimistic numbers in book production, the books in Ukrainian did not necessarily reach their reader. Readers in general were not interested in Ukrainian letters and library holdings did not meet the needs of those who were interested.

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<sup>628</sup> Mykoliuk, 68.

<sup>629</sup> Shevel'ov, *Ukraïns'ka Mova*.

<sup>630</sup> Balyka, Karpins'ka, *Interesy Chytachiv-Ukraïntsv*, 336.

<sup>631</sup> Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom* (London: Robert hale Limited, 1947), 63-64.

In addition, there was a clear discrepancy between books which could be of interest and use for the readers and those which were available on the bookshelves. The majority of the reports mentioned that the library holdings were full of books purchased in 1920-1923, which “nobody uses”.<sup>632</sup> This situation was observed by Khvyl'ovyi who once commented that Ukrainizatsiia excelled itself in publishing worthless literature and obliging national charity organisations to buy it and “to store it in the basement to feed mice.”<sup>633</sup> In total, Ukrainizatsiia of Ukraine’s libraries was insufficient: libraries could not meet the needs of the readers, and librarians were ineffective, or slow, in creating demand for Ukrainian literature.

### *Preferred Authors*

A study of readership shows what the mass audience liked in literature, what they expected from it, what was the horizon of their aesthetic expectations and what aesthetic needs and artistic preferences they had. As reported, most readers were interested in belles-lettres, memoirs of “former people” [*byvshi liudy*], new Russian fiction, foreign novels in translation and entertaining literature. Based on the 1928 all-Ukrainian survey, there were 3711 readers’ (workers and governmental employees) requests for fictional literature, including 966 (26%) requests for foreign, 931 (25 %) for Russian and 349 (9%) for Ukrainian fiction.<sup>634</sup> If limited only to the working class readers, the results were 488, 465 and 111 respectively.<sup>635</sup> The comparison of ‘author repertoire’ in these three categories reveals how limited the pool of Ukrainian writers was: there were requests for 106 foreign, 120 Russian and only 40 Ukrainian writers during the period under study.

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<sup>632</sup> Frid'eva, *Tsentral'ni Biblioteky*, 69.

<sup>633</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Kamo Hriadeshy*, 82.

<sup>634</sup> Dovgan', 37.

<sup>635</sup> Frid'eva, *Tsentral'ni Biblioteky*, 138.

The surveys showed the strong demand for world literature. Among the most popular foreign writers were Jack London (70 demands), James Curwood (61), Lewis Sinclair (30), Guy de Maupassant (13), Victor Margueritte (13), John Locke (11), Bernhard Kellermann (11), Fenimore Cooper (10), Ethel Lilian Voynich (10), Guido da *Verona* (9), Stefan Żeromski (8), Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (8), H. G. Wells (8), Claude Farrère (8), Victor Hugo (7), Thomas Mayne Reid (5). Most translations were into Russian. Translations into Ukrainian indeed started gradually to appear in the 1920s; however they were not enough to satisfy the demand. In Ukraine, there was only one periodical, dedicated to featuring foreign literature in Ukrainian translation: an illustrated monthly magazine *Vsevit* [The Universe], founded in 1925 by Ellan-Blakytyni, Khvyl'ovyi and Dovzhenko. In 1927-1930, the magazine published translations of Henri Barbusse, Jules Vallès, Raymond-Louis Lefebvre, Leonhard Frank, Ibáñez, and Moseş Cahana. The circulation of the magazine was, however, small, around 10-11 thousand copies.<sup>636</sup>

Also, some novels in Ukrainian translations were published, for instance, of Jules Verne (translated by Iurii Mezhenko) and of Maupassant, Honoré de Balzac, Anatole France (translated by Valer"ian Pidmohyl'nyi). The Ukrainisers were well aware of the need for Ukrainian translations. A literary critic Volodymyr Sukhno-Khomenko urged for world literature in Ukrainian translations. Only then, he noted, Ukraine would have its “Edisons, Einsteins, and Tolstois”.<sup>637</sup> Given the small number of translations, it seems, the Ukrainisers had missed the possibility to deliver literature, which was in high demand, in the Ukrainian language and by this to meet the objectives of Ukrainizatsiia.

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<sup>636</sup> Roman Horbyk, “Masky Identychnosti: Sotsiolinhvistychni Aspekty Ukraïnizatsiï na Shpal'takh Rozvazhal'noi Presy Kintsia 20-kh rr. XX st.” *Derzhava ta Rehiony*, Seriia Humanitarni Nauky, 1(32) (2013), 87-95.

<sup>637</sup> Quoted in Shkandrij, *The Ukrainian Reading Public*, 166.

The all-Ukrainian library survey showed the clear prevalence of Russian contemporary writers over pre-revolutionary ones among the worker readers. The list of the most requested Russian writers was as follows: Gorky (31), Serafimovych (23), Dostoevsky (17), Pushkin (16), Lev Tolstoy (14), Turgenev (13), Malashkin (10), Veresaiev (9), Gladkov (9), Seifulina (9), Al. Tolstoy (9), Novikov-Priboi (7), Erenburg (8), Gogol (7), Staniukovich (7), Furmanov (6), Kuprin (6), Goncharov (6), Zoshchenko (5).<sup>638</sup> Out of 465 total requests, there were 378 (81.3%) demands for contemporary writers (152 requests featured in the top-list and 226 requests for other contemporaries issued less than twice) and only 87 were for pre-revolutionary authors (the question is how to regard Gorky with his highest indices: as a pre-revolutionary author or a contemporary one).<sup>639</sup> The results from Odesa libraries corroborated the all-Ukrainian pattern: 75.3% of issues (out of 19,719 examined) were for contemporaries. In the report from Odesa, the library issues were differentiated according to the ideological/aesthetic affiliation of the authors: 60.3% were interested in fellow-travellers (out of which Gorky took the absolute majority of 770 demands, followed by Ehrenburg (478) and Seifulina (434)); 39.3% for proletarian writers (Neverov (505), Gladkov (mainly, *Tsement* - 432), Novikov-Priboi (404)); and 0.4% for the LEF writers (almost exclusively Mayakovsky with 21 issues).<sup>640</sup>

In comparison to the showings for Russian writers, requests for Ukrainian authors presented different patterns. On the republican scale, in 1928 there were only 38 requests for contemporary writers out of a total of 334 registered, or 11.4% (for Russian this correlation was 81.3%).<sup>641</sup> The results for the worker readers were even less diverse: out of

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<sup>638</sup> Fried'eva, *Tsentral'ni Biblioteky*, 140.

<sup>639</sup> *ibid*, 140.

<sup>640</sup> Kogan, *Robotnychi Chytach*, 61.

<sup>641</sup> Dovgan', 39.

111 demands for 25 writers in total there were only 7 contemporaries mentioned (6.3%).<sup>642</sup>

The most requested Ukrainian authors are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Number of Requests for Ukrainian Writers in Ukraine's Libraries, 1928**

Volodymyr Vynnychenko	78	Volodymyr Sosiura	3
Ivan Franko	26	Mykhailo Staryts'kyi	3
Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi	25	Dmytro Buz'ko	2
Taras Shevchenko	23	Oleksii Kundzich	2
Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi	19	Stepan Rudans'kyi	2
Borys Hrinchenko	18	Arkhyp Teslenko	2
Panas Myrnyi	16	Hanna Barvinok	1
Marko Vovchok	14	Sava Bozhko	1
Ol'ga Kobylans'ka	12	Tymofii Borduliak	1
Lesia Ukraïnka	12	V. Vil'shanets'ka	1
Panteleimon Kulish	10	Leonid Hlibov	1
Mykola Khvyly'ovyi	7	Mykhailo Ivchenko	1
Stepan Vasyl'chenko	5	Myroslav Irchan	1
Ostap Vyshnia	5	Pavlo Tychynia	1
Oleksandr Kopylenko	5	Geo Shkurupii	1
Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi	5	Arkadii Liubchenko	1
Andrii Holovko	4	Oleksa Storozhenko	1
Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnov"ianenko	4	Oleksandr Oles'	1

**Source:** Kost' Dovgan', "Ukraïns'ka Literature i Masovyi Chytach," *Krytyka*, 8 (1928), 39

Out of all the contemporary Soviet authors mentioned in the list, only Khvyly'ovyi, Vyshnia, Kopylenko and Sosiura were requested more than twice. The dynamics in Kyiv libraries was almost the same. During a week-long examination in 1926/27 there were circa 40 Ukrainian writers requested, 25 of which were asked for less than five times. The most popular authors in Kyiv were (out of 4,247 total requests examined): Vynnychenko (104), Franko (75), Kotsiubyns'kyi (63), Hrinchenko (61), Nechui-Levyts'kyi (45), Myrnyi (37), Vovchok (32), and Shevchenko (28). Among the contemporaries, only Khvyly'ovyi,

<sup>642</sup> Fried'eva, *Tsentral'ni Biblioteky*, 139.

Vyshnia, Kosynka and Slisarenko were requested four-six times.<sup>643</sup> In Odesa, the same preference for nineteenth-century authors was recorded: out of 19,719 total requests Franko was issued 464 times, Vynnychenko 413, Kotsiubyns'kyi 289, Shevchenko 226, Nechui-Levyts'kyi 212, Myrnyi 160, Vovchok 120 and Khvyl'ovyi 56. Despite the affirmation of the reporter that the interest of Odesa worker readers in Ukrainian writers grew steadily, the results show how minor their share still was: only 9.8% out of all demands (which is still higher than the all-Ukrainian average).<sup>644</sup>

Vynnychenko was the most requested Ukrainian author of the time. Vynnychenko, a well-known UNR politician, novelist and a playwright, even after his emigration in 1918, remained one of the most popular writers and continued collecting royalties from the Soviet government. Notably, half the requests accounted for *Soniachna Mashyna* [Solar Machine], the first science fiction and utopian novel in Ukrainian literature. This novel, written during 1921-1925, was first published in Ukraine in 1928 and had three editions in the 1930s. Despite high demand and inexhaustible interest in the novel, the readers were well-aware of its 'hostile ideology'. In general, the readers considered the novel "interesting even though it [did] not correspond to the demands of the day".<sup>645</sup> In the readers' reviews, one can notice the influence of Soviet propaganda on the library borrowers. According to one peasant reader, "*Soniachna Mashyna* is a good thing. It is almost impossible to differentiate it from an adventure novel. [It presents] a good description of human psychology. The novel is interesting. But it stinks a bit. Yes: I didn't expect from Vynnychenko that he would write such nonsense. I expected more from him."<sup>646</sup> Another peasant reader spoke of *Soniachna Mashyna* "as fictional literature; the book is nice, but it is written too

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<sup>643</sup> Frid'eva, *Chytach Kyivs'kykh Bibliotek*, 185.

<sup>644</sup> Kogan, *Robitnychi Chytach*, 61.

<sup>645</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb. 214, ark. 391.

<sup>646</sup> TsDAVO, F.166, Op.8, spr.81, ark. 71.

fantastically. The idea is interesting, although hard, unusual. The ending is not nice and not serious. The book is permeated with Menshevism.”<sup>647</sup> Possibly, the readers enjoyed the novels but tried to cover their interest with ideologically-correct reviews.

As presented, it is hard to say what was prevalent in these reviews: readers’ personal tastes or the agenda of Soviet political educators. At the time, reading was often used for political purposes. Similarly, readers’ genuine preferences could be easily used against the readers. By the decade’s end, ‘trials’ of books and authors frequently took place at the workplace. These ‘evenings of workers criticism’ were used to manipulate public taste, which often did not correspond to the vision of an ‘ideal’ reader as seen by the party, and to pressure writers, who did not conform to the party literary agenda. In 1926, for instance, *Khvyl'ovyi Ia (Romantyka)* was put on trial. To recap, in the short story the chief protagonist, a Cheka member, executed his mother as a part of his duty. The initial charge of the ‘trial’ was to accuse the Cheka member of not behaving as “true communists”. The procurator’s (a party activist) passionate speech, however, influenced the judge and the juries in their verdict, and they justified the execution of non-Communists, including the Chekist’s mother.<sup>648</sup> The book ‘trials’ were often used as methods of political education and the expressions of *vox populi*, especially when the party officials wanted to condemn the writer for his writing.<sup>649</sup>

The political educators targeted the Ukrainian countryside, seen as the source of the working class. In the 1920s promotion of Ukrainian book-publishing went hand in hand

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<sup>647</sup> *ibid.*, ark. 71.

<sup>648</sup> S. Kokot, “Litsud nad opovid M. Khvyl'ovoho “Ia”, *Pluzhanyn*, 4-5 (1926), 33. See also: Mykhailo Bykovets’, “Khudozhnia literatura na sudi u selianstva,” *Pluzhanyn*, 10 (1926), 31-33; V. Shchepotiev. “Literaturni sudy,” *Pluzhanyn*, 4-5 (1926), 8-10; Shkandrij, *The Ukrainian Reading Public*, 169-170.

<sup>649</sup> Perhaps, the most well-known example of the ‘discordance’ between a writer and his readers in Soviet literature was the case of Boris Pasternak and his *Doktor Zhivago* (famous “I haven’t read the novel but still I condemn it” (1958).

with the *liknep* campaign, meaning that the party could take charge in teaching peasants to read in ideologically correct terms.<sup>650</sup> At the beginning of 1923, the publishing house of the Ukrainian Komsomol sent around rural areas the questionnaire “Which book do we need?” The result of this poll was mostly predictable: 96% of peasant readers demanded books in Ukrainian. The questionnaire also inquired about the kind of books the countryside expected from the government. As shown, Ukrainian peasants were looking forward to (1) drama with new revolutionary content, (2) agricultural book-guides, (3) anti-religious literature, (4) fine literature and revolutionary poetry, (5) popular educational literature, (6) historical literature and (7) agitation literature.<sup>651</sup> The results of the survey with certainty reflected the influence of Soviet educators and propagandists: the Ukrainian countryside throughout the 1920s remained deeply conservative and, despite continuous attempts, highly religious.<sup>652</sup> Hence, the high demand for anti-religious literature and “drama with new revolutionary content” reflected the “desired” outcome of the questionnaire or the interests of those enumerators in the field.<sup>653</sup>

Instead, the results of the later survey of the peasant library readers, organised by the Narkompros in spring 1928, showed 44% of requests for fictional literature, 20% for agricultural and 9% for “political and party literature”. Among the pre-revolutionary authors, the top-listed were: Shevchenko, Vynnychenko, Franko, Nechui-Levyts'kyi, Kotsiubyns'kyi and Vovchok. The category “contemporary writers” was by far dominated

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<sup>650</sup> Charles E. Clark, “Uprooting Otherness: Bolshevik Attempts to Refashion Rural Russia via the Reading Rooms of the 1920s”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 38, 3/4 (1996), 305-329.

<sup>651</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, 19 April, 1923.

<sup>652</sup> The number of religious associations in the countryside had increased two to three times in the course of the 1920s. See: Viola, *Peasant Rebels*, 52; S. Kul'chyt's'kyi (ed.) *Narysy Povsiakdennoho Zhyttia Radians'koi Ukraïny*. (Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy, 2009), Part 1, 182-188.

<sup>653</sup> It was changed by the collectivisation and the famine of 1932-33. See: Olesia Stasiuk, *Deformatsiia Tradytsiinoï Kul'tury Ukraïnstiv v Kintsi 20-h-na Pochatku 30-h Rokiv XX St.* PhD Thesis, Kyiv, 2007.

by Vyshnia (56%), followed by Smolych, Shymans'kyi, Senchenko, Sosiura and Khvyl'ovyi.

The dominance of the Ukrainian satirist Vyshnia was linked to his down-to-earth themes, style and language. His collection of feuilletons and anecdotes *Ukrainizujemo*' [Let's Ukrainianise] (with the most famous humoresque *Chukhraïntsi*, in which he described "a peculiar people *Chukhraïntsi* in an odd country *Chukren*") was first published in 1926 and had five editions during the three following years. Among his other collections were: "*Lytsem do Sela*" [Facing the Village] and *Vyshnevi Usmishky* [Vyshnia's Merriment]. One peasant reader explained Vyshnia's popularity: "how greatly he criticises us! It is insulting to some extent, but it is so true".<sup>654</sup> Nonetheless, like other social groups, the peasant audience showed little interest in contemporary writers. In the Narkompros report, this state of affairs was ascribed to librarians' indifference and unwillingness to promote contemporary proletarian literature. As stated: "All social 'loading' of contemporary Ukrainian writers, all the vividness of the Ukrainian revolution and the construction of Soviet Ukraine went past the countryside".<sup>655</sup>

### *Classical vs. Contemporary Literature in Ukrainian*

All the above-discussed reports presented the same limited number of names of Ukrainian writers requested/issued by the republic's librarians. In Kyiv, there were no more than forty names mentioned, in contrast to almost three hundred names of Russian and foreign writers requested during the same period.<sup>656</sup> This lack of diversity becomes even more surprising if compared to the number of members in various literary groupings and unions. The number

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<sup>654</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, Op.8, Spr.81, ark. 76.

<sup>655</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, Op.8, Spr.81, ark. 65.

<sup>656</sup> Frid'ieva, *Chytach Kyïvs'kykh Bibliotek*, 182.

of people who earned by literary work in the early 1930s was (sic) about four and a half thousand: this was the number of applications, submitted for membership in the Union of Soviet Writers of Ukraine in June 1934.<sup>657</sup> The discrepancy between the amount of men of letters paid from the republican budget and those actually known or read (there were circa 20 names of contemporary authors mentioned in all-republican reports in 1928) raises the question of the quality of the Ukrainian letters and their correspondence to the readers' expectations. Indeed, that small pool of contemporaries read or known in the 1920s could be easily attributed to the insufficient achievements of Ukrainizatsiia, especially its failure to create demand for Ukrainian culture among the urban population. Partially, it could be so; however, such an explanation does not help explain the prevalence of nineteenth-century authors. Hence, it was not the language of the final product, which made the working-class readers object to Ukrainian contemporary literature.

The reports highlighted one peculiarity of the Ukrainian readership: workers and peasants were given the power to reconstruct society and reject the past with its traditional characteristics and limitations and yet the Ukrainian audience showed an indisputable and unshaken preference for the Ukrainian classics (unlike in Russia where contemporary prose writers left the 'old novelists' far behind), for pre-revolutionary "culture zero". Such social conservatism can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, as known, until 1905 book publishing and distribution in Ukrainian was banned by the Valuev Circular from 1863 and the Ems Secret Decree (*ukaz*) from 1876.<sup>658</sup> Thus, the nineteenth-century authors had

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<sup>657</sup> Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 228.

<sup>658</sup> During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empire was combating possible rise of Ukrainian nationalism by banning the usage of Ukrainian language. The Valuev circular of 1863 placed limits on Ukrainian-language publications, stating "no separate Little Russian language ever existed, doesn't exist, and couldn't exist." The circular banned the publication of all literature directed at the common people limiting its usage primarily to belles-lettres. In 1876 the Circular was included in the Ems decree further restricting Ukrainian publishing. The Ems decree remained in force until the first Russian Revolution of 1905. See: Johannes Remy, 'The Valuev Circular and Censorship of Ukrainian Publications in the Russian Empire (1863-

become available only shortly before the revolution. This explains the high demand for the classics since the readers simply had not yet had a chance to read them, unlike the Russian ‘old masters’ that had always been available. The balance was also influenced by the publishers: the number of published copies of the Ukrainian classics was far bigger than of contemporary Soviet Ukrainian authors. In 1927, the print runs for pre-revolutionary authors were over three times those for contemporaries.<sup>659</sup>

As corroborated by the library reports, the tastes of readers were often conservative and escapist. Among the top-listed novels were: Kotsiubyns'kyi's *Fata Morgana* (1910), describing changes in the Ukrainian countryside before the 1905 revolution, Franko's *Boa Constrictor* (1878) and *Boryslav Smiiet's'a* [Boryslav Laughs] (1882), recounting early attempts of workers' revolutionary movements, Nechui-Levyts'kyi's *Mykola Dzheria* (1878), providing an emotional account of the life of Ukrainian serfs under the tsar. Those novels offered Ukrainian readers, consisting predominantly of current or recent peasants and newly-emerged workers, something they could easily relate to. Also, the same audience indulged reading about “the old people”, as seen from the report on Turgenev's *Dvorianskoie Gnezdo* [Home of the Gentry]: “I liked it; I like to read about landowners (*pany*), how they lived. I don't want to read about peasants. Why should I if I know myself how is it to be poor? Why should I read about them? Poor and that's about it”.<sup>660</sup> In addition, as reported, readers, especially in the first half of the decade, preferred books on

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1876): Intention and Practice,’ *Canadian Slavonic Papers /Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 49, 1-2 (2007): 87-110; Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question. The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the 19th Century*, (Budapest: CEU Press, 2003); David Saunders, ‘Russia and Ukraine under Alexander II: The Valuev Edict of 1863,’ *The International History Review* 17, 1 (1995): 23-50.

<sup>659</sup> M. Hodkevych, “Ukrainis'ke Krasne Pys'menstvo Ostannioho Desiatyrichchia v Tsyfrakh,” *Pluzhanyn*, 11-12 (1927), 62.

<sup>660</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, Op.8, Spr.81, ark. 51.

the Romanovs to those on the recent past: “Why should we read about something we have experienced ourselves?”<sup>661</sup>

Secondly, Russian was widely recognised as a *lingua franca* and was more useful for social mobility. This led to the higher prestige of Russian authors and Russian literature in general. The surveys proved that readers preferred “serious” (*solidna*) literature: big novels, thick books with realistic, well-developed plots. Instead, Ukrainian contemporary writers preferred short literary genres. The shortage of “thick novels” led to the conclusion that Ukrainian contemporary literature was underdeveloped and could not yet compete with the Russian one. On the other hand, this “serious” literature was not often understood and accepted by the readers with little or no education. The All-Union best-read novel *Tsement* by Gladkov received the following review: “The book doesn’t work for the peasant readers, it’s written not as it’s supposed to be: the book doesn’t collect thoughts, for us to understand and learn, but scatters them around. It is long-winded, hence boring to read; the book is good and describes the age. It is suitable for a completely literate urban reader, but is unfit for peasant reader.”<sup>662</sup>

Finally, the popularity of the Ukrainian classics was fuelled by Ukrainizatsiia. In numerous evening courses and language sessions, the students were required to learn the language based, as believed, on its best examples. The readers’ reports are inundated with comments like “I read Kvitka-Osnov”ianenko in order to learn the Ukrainian language, did not find anything interesting otherwise”.<sup>663</sup> Or [in Russian about Hrinchenko’s Short Stories] “I reckon that the library needs such books so far as to introduce its readers to the

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<sup>661</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F.47, od. zb.210, ark.15.

<sup>662</sup> Kogan, *Shcho Chytaiut' Seliany*, 60.

<sup>663</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od. zb. 214, ark. 26.

works of Ukrainian writers. There is no other use for them”.<sup>664</sup> So, the interest in “old writers” was involuntarily promoted by 1) course leaders with their low awareness of contemporary proletarian literature (in addition to sometimes their poor qualification) and 2) librarians with their unwillingness to promote recent works in response to indefinite requests (e.g., “give me something in Ukrainian”).

The readers’ reports clearly demonstrated that the Ukrainian audience was not satisfied with what Ukrainian contemporary writers had to offer. The majority of readers’ reviews concurred that contemporary literature was 1) “boring” with its limited choice of topics; 2) “schematic” with no real plot and storyline; 3) “too naturalistic” and complicated in its language. Khvyl'ovyi’s *Osin'* [Autumn] was “not understandable”, his *Pudel'* [Poodle] was “no good”, his *Etudes* “only kill the interest in reading”; Kundzich’s *Chervonoiu Dorohoiu* [On the Red Path] was “something... I haven’t understood a thing”<sup>665</sup>; Smolych’s *Nedili i Ponedilky* [Sundays and Mondays] “left the impression of being translated from Russian, it is hard to read”;<sup>666</sup> Dnirovs'kyi’s *Zarady Neï* [For the Sake of Her] “is hard to understand, it has no theme, its ideology is completely alien to us”;<sup>667</sup> Ianovs'kyi’s *Krov Zemli* [Blood of the Earth] “I don’t like, it is very hard to read, I cannot understand it at all.”<sup>668</sup> The generalised attitudes towards contemporary literature were as followed:

I prefer fiction, because it captures our life. I personally like all books by Nechui-Levyts'kyi, especially *Khiba revut' voly*, Borys Hrinchenko. These authors are true Ukrainians. [...]

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<sup>664</sup> *ibid*, ark. 398.

<sup>665</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, Op.8, Spr.81, ark.61.

<sup>666</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od. zb 215, ark. 161.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid*, od.zb. 217, ark, 14.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid*, od.zb. 215, ark. 164.

From new novels I have read only a few. I don't like them because they write mostly about politics and industry.<sup>669</sup>

There are no books now like we had before: travelings, adventures, or scary fairy-tails. When I was a bachelor, we had such books. Now everything is "revolution-revolution". We are fed up with it, we saw it ourselves. Of course there are some interesting books about the revolution, but a lot of words there are illiterate, or even obscene. I cannot read it at home as a father.<sup>670</sup>

Thereby, the 1920s had shown not simply that readers preferred Ukrainian classics, but also that they were repelled by Ukrainian contemporary literature, which was not able to satisfy the demands of the ever largest Ukrainian readership. As concluded by one contemporary observer, "the failure of Ukrainian current literature [was] not only in its youth and primitiveness of techniques, not only in the scant distribution of Ukrainian books in the cities, not only in small amount of copies, but in the fact that *an author hasn't yet learned how to write books from the Ukrainian readers*".<sup>671</sup> The main recommendation provided by the surveys for writers and publishers was to develop literature, pioneered by proletarian writers who would be able to awake the interest of a mass reader with its down-to-earth topics and language.

Indeed, 'real' readers, as presented by the library surveys, did not correspond to the envisaged image of many sophisticated and avant-garde contemporaries. Khvyl'ovyi and his Olympians anticipated that the revolution would transform the proletariat into 'intellectual communards'. He advocated "the new art [...] created by workers and peasants. On condition, however, that they will be intellectually developed, talented, people of genius."<sup>672</sup> For the writer, literature was meant to inspire, to instigate its readers to become more intelligent, critical, and cultured. Instead, as shown, Khvyl'ovyi and the like

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<sup>669</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, Op.8, Spr.81, ark. 91. (My underline – O.P.).

<sup>670</sup> TsDAVO, F. 166, Op.8, Spr.81, ark.91, (My underline – O.P.).

<sup>671</sup> Dovgan', 81; (My underline – O.P.).

<sup>672</sup> Khvylovy, *Quo Vadis*, 54.

were among the most criticised authors by the mass audience, who could comprehend neither their themes, nor the language.

Similarly, the 'real' reader did not resemble an activist and ideologically advanced reader, as imagined by the party officials. Despite all the manipulations, the readers, even by the end of the 1920s, still preferred Vynnychenko to Gladkov, even though they covered up their interest under ideologically correct reviews. In addition, the reader of the 1920s did not match the expectations of the Ukrainisers. After 1927, Skrypnyk promoted the idea of Ukrainian proletarian culture, aimed at urban, proletarian, competent, well-educated and nationally aware consumers. In turn, the readers were conservative and escapist, with a strong preference for entertaining literature and plots they could easily relate to.

The above-discussed surveys and book reviews suggest the constant interaction between writer and reader. Mass readers expected that a book should be useful, didactic or instructive; it should be accessible to the reader, with clear ideas and guidance; literature should be realistic and yet heroic, optimistic, novels should be thick with an interesting plot and conflict, heroes should be positive, exemplary to and resembling the real life; the book should highlight the role of the collective, the working class and the party in building the new society; literature should not be obscene and its language should be understandable and simple. These expectations were voiced from below; they represented the tastes and preferences of broad masses of the new Soviet readers. The readers could voice their demands for and evaluations of literature they read not only through library reviews. There were numerous fora available for activist readers at the time. Every periodical reserved space for readers' letters, numerous literary evenings were organised at the workplace. Hence, the authors, if they wanted to be published and read, needed to take these requests into account.

Krawchenko argues in favour of an unprecedented workers' movement for Ukrainian culture, developed due to the fact that national intellectuals for the first time had wide access to worker consumers.<sup>673</sup> Indeed, the implementation of Ukrainizatsiia policies strengthened the ties between the working class and the local Ukrainian intelligentsia. The question is where this meeting point between the aspirations of the creative intelligentsia and the demands of the working masses was and what type of culture this bond between the intelligentsia and workers brought about. Undoubtedly, both cultural activists and consumers played an important role in shaping Soviet Ukrainian culture. Certainly, the final product became a mixture between the "horizons of expectations" of the working-class readers, proletarian writers and the authorities.

The resultant Soviet culture of the 1930s differed significantly from the project initially envisaged by the avant-garde of the Ukrainian horizon in the KP(b)U. Within the equation of the Ukrainian proletarian writers, audience and the authorities, it was those writers of distinct autonomist and elitist orientation, who with time found themselves in a complete minority, if not to say, isolation. The republic's audience, deliberately created and shaped by the mechanisms of social engineering, clearly favoured the dominant party vision of Soviet culture and literature, seen as a necessary complement to the social and economic advances of the late 1920s. The working class, the new dominant social force, did not want to be insolently treated by the old-line intelligentsia or those, as believed, who pursued the elitist concept of art. In fact, the working class was now empowered to dictate its own vision of Soviet culture. In fact, according to the new Soviet vocabulary, the workers were becoming Soviet intelligentsia themselves, gradually substituting that nineteenth-century "dedicated order, almost a secular priesthood, devoted to the spreading

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<sup>673</sup> Krawchenko, *Social Change*, 82.

of a specific attitude to life, something like a gospel,” as the Russian intelligentsia was defined by Isaiah Berlin.<sup>674</sup> So, the new Soviet canon became a product of a hybrid, of what Dobrenko called the “power-masses,” functioning as a *single creator*.<sup>675</sup> During the years of the first Five-Year plan the “power-masses” triumphed against the sectarian elitist vision of Soviet Ukrainian culture, negated by both the party leadership and the audience. The next chapter will explore the last stage of the sovietisation of Ukraine in 1928-1932 and account for the meeting point of the three main components of cultural development, as defined in the thesis: 1) centralist and unification initiatives of the party; 2) middle-brow readers’ tastes and appetites; and 3) gradual adaptation of the writers in view of the two components.

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<sup>674</sup> I. Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London: Hogarth, 1979), 117.

<sup>675</sup> Evgeny Dobrenko, The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste, or, Who “Invented,” in *Socialist Realism, in Socialist Realism without Shores*, Lahusen and Dobrenko (eds.) (London ; Durham, N.C, 1997), 135.

## **Section Four: Fitting in the Soviet Canon: State Appropriation of Literature during the First Five-Year Plan**

By 1932, the process of the full-scale social and political transformation of the Soviet Union, kick-started by the Bolsheviks in Petrograd on 6-7 November 1917, was arguably completed. During the years of the first Five-Year Plan, the two visions of a new Soviet society had finally met, the one gradually introduced from above by the authorities, and the one, anticipated by the new working class, brought up by Komsomol and educated in the 1920s.<sup>676</sup> Hence, the Soviet socio-political revolution was introduced and influenced both “from above” and “from below”. As Robert C. Tucker put it, “masses of ordinary people participate in the process, while the new political leadership which the revolution has brought to power espouses the transformation of the society as a program and actively promotes it as a policy.”<sup>677</sup> The period between 1928 and 1932 determined the complete sovietisation of Ukraine’s society, politics and culture. This chapter explores the role of Ukraine’s creative intellectuals during this final stage of the socio-political transformation. In particular, it examines the process of state appropriation of literature and its impact on the literary scene in Ukraine. This concluding chapter investigates the results of the writers’ evolution towards accepting and/or establishing the Soviet canon with regards to political consolidation and social transformation. Thus, this chapter brings together all three constituents of the cultural sovietisation of Ukraine discussed in the thesis (intentions of the authorities, the writers’ evolution and the emergence of national audience), and looks at how the convergence of these three factors impacted the intellectual and artistic autonomy

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<sup>676</sup> Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind. Higher Education among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997); Matthias Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917–1932* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>677</sup> Robert C. Tucker, “Stalinism as Revolution from Above,” in *Stalinism. Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. R. Tucker (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 79.

in Ukraine. In addition, the chapter explores the ways, in which the writers reacted to the resultant political, social and aesthetic uniformity, which came into being after 1932-1934.

### *Modernisation by Means of Class War*

In the second half of the 1920s, the Soviet leadership centrally initiated a grand campaign of modernisation, based on rapid industrialisation and increase of production. There were multiple reasons for this initiative. Firstly, the Soviet Union, which had already reached its pre-war levels of production by 1927, still lagged far behind other major economic powers. Secondly, the need of state-initiated and state-controlled modernisation was conditioned by the ‘war scare’ and hence the need not only to modernise but also to militarise the national economy in case of an attack or a future European war, in which the Soviet Union did not plan to play a subordinate role.<sup>678</sup> Also, there were important ideological prerequisites: the success of modernisation could provide substance to Stalin’s theory of ‘socialism in one country’, i.e., proving that the Soviet Union with its industrial base and military might could become a model for a successful proletarian revolution before exporting it abroad. Finally, it had political significance. After having defeated the left wing opposition, Stalin initiated the campaign against his previous supporters from the right wing, using the Soviet economy as a trump card against his new opponents.

Stalin’s far-reaching plans of economic and social modernisation required unquestioning social support, especially from the working class and ‘toiling intelligentsia’. This was not easy to achieve in Ukraine, where, for instance, in 1928, 35% of engineering and technical personnel, 40% of agricultural specialists, 75% of scientists and academics

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<sup>678</sup> John P. Sontag, “The Soviet War Scare of 1926-27,” *The Russian Review* 34, 1 (1975): 66-77; Lennart Samuelson, *Plans for Stalin’s War Machine: Tukhachevskii and Military Economic Planning, 1925-1941*. (Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press, 2000).

were of pre-revolutionary origin.<sup>679</sup> To tackle the situation, specialised education and training for the need of industrialisation was prioritised in the Resolution On the Five-Year Long-Term Plan of Development of the National Economy of the Ukrainian SSR, adopted at the Second KP(b)U Conference (April 1929).<sup>680</sup> As a result of a controlled class-based admission to higher education and worker promotion (Ukr. *vysuvanstvo*, Rus. *vydvizheniie*), in 1933 already 46.4% of all the specialists occupied in national economy were educated and trained after 1928, out of which 37.4% were of worker origin.<sup>681</sup>

The rapid changes in the level of education and promotion possibilities available for workers changed social dynamics. The new ‘revolutionary classes’, imbued with political propaganda, eagerly embraced the values of the socialist construction and bright communist future. For them, any privileges provided to the ‘old intelligentsia’ were seen as a betrayal of the revolutionary cause.<sup>682</sup> So, those newly educated and promoted workers and peasants disseminated an intolerant attitude towards alleged class enemies, as defined by the official channels. Hence, a peremptory attitude towards ‘class enemies’ of the time was fuelled both by centrally initiated political campaigns and social grievances of the new Soviet working class. This ‘class war’ became a defining feature of the first Five-Year Plan and it left noticeable traces in every domain, including the cultural sphere.

For the soviet state modernisation programme to succeed, the party needed to take all sectors of social and political life under its direct control. After the course on accelerated industrialisation was officially declared in December 1925, many previously semi-autonomous spheres started to be regarded as necessary components of the Soviet

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<sup>679</sup> L. Tkachova, *Intelihentsiia Radians'koï Ukraïny v Period Pobudovy Osnov Sotsializmu*. (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1991), 84.

<sup>680</sup> *II Konferentsia KP(b)U*. 9-14 kvitnia 1929.: Stenoh. Zvit. (Kharkiv: DVU, 1929).

<sup>681</sup> Tkachova, *Intelihentsiia*, 89.

<sup>682</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 130.

industrialisation effort. The campaign required centralisation of power; resulting in a change of dynamics between political elites in the republics and centrally. As it was already mentioned in Section One, the course on industrialisation changed the way the korenizatsiia policy in Ukraine was defined and carried out. Since 1926, the project gained new impetus, since the republic's Ukrainian speaking peasantry became the main source of workforce for the modernisation campaign. The objectives of korenizatsiia, however, were interpreted differently in Kharkiv and in Moscow. In 1926, Kaganovich arrived in Ukraine tasked with hastening the implementation of korenizatsiia. His view on the project contradicted the vision of the Ukrainian faction in the party, which included the former Borot'bysty. In April 1926, the chief Ukrainiser Shums'kyi was publicly accused of misinterpreting the aims of the policy, having confused the Ukrainizatsiia of the party and its apparatus with Ukrainizatsiia of the republic's proletariat. The 'Shums'kyi affair' triggered a sweeping campaign against the Ukrainian communists, intellectuals and public activists.

On 4 September 1926, amidst this power struggle, the top secret report "*Ob Ukrainskom Separatisme*" [On Ukrainian Separatism] was issued by the GPU, outlining the activities, allegedly used by the counterrevolution to pursue the goals of Ukraine's independence. The report targeted mostly those activists, who had supported Shums'kyi's vision of Ukrainizatsiia, and those, who had returned from abroad to help carry it out (*zminovikhivtsi*<sup>683</sup>). It was stated that "the fact that Ukrainian nationalists ceased the open struggle with the Soviet regime and formally acknowledged it, [did] not mean that they [had] definitively reconciled themselves with the present state of affairs and [had] truly given up their hostile plans."<sup>684</sup> The directive called for comprehensive surveillance over Ukrainian artists and intellectuals, suspected in being involved in the anti-Soviet 'cultural

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<sup>683</sup> On *zminovikhivtsi* in Ukraine see: Gilley, *The 'Change of Signposts'*.

<sup>684</sup> Shapoval, "'On Ukrainian Separatism', 292-93.

struggle'. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (*UAPTs*), and the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (*VUAN*) were seen as the most dangerous centres of 'Ukrainian separatism'. According to the GPU officials, these institutions "collected around themselves the dense mass of former eminent figures of the UNR".<sup>685</sup> The last document is extremely important for understanding the inherent contradictions around the implementation of the *korenizatsiia* policy in Ukraine. With its anti-Ukrainian character the document contradicted presumably affirmative objectives of the Soviet nationalities policy. It suggests how various policies worked at cross-purposes to each other: the top secret report was issued and its recommendations started to be implemented at the time when *Ukrainizatsiia* had only started to gain its momentum.

The secret *GPU* document encouraged informing on Ukrainian intellectuals who have "changed their tactics but not their ideology."<sup>686</sup> The results of their meticulous work can be found, among others, in the collection of weekly top secret reports (*svodki*), drafted by the GPU Secret Department from 1927 to 1929. These were the reports on actions deemed to be of counter-revolutionary or even anti-Soviet character. Among numerous activists, the names of Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi were repeatedly featured. The entries ranged from simple mentions of the writers' negative attitude towards the Soviet literary politics in Ukraine<sup>687</sup> up to open accusations of separatism. For instance, Tychyna was called a speaker of the counter-revolution, and accused of preparing an uprising against the Soviet regime.<sup>688</sup> The evidence compiled by the secret services in 1926-29 suggests that in Ukraine the persecution based on political affiliation, often defined by national orientation, had long preceded the class-based discrimination, employed during Stalin's 'great break'.

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<sup>685</sup> *ibid*, 293.

<sup>686</sup> *ibid*, 293.

<sup>687</sup> Danylenko, *Ukrains'ka Inteligentsia*, 119.

<sup>688</sup> *ibid*, 164.

Conventionally, the ‘hard line’ campaign against class enemies within the Soviet Union was introduced during the Shakhty trial in 1928, when a large group of mining engineers and technicians from the Donbas area in Ukraine were charged with conspiracy and sabotage. The trial marked the beginning of a political confrontation between ‘proletarian’ communists and the old ‘bourgeois’ intelligentsia and it set the pattern for anti-intelligentsia actions in other areas.<sup>689</sup> In Ukraine, the Shakhty trial was followed by several major national conspiracies and terrorist plots ‘unmasked’ between 1929 and 1934. The most important trials of the early 1930s were those over the conspiratorial ‘nationalist’ organisations the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (*Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukraïny, SVU*), the Ukrainian National Centre (*Ukraïns'kyi Natsional'nyi Tsentr, UNTs*) and the Ukrainian Military Organisation (*Ukraïns'ka Viis'kova Organisatsiia, UVO*). Many of these cases were fabricated by the secret police.<sup>690</sup> These trials mostly targeted the “old intelligentsia” and *zminovikhivtsi*, Ukrainian communists and political activists who disagreed with political centralisation and the vision of a Soviet Ukraine imposed centrally. The scope of these trials was immense. Only in connection to the SVU, some thirty thousand educators and schoolteachers were arrested all over Ukraine.<sup>691</sup>

The trial over the alleged SVU leaders was the major show trial of the period. The persecution of the forty-five Ukrainian intellectuals, writers and theologians, former politicians and activists, and the VUAN leading members had serious repercussions. Firstly, by eliminating the VUAN leadership, the autonomous status of this academic institution, granted in the early 1920s, was abolished. By this, the Academy, the main

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<sup>689</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Cultural Revolution of the First Five Year Plan” in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, ed. Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978), 6.

<sup>690</sup> Iurii Shapoval, *Ukraïna 20-50-h Rokiv (Storinky Nenapysanoï Istorii)* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1993); <sup>690</sup> *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraïni: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty*, ed. Iu. Shapoval et al. (Kyiv: Abrys, 1997).

<sup>691</sup> *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraïni*, 135.

promoter of academic research, was subjugated to the political agenda of the Communist Party. In addition, the SVU trial brought to an end the lenient attitude towards *zminovikhivtsi* and fellow-travellers; this change of perspective signalled the process of accelerated monopolisation of the artistic and cultural spheres. Matthew Pauly has argued that the SVU trial was a signal that the Ukrainizatsiia policy had been reconsidered: “By tarring Ukrainian literature with the slander of nationalism, conflating it with counter-revolutionary reaction, the SVU trial and its reporting also undermined the public’s faith in Ukrainization and pre-revolutionary cultural elites”.<sup>692</sup>

The SVU trial drew a line under the whole period of national communist opposition in the KP(b)U. Although no party members were arrested, many were targeted by the official press and some, like Khvyl'ovyi, became actively engaged in the process of public denunciations and unmasking alleged Soviet enemies. In the course of the trial, Khvyl'ovyi prepared two articles, “Who else sits among the indicted?” and “After Iefremov’s diary...”, published at the time of the trial in the newspaper *Kharkivs'kyi Proletar* [Kharkiv Proletariat].<sup>693</sup> Those contributions were used both to castigate those accused and as a form of self-criticism. Firstly, Khvyl'ovyi openly supported the party campaign against national deviations and applauded the GPU’s success in uncovering “the main headquarters of the Ukrainian military counter-revolutionary organisation”.<sup>694</sup> Secondly, he called for further actions against another “militant deviation” in the KP(b)U, namely *khvyl'ovizm*.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 249.

<sup>693</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, “A Khto Shche Sydyt na Lavi Pidsudnyh? (do Procesu ‘Spilky Vyzvolennia Ukraïny’)”, *Kharkivs'kyi Proletar*, March, 16, 1930; “Za Shchodennykom S.O. Iefremova – Vozhdia, Akademika, ‘Sovisti Zemli Ukraïns'koï’, shcho Palahkotyt’ ‘Velykym Polum’iam’”, *Kharkivs'kyi Proletar*, March, 21, 1930; *Kharkivs'kyi Proletar*, March, 25, 1930.

<sup>694</sup> *Kharkivs'kyi Proletar*, March, 16, 1930.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*

Undoubtedly, through these newspaper articles the writer once again attempted to swear allegiance to the party and to denounce his previous ‘faults’, for which he was continuously reproached in the official press and during party meetings. Under the guise of the trial reports, Khvyl'ovyi, possibly as in his first open letter in the newspaper *Komunist* in 1928, tried to display that he acknowledged his mistakes, realised the importance of the party membership and was ready to cooperate. His repentance reached its intended addressee. During the XI KP(b)U Congress, Stanislav Kosior, General Secretary of the TsK KP(b)U, reported: “In the fight against *shums'kizm* and *khvyl'ovizm* [...] the Party has won. We defeated the deviationists to the last, we inflicted a crushing blow. [...] I reckon that the SVU trial became the most merciless conviction to *shums'kizm* and to entire Ukrainian chauvinism. Comrade Khvyl'ovyi, who during the process published an article entitled “Who else sits among the indicted?” raised a pertinent question. Hereby I must admit that the time has come to stop baiting Comrade Khvyl'ovyi for his old sins.”<sup>696</sup>

Although the communist Khvyl'ovyi avoided persecution, other communists of national orientation were called to account for their alleged deviations. In the following years, a number of prominent Ukrainian politicians, party members and public activists were charged in connection to the Ukrainian National Centre and the Ukrainian Military Organisation. The most prominent convicts of the UNTs case were the two Galicia-born Ukrainian academics and recent returnees to Soviet Ukraine Hrushevs'kyi and Matvii Iavors'kyi,<sup>697</sup> whereas the UVO trial tackled the representatives of the higher political echelons. In 1933, Shums'kyi, demoted in 1927 from the Commissariat for Education and reassigned to Moscow, was accused of organising a fascist coup and consequently

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<sup>696</sup> XI Z'їzd KP(b)U. 5-15 chervnia 1930 r.: *Stenoh. Zvit.* (Kharkiv: DVU, 1930), 285.

<sup>697</sup> On Hrushevs'kii see: Ploky, *Unmaking Imperial Russia*; V. Prystaiko, Iu. Shapoval, *Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi: Sprava ‘UNTs’ i Ostanni Roky* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 1999).

sentenced to ten years of labour camps. The UVO trial also had repercussions for Skrypnyk, heavily criticised for his activity as a Commissar for Education.<sup>698</sup> The campaign against Skrypnyk, '*skrypnykivshchyna*', led to official curtailing of Ukrainizatsiia in 1933.

Undoubtedly, those political show trials were intended to prevent the crystallisation of the possible political opposition in Ukraine, strengthened as a by-product of Ukrainizatsiia. Campaigns against Ukrainian politicians and public intellectuals after 1928 signalled the decline of the separatist horizon in the party, as it was defined in Section One. At the same time, it was a watershed in the process of sovietisation of Ukraine. After 1932, in Ukraine it was hardly possible to find an activist or an intellectual, who was not checked, who did not repent or concede to the party agenda. The 'class war' of the 1928-1932 became, in its own way, a threshold for those who would define the cultural and ideological scene in Ukraine in the decades to follow.

### *The Methods of the 'Class War' in Literature*

Until the late 1920s, literature enjoyed relative autonomy, as assured by the resolutions of the TsK KP(b)U and TsK VKP(b) from 1925. It was recognised that there was no hegemony of proletarian writers as of yet; hence, the party observed the autonomy of literature, and did not engage in the literary debates of the time.<sup>699</sup> The course on rapid industrialisation, however, challenged this semi-autonomous status and led to re-examining the party view on literature and re-defining the limits of its intervention in cultural matters. In a short while, the process of institutional unification was initiated. It was supervised by

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<sup>698</sup> Koshelivets', *Mykola Skrypnyk*; Soldatenko, *U Poshukakh*.

<sup>699</sup> Luckyj, *Literary politics*, 277-78; Clark and Dobrenko (eds.) *Soviet Culture and Power*, 40-44.

semi-official associations of proletarian writers, created all over the Soviet Union after the example of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), established in January 1925.

In Ukraine, the All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers (*Vseukraïns'ka Spilka Proletars'kyh Pys'mennykiv*, VUSPP) became the main agent for achieving institutional and ideological unification. The VUSPP members, as declared in the Manifesto from January 1927, were determined to wage a “decisive struggle for an international-class union of Ukraine’s literature against ‘bourgeois nationalism’ and creating a ‘proletarian constructive realism’”.<sup>700</sup> Those audacious claims at the time were, however, premature. The VUSPP had important rivals in Ukraine’s literary settings, namely the VAPLITE and the Futurists. It was the public campaign against Khvyl'ovyi and the VAPLITE in 1927-28, which brought the VUSPP to the fore. After the dissolution of the VAPLITE, this association became the major literary organisation in the republic and a mouthpiece of the official propaganda.

The party intervention in the cultural sphere reaffirmed the social purpose of literature. After 1928, literature was recognised as a medium used to promote certain class-defined values and morals to young workers and future communists. Those party initiatives were eagerly accepted by the literary corpus. The idea of the ‘the first Five-Year Plan of art’, aimed at raising the mass consciousness and organising mass will, mind, and enthusiasm for socialist construction and the great social reforms (as defined by the RAPP leader Leopold Averbakh<sup>701</sup>) found substantial support in Ukraine. Apart from the VUSPP,

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<sup>700</sup> Manifest Vseukraïnskogo Z'izdu Proletarskykh Pys'mennykiv (28 sichnia, 1927 roku) in Leites, Iashek, *Desiat' Rokiv*, II, 233-236; “Deklaratsia Vseukraïns'koï Spilky Proletars'kykh Pys'mennykiv,” in Leites, Iashek, *Desiat' Rokiv*, II, 237-239.

<sup>701</sup> Harriet Borland, *Soviet Literary Theory and Practice during the First Five-Year Plan, 1928-32* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969) 23.

*Literaturnyi Iarmarok* [Literary Bazaar] (in its last periodicals) and the Proletfront [Proletarian Literary Front], two literary organisations established by Khvyl'ovyi after the dissolution of the VAPLITE, and the Futurists also got engaged in the process of socialist construction.

*Literaturnyi Iarmarok* was a literary almanac, initiated by Khvyl'ovyi in late 1928 to unite the former VAPLITE members. *Literaturnyi Iarmarok*, of which twelve issues were published between December 1928 and February 1930, was an attempt to preserve some elements of autonomy of literature against the monopolising tendencies of the VUSPP. The journal featured some of the most ironic, humorous and mystifying texts of the 1920s. To a certain degree, the periodical became the culmination of the extremely creative literary decade of the twenties. The critic of the time Bilets'kyi highly praised Khvyl'ovyi's new initiative: "by virtue of its external appearance which was created by the most prominent artists of the day, by its content, particularly the literary prose, by its refined language and the subtle melding of humour together with a respect for ideas and form, [it] surpassed by far anything that had been done in Ukraine before."<sup>702</sup>

Not surprisingly, the publications in *Literaturnyi Iarmarok* attracted torrents of criticism from orthodox critics and the VUSPP members. Nevertheless, as the social and political pressure toughened, the contributions to the almanac were becoming more moderate and in line with the party spirit. Already the last issues merited rather laudable official reviews. One of the critics asserted: "today we can say with assurance that [...] the majority of [these] 'pessimists' will become our own troubadours. They have begun to speak a different language. If you take Number 10 of *Literaturnyi Iarmarok* you will see that it already signals ... a transition to ... an organisation [that is part] of the proletarian

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<sup>702</sup> Quoted in Iaroslav Hordyns'kyi, *Literaturna Krytyka Pidsoviets'koï Ukraïny* (Munchen: Otto Sagner Verlag, 1985 [1939]), 45.

front.”<sup>703</sup> In the preface to the last issue of the almanac, Khvyl'ovyi bid his farewell to the readers and invited them to follow the new literary periodical, *Prolitfront*.<sup>704</sup>

The Proletarian Literary Front, *Prolitfront*, became the last attempt of Khvyl'ovyi and his followers to maintain distance from the state-sponsored VUSPP and challenge the unification tendencies of the party cultural managers. It was established in April 1930 to unite those former Vaplitians, who contributed to *Literaturnyi Iarmarok*. However, the literary organisation followed the same path of accommodating the party vision on literature, as its ardent opponent, the VUSPP. In the statute, the group members declared themselves in the vanguard of a “fight against bourgeois art, against a hostile ideology [...], against nationalist manifestations.”<sup>705</sup> At the time, when class content and orientation towards the masses became the key values for literature, the organisation turned towards workers and peasants, looking for themes and readers. The Prolitfront in full accepted the party vision on literature as an immediate response to actuality. Its members got engaged in various ‘useful activities,’ such as making tours to factories and collective farms, taking trips to the construction of new sites to collect material for their poems and stories. Also, the Prolitfront declared that their ranks were open for workers who were eager to master literary craft and participate in “socialist competition for the best literary results”.<sup>706</sup> To provide a platform for these voices, the Prolitfront initiated the bimonthly journal *Literaturnyi Tsekh* [Literary Guild], also targeting young members of various literary studios opened in Kharkiv factories. Although seen as a last retreat for ‘independent’

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<sup>703</sup> Quoted in Ilynytskyi, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 157.

<sup>704</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, “Proloh do Knyhy Sto Sorok Druhoi,” in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol.4, 447.

<sup>705</sup> “Do Chytacha,” in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 595-599.

<sup>706</sup> Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 158.

writers,<sup>707</sup> the creation and the activity of the Prolitfront in 1930-31 demonstrated the process of gradual and yet irreversible descent of the alternative project of proletarian literature in Ukraine.

The interference of the party in the cultural sphere, however, was not the only factor leading to the unification of Ukrainian literature. As argued throughout the thesis, the Soviet literary canon was approached equally by the party need to control arts and the aesthetic horizon of the readers. Hence, the evolution of the reading appetites among the Ukraine's working youth influenced significantly the trajectory of cultural development in Ukraine. During 1928-32, a militant model of the 'ideal' reader, as promoted by the party, in full started to correspond to the predominant attitudes of the fanatical youth. The change in reading models can be analysed based on the reading reports and library surveys conducted in Ukraine between 1928 and 1932.

In 1929, a survey of the working youth library borrowers in Kyiv was conducted. Its results differed significantly from those all-Ukrainian surveys undertaken in 1927/28 (as discussed in Section Three). In comparison to the previous studies, the 1929 survey showed the important shift in preferences as for contemporary proletarian literature in Ukrainian. The surveys from 1927/28 recorded 11.4% of requests for contemporary literature in Ukrainian and 81.3% in Russian. In comparison, in 1929, there were already 56.3% of requests for Soviet Ukrainian and 68% for Russian literature (Table 9).<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i Proshchannia*, 251-288; Luckyi, *Literary Politics*, 156.

<sup>708</sup> Kerekez, *Robitnycha Molod'*.

**Table 9: Reader's Requests on Books Based on Language in Kyiv Libraries, 1929**

	By the author		
	Total names	Of them on contemporary authors	In per cents
<b>Ukrainian</b>	55	31	56.3
<b>Russian</b>	145	100	68
<b>Translated</b>	121	-	
	By number of requests		
	Requests in total	Of them on contemporary authors	In per cents
<b>Ukrainian</b>	436	90	20.5
<b>Russian</b>	510	373	73
<b>Translated</b>	513	-	

Source: Ia. Kerekez, *Robitnycha Molod' i Khudozhnia Literatura*. Instytut Rukopysu, F. 74, od. zv. 214

The results of the study exposed significant changes in the readers' preferences, if compared to both the all-Ukraine survey (1927/28) and the earlier survey of the Kyiv library borrowers, conducted in 1926/27. In both cases, one can observe the growing preference for contemporary Soviet literature in Ukrainian. As reported in 1926/27, the Kyiv library borrowers mostly requested nineteenth-century authors, with very little interest in contemporary literature.<sup>709</sup> In fact, there were hardly any contemporary writers in the top-list in 1926/27. Out of 503 total requests for books in Ukrainian, only four contemporary Soviet writers were requested more than twice. These were Khvyl'ovyi, Vyshnia, Kosynka, and Slisarenko (4-6 requests). In comparison, the 1929 list already included some new names: the most popular Holovko, Panch, and Vyshnia were closely followed by Mykytenko, Khvyl'ovyi and Le. The growing popularity of Soviet Ukrainian literature, however, can also be attributed to the fact that the book production had increased by the end of the decade (Table 2).

The 1929 survey suggests some important changes in the readership in Ukraine. The survey showed that various tactics used by the authorities to manipulate taste succeeded in

<sup>709</sup> Frid'eva, *Chytach Kyivs'kykh Bibliotek*, 185.

creating a new normative model of a reader. In the atmosphere of class war, a reader seems to become militant, even fanatical. The pervasive intolerant attitude towards alleged enemies penetrated book reviews. Along with the growing popularity of the contemporary Soviet writers, the attitude towards foreign and non-Soviet authors became more condemnatory. Former most-popular authors were reproached for not being 'suitable' for the new audience. For instance, London's novels were characterised as full "of defects, over-idealizations, and clichéd characters";<sup>710</sup> O. Henry's short stories were "written not for the workers, but for the upper class, since the workers are not interested in the lives of the millionaires."<sup>711</sup> Similar negative attitude was recorded towards Vynnychenko's novels. The best-read author of the decade was attacked for the lack of faith in a classless society. As reviewed, his *Soniachna Mashyna* "must be completely destroyed [...]. [Vynnychenko] wants to prove that the proletariat cannot play the master, that a classless society is impossible and that the class hierarchy should remain. Well, the proletarian reader even without Vynnychenko knows how things can and should be."<sup>712</sup>

The interest in historical events and their interpretation had increased. Whereas in the mid-1920s, readers in general were not interested in the recent past ("Why should we read about something we have experienced ourselves"<sup>713</sup>), by the end of the 1920s there was a clear demand for these literary accounts. As noted by a reader reviewing Mariia Boretskaia's *Pir Narodnyi* (1927), "every young worker should read this novel since he hasn't experienced those events [the revolution and the civil wars] himself".<sup>714</sup> This growing interest in the recent past was aptly used for, or even instigated by the party

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<sup>710</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb. 214, ark. 47.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid*, ark. 46.

<sup>712</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb.217, ark. 5.

<sup>713</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb.210, ark. 15.

<sup>714</sup> *Institut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb. 214, ark. 36.

propagandists and educators. The revolution and the civil wars were appropriated by Soviet propaganda; they acquired new, useful and didactic interpretation. These events acquired a black-and-white depiction, where positive characters of communists were opposed by negative “others”. These new literary representations were successfully used to manipulate the reader and to pressure writers.

Numerous reviews from the 1929 study exposed that the Soviet youth had digested Soviet propaganda and started thinking in class-terms; their identity had been transformed as a by-product of Soviet modernisation. The book reviews showed that the remembrance of the civil wars acquired a very exclusive character, used to glorify communists and condemn other sides of the conflict. For instance, Irchan’s *Tragediia Igo Travnia* was “the most frank and honest book about the civil war; the author truthfully depicted the revolutionary struggle in Ukraine, where counterrevolutionary gangs, hidden behind the ideals of Ukraine’s independence, ruthlessly destroyed and plundered everything on their way.”<sup>715</sup> Similarly, Panch’s *Golubi Eshelony* offered “a good depiction of the events after October and the corrupted defenders of a “free Ukraine”. Smolych’s *Fal'shyva Mel'pomena* showed “the purposelessness of the Ukrainian counterrevolution and of those who, despite their class origin, in a chauvinistic haze became a blind weapon of the real counter-revolution.”<sup>716</sup> Similarly, the rhetoric of ‘class war’ found its place in the reviews. Rusov’s *Oblomki* “unravelling the whole truth about our former enemy, so that we can understand our future enemies. [...] We need to fight passive residues [in our society] before they become active, same as our community fights our class enemy”.<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> *Instytut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb. 214, ark.39.

<sup>716</sup> *Instytut Rukopysu*, F. 47, od.zb. 214, ark. 215.

<sup>717</sup> *ibid*, ark. 4.

Of course, the library reports might not represent general public opinion on the matter. It may as well be that respondents were party members or Komsomol activists, expected to express their opinion along certain lines. Those activists embodied the ‘ideal’ reader of the Soviet propagandists, the one eager to engage in ideological debates, defend the value of proletarian literature, and simultaneously pressure writers. And yet, if the qualitative element (book reviews and personal comments) could be produced by those ‘ideal’ readers, the quantitative constituent (the number of books and authors requested) supports the conclusion that the change in preferences and appetites of ‘real’ readers did indeed occur by the end of the 1920s. Readers expressed their preference for Soviet literature written in the Ukrainian language, the one which could satisfy their demands for simple realistic plots and positive characters. In addition, these books were a part of the obligatory language courses curriculum. As it was observed, “Our writers aim at new plots, reflecting the expectations of the new reader”.<sup>718</sup> Overall, during the Five-Year Plan the ‘real’ reader had evolved and started to resemble that ‘ideal’ reader as imagined by state propagandists and centrally-oriented Ukrainian writers. The changes in readership model became, however, detrimental for inclusive Soviet Ukrainian literature. The vision of *Khvyl'ovyi* was often regarded too demanding, sophisticated or ideologically dubious for mass tastes. In general, cultural innovations of the 1920s failed to win the reading public. As a result, writers and Soviet authorities alike moved to embrace more conventional forms of literary expression.

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid, ark. 2.

### *The Old Writers in the New Atmosphere*

The period of the first Five-Year Plan became the most despondent for Ukrainian literature. Literary works produced by authors with little or no talent, and evaluated purely in terms of ideology and political intent inundated bookshops. The VUSPP members with all their claims for monopoly hardly produced any works of high literary merit. Pages of the VUSPP's periodical *Hart* [Tempering] and its literary fortnightly *Literaturna Hazeta* [Literary Gazette] were predominantly filled with invectives towards perceived enemies, other literary groups and currents, especially against the Futurists. To make matters worse, the atmosphere of class war demanded from the already established writers to engage in polemics and lower their standards in order to meet the expectations of the mass reading public. Not surprisingly, many renowned writers attempted to keep silent or withdraw from mere ideological debates. These scenarios, however, were not available for Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi, who were continuously reproached for their non-orthodox past.

Needless to say, Tychyna, same as other intellectuals of pre-revolutionary origin, could not feel safe in that atmosphere of class-based intolerance. His name was mentioned repeatedly on the pages of those 254 volumes of the SVU trial materials. Indeed, as seen from the investigation file of a VUAN member and a literary scholar Oleksandr Doroshkevych, Tychyna figured as a member of a secret organisation, which was based at the Kyiv department of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature.<sup>719</sup> Nonetheless, instead of being interrogated and further investigated, Tychyna was promoted. In May 1929, Tychyna was nominated for a vacant position of a VUAN academic. The same year, he became a VUTsVK candidate. These appointments commenced Tychyna's career as state official.

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<sup>719</sup> TsDAHO, F. 263. Op. 1. № 57013 FP/ kor. 1388. Ark. 167-168.

This path, however, required different virtues; the attuned poetry became a necessary attribute of his new role.

In 1931, after years-long silence (his last collection *Viter z Ukraïny* appeared in 1924) Tychyna published a new collection of poetry, entitled *Chernihiv*. Eight verses, featured in the collection, presented a pathetic sketch of an ordinary day in a Ukrainian city during the Five-Year Plan. The poet relayed the conversation between the main character, a nameless worker, and his friend, who came to this city, which “regain its youth due to the Soviet rule”.<sup>720</sup> The book was concluded by a verse, which had a telling title *Stara Ukraïna Zminytysia Musyt'* [Old Ukraine Must Change]. Despite its obvious proletarian orientation, the collection was severely censored. Those eight verses in full were republished only once, in the 1932 collection of Tychyna’s selected poetry. Thereafter, only two verses from *Chernihiv* were allowed: the first verse “*Mii Druh Robitnyk Vodyt' Mene po Mistu i Khvalyt'sia*” [My Friend, a Worker, is Showing Me around the City and is Bragging] and *Lenin*, dedicated to the death of the leader (discussed in Section Two). The main reason for this severe censorship, according to one Soviet critic, was formalism. The poet, as reviewed, did not convey “the deep ideas, the great historical meaning of *Chernihiv* [...] to the reader because the form he chose did not correspond to the content.”<sup>721</sup>

For contemporary critics, however, *Chernihiv* became a sign of Tychyna’s final submission to the party line. Stus, a famous literary scholar of the 1970s-1980s, called the collection “Tychyna’s way out from the ‘Solovki situation’.”<sup>722</sup> For Stus, *Chernihiv* was dictated by fear; with this collection Tychyna attempted to gain favour from the party and secure his own place in Soviet literature. Thereafter, a motive of fear and the poet’s weak

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<sup>720</sup> Quoted in George G. Grabowicz, “Tycyna’s Cernihiv,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* I, 1 (1977), 92.

<sup>721</sup> Quoted in Grabowicz, *Tycyna’s Cernihiv*, 90.

<sup>722</sup> Stus, *Fenomen*, 81.

personality had often been used to explain Tychyna's rapid submission to the party line.<sup>723</sup> However, this approach rejects the gradual evolution of the poet towards party-mindedness, ideological and class content (*partiinost'*, *ideinost'*, *klassovost'*), the main components of socialist realism. As the examples in Section Two have shown, the poet was trying to meet the expectations of the party and to attune his poetry to the official agenda even before 1931.

Therefore, the collection was not a sudden break, but a mere stop during Tychyna's descent towards simplification of style and techniques and ideological poetry with social content. Whereas his earlier forays into propagandistic poetry could be vindicated by the obscurity of the civil war period and the concurrent power vacuum, his contributions of the early 1930s should already be regarded as attempts to fit in the restrictive literary ambience. Generally, *Chernihiv* is a "missing link" in the non-linear evolution of the poet from *Soniachni Klarnety* and *Pluh* to *Partiia Vede* [The Party Leads] and his later poetry. One can agree with Grabowicz's characteristic of the collection: "*Chernihiv*, in short, highlights the various changes that occurred in Tychyna's poetry – of thematic focus, of prosodic and linguistic devices, of the poet's ideology and his stance with respect to the represented world."<sup>724</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi steadily followed the same path of accepting the intolerant mood of the period. His literary input suggests that he had settled for the requirements of social usefulness and rigid objectivity of literary work. His short stories of the early 1930s featured the most desired objects of the Five-Year Plan: workers, peasants, and exemplary party activists. At times, however, Khvyl'ovyi departed from official themes. Some of his

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<sup>723</sup> E.g., Tel'niuk, "*Mistyfikatsiia Poeta*"; Iarovyi, "Poet na *Perehresti Pohliadiv*"; Tarnavs'kyi, "*T. S. Eliot i Pavlo Tychyna*"; Novychenko, "*Tychyna i Ioho Chas*".

<sup>724</sup> Grabowicz, *Tycyna's Cernihiv*, 90-91.

characters, although party members, did not correspond to the morals of the builder of communism (e.g., *Ostannii Den'* [The Last Day] or *Maibutni Shakhtari* [Future Miners] or did not submit to the all-pervading optimism of the decade. Apart from some exceptions, a devotion to the Soviet duty, loyalty and discipline became the main drivers for the characters of his later prose.

In *Shchaslyvyi Sekretar* [A Happy Secretary], (1930 or early 1931),<sup>725</sup> Khvyl'ovyi produced one of the best examples of a positive hero in Ukrainian literature before socialist realism. The story depicts a day of the devoted party activist and functionary Comrade Stark, who had been recently transferred to a new troublesome district. The Comrade was highly valued by the leadership thanks to his excellent managerial skills and compliance with any personally inconvenient party directives. In a nutshell, the short story presents the conflict between social duty and personal attachments. Comrade Stark, expecting his family reunion, suddenly found out that his son had an accident. This terrible news was delivered simultaneously with a telegram demanding immediate transfer to another troublesome region. Cornered with the necessity to choose, the Comrade decided to follow his duty instead of hastening to his family. The decision was presented as understandable for such a devoted and loyal communist. However, a reader feels the artifice of this choice, especially since throughout the story the Comrade repeatedly confirmed his affection to his family and especially to his son. Stark decided to comply with the party directives, a sign that he had fully transformed from an individual with a free will to a mere party functionary, an executive of central decisions. It must be admitted that Comrade Stark was not only a literary character. During the first Five-Year plan, many shock workers prioritised their

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<sup>725</sup> Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, "Shchaslyvyi Sekretar," in *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 3, 387-397.

duty over families, as seen from the memoirs of construction team leader V. Ia. Shidek (1929-31), who had forgotten about his ill son “under the pressure of work”.<sup>726</sup>

Comrade Stark, same as the constructor team leader Shidek, personified a new ideal image of a Soviet citizen, which came to replace those revolutionary romanticists of the early 1920s. Khvyl'ovyi, a creator of the romantic myth of the revolution and the civil war, now became a promoter of a new myth, of a happy Soviet society, where citizens were full of optimism for and devotion to their communist future. The difference between the two was obvious. For the characters of Khvyl'ovyi's early prose, the golden age was far gone. Hence pessimism became an attribute of the time. In contrast, for the new builders of communism the golden age was due to come and it was up to each and every community member to approach it. This participatory model elucidated the predominant optimism and enthusiasm of the Soviet times.

Khvyl'ovyi presented another characteristic of the age, the prevalence of a community over an individual. The needs of the community (and the state) were far more important than individual needs; hence should be unconditionally pursued for the good of all. This understanding of the common good later came to replace the narrow-mindedness of the Five-Year period, and the loyalty to the state overweighed sectarian class loyalty. In a way, social realism with its loyalty to the state and the party was a relief for many cultural figures, which did not fit in the rigid frames of proletarian literature and RAPP sectarianism and bigotry.

Along with attuning his creative writing, Khvyl'ovyi tried to rehabilitate his earlier works. In 1932, the first volume of his selected writings was published, consisting of short stories and novels written in 1921-1924. In the introduction, Khvyl'ovyi referred to a

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<sup>726</sup> Edward Acton, and Tom Stableford (eds.) *The Soviet Union. A Document History*. Vol. 1. 1917-1940 (Exeter: Exeter UP, 2005), 311-314.

review on a German translation of his novels, which stated “Unsuitable for mature readers, for youth and public libraries, communist!”<sup>727</sup> Questionably, Khvyl'ovyi mentioned this negative review as a proof by contradiction to his fellow party members, who kept scolding the writer for his alleged deviations. In addition, Khvyl'ovyi accompanied each story in the volume with a short introductory note, clarifying his intentions and attuning his earlier works to the demands of the time. His efforts did not go unnoticed. Among the GPU secret reports, there was an apt characteristic of Khvyl'ovyi's transformation: “Mykola Khvyl'ovyi was almost an Apostle or a Prophet for the Ukrainian people, best compared to a tragic prophet Jeremiah. However, he got mistaken and needed to recognise his errors; he had been thinking for over half a year, and turn himself into ... a buffoon [*blasen*].”<sup>728</sup> Nevertheless, Khvyl'ovyi did not take those recantations seriously. In one of the letters intercepted by the secret police he confessed “logically and in my mind I have switched over; but emotionally, I have not, and I feel that it will not happen soon. Emotionally I am still the same.”<sup>729</sup>

### *Khvyl'ovyi: a Suicide*

In 1933, at the height of the famine, Khvyl'ovyi together with Arkadii Liubchenko, his close friend and a former VAPLITE secretary, was commissioned to write reports on the situation in villages in eastern Ukraine. Later abroad, Liubchenko published his memoirs, entitled *Iogo Taiemnytsia* [His Secret], offering his account of the journey and the last year of Khvyl'ovyi's life. The memoirist rendered Khvyl'ovyi's views on the famine in Ukraine. For Khvyl'ovyi, according to the author, the famine was intentionally organised in order “to

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<sup>727</sup> “Peredmova i Vstupni Slova M.Khvyl'ovoho do Pershoho Tomu Ioho “Vybranyh Tvoriv” 1932 r.,” Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 4, 618-619.

<sup>728</sup> GDA SBU, Spr. C-183, ark. 64.

<sup>729</sup> GDA SBU, spr.C-183, ark.115.

provoke resistance and, after having crushed it, to settle once and for all the dangerous Ukrainian problem.”<sup>730</sup> The partiality of the memoirs, however, is worth noting. Following the World War Two, Liubchenko, one of many, ended up in exile and became an architect of the glorification narrative of the Ukrainian twenties in the diaspora historiography, later shaped within the “executed renaissance” paradigm. The memoirs, first published in 1943, could as well be used to adjust Khvyl'ovyi's persona to the demands of the new ideological narrative.

Nonetheless, the memoirs offer an insight into the last years of Khvyl'ovyi's life. One of the monologues, recorded by Liubchenko, seems especially important for understanding Khvyl'ovyi's decisions leading to his suicide in May 1933. It exposed the writer's views on the role of a public intellectual in Ukraine at the time:

[Addressing Liubchenko]: What right do you have to die? Who told you can die? Nobody. I'm telling you: you must be prepared to live. To die, my friend, is the easiest way out. Anybody can do it. But to live – that's something worth trying. To live and to struggle – especially now; that's highly praiseworthy. It is true, in certain cases death is a better option, when through death perhaps one can do more for one's fellow men than by living. But such cases are rare [...] <sup>731</sup>

And your death – not of an average man, not of a narrow-minded person – should be extremely thought-through. [...] We do not belong only to ourselves. If we are sincerely faithful to the idea and to our task, we don't even have the right to manage our death. Everything depends on what our duty decides for us. And this is us, and all those who are with us, who should live. To live and to work. In today's circumstances first of all we should survive physically. This is our main task. <sup>732</sup>

This long monologue, recorded in April 1933, provides a better understanding of the possible motivations for Khvyl'ovyi and his followers, firstly, to try to come to terms with

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<sup>730</sup> Arkadii Liubchenko, “His Secret,” in *Stories from Ukraine*, 231.

<sup>731</sup> Liubchenko, *His Secret*, 232-234.

<sup>732</sup> Liubchenko, “Iogo Taiemnytsia,” in Liubchenko, *Vybrani Tvory* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 1999), 438-39.

the regime at any costs by adjusting to every political agenda, and, subsequently, to take responsibility over their own lives.

For all that, on 13 May 1933 Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide. The suicide occurred the day after the arrest of Ialovyi, the VAPLITE writer and its first president, accused in connection to an alleged counter-revolutionary organisation. As is known, on his last day Khvyl'ovyi invited his friends over to listen to his new novel. With a short presentation (“I was struggling with this novel a lot. However, I learned how a writer in the Stalin age should behave. Maybe I could teach you as well”<sup>733</sup>) the writer withdrew to his study where he shot himself a moment later. It is believed that Khvyl'ovyi left two death notes, in which he claimed his responsibility over the generation of the 1920s and provided the instructions about his literary heritage.<sup>734</sup> The first note read:

Arrest of Ialovyi - this is the murder of an entire generation ... For what? Because we were the most sincere Communists? I don't understand. The responsibility for the actions of Ialovyi's generation lies with me, Khvyl'ovyi. Today is a beautiful sunny day. I love life - you can't even imagine how much. Today is the 13th. Remember I was in love with this number? Terribly painful. Long live communism. Long live the socialist construction. Long live the Communist Party.

The second note was addressed to his foster daughter Liubov Umantseva:

My precious *Liubystok!* Forgive me, my grey-winged dove, for everything. By the way, yesterday I destroyed my unfinished novel not because I didn't want it to be published, but because I needed to convince myself: if I had courage to destroy the novel – then I have found enough will to do what I am committed to do. Goodbye, my precious *Liubystok*. Your father M. Khvyl'ovyi.<sup>735</sup>

Right after the Party Committee was informed about the incident, Khvyl'ovyi's study was sealed; all his library, personal documentation and correspondence were confiscated.

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<sup>733</sup> Quoted from the documentary “*Tzar i Rab Khytroshchiv*” (script writers Iryna Shatokhina, Iurii Shapoval, 2009).

<sup>734</sup> The controversy of the suicide notes is discussed in Palko, *Between Two Powers*

<sup>735</sup> Copies of the death notes were accessed in TsDAMLM of Ukraine, F.1208, op.1, Spr.5, ark.1, Spr.6, ark.1.

The “shot of Khvyl'ovyi” was interpreted differently by state officials, the secret police, and the fellow writers. Already at the funeral, party functionaries attempted to dissociate the writer’s decision from the party line, offering an image of a weak, unsteady communist. The main message of the official obituary notices and Party representative’s speeches was that Khvyl'ovyi lacked revolutionary temper in a time when “every day, every hour of our struggle put us closer to the triumph of Socialism all over the world.”<sup>736</sup> Thus, Khvyl'ovyi’s decision was perceived as worthless, tragic, and ridiculous;’ it was stated that it had “nothing to do with his membership in the Communist party.”<sup>737</sup>

Khvyl'ovyi’s death also played into the hands of the secret police. As declared, his decision was linked to the nationalist orientation and prejudices against the Soviet government. So, in order not to let those sentiments spread, the party “in cold mind, with all the hatred to capitalism, with all the love to socialism of today and communism of tomorrow [must] fight those prejudices in everyday life, in Khvyl'ovyi, in ourselves.”<sup>738</sup> In less than a year, the name of “the fascist writer” Khvyl'ovyi appeared in the list of the alleged traitors in the official monthly *Chervonyi Shliakh*.<sup>739</sup> For the decades to follow, *khvyl'ovizm*, along with *shums'kizm* and *skrypnykivshchyna*, was a synonym to ‘bourgeois nationalism’, used for labelling any form of national deviation in the party, including simple divergence of opinions.

The reaction of the state authorities proved that the accident had far broader significance than a mere personal or local event. Khvyl'ovyi’s suicide became decisive for the Ukrainian cultural development. For instance, Vynnychenko interpreted the suicides of Khvyl'ovyi (13 May 1933) and the then Commissar for Education Skrypnyk (7 July 1933),

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<sup>736</sup> Speech of comrade Kyrylenko in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 5, 142.

<sup>737</sup> Speech of comrade Mykytenko in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, vol. 5, 138.

<sup>738</sup> Speech of Bezymens'kyi in Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, Vol.5, 145.

<sup>739</sup> Quoted in Luckyj, *Literary politics*, 221.

as a proof of inconsistency in the Soviet nationalities policy.<sup>740</sup> Fellow writers read Khvyl'ovyi's suicide in line with tightening centralisation of cultural life in the republic. In the corridors of the *Slovo* apartment building (the building of the writers' union in Kharkiv) it was said that Khvyl'ovyi's suicide was far more significant than that of Mayakovsky's; while Khvyl'ovyi reacted to the "social discontent of [19]33," his Russian fellow committed suicide only "out of personal discontent in [19]30."<sup>741</sup> In general, for the writers' guild, the decision of their recognised leader signalled that there was no alternative to a centralist vision of Soviet Ukrainian literature. The adverse prospects were observed by the writer Hryhorii Epik: "You know, Mykola [Kulish], whatever we write now, we will not be allowed, that's our end."<sup>742</sup>

Shortly after the suicide, a new image of an ambivalent irresolute communist Khvyl'ovyi, who could not reconcile his ideological standpoints with nationalist sentiments, came into prominence. The narrative of the ambivalent writer and communist Khvyl'ovyi was conveniently used by the ideological rivals. The party benefited most from this perspective. Moreover, the party ideologists were the contributors to such an image of Khvyl'ovyi. One of the instruments chosen for this matter was a deliberate manipulation with the documents gathered on Khvyl'ovyi by the secret services. Evidence of the party's attempt to create and consolidate a certain image of the communist Khvyl'ovyi can be found in a recently published collection of declassified documents from the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine.<sup>743</sup> The secret File S-183 was put together between 1930 and 1933. The opening year of the file cast doubts on the underlying motive

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<sup>740</sup> TsDAHO, F.1, op.20, spr.6204, ark.20-30: Lyst V. Vynnychenka Politbiuro TsK KP(b)U, TsK VKP(b) i I. Stalinu z Krytykoiu Natsional'noi Polityky Bil'shovykiv v Ukraïni ta Zasterezhenniam shchodo Neobkhidnoi Konsolidatsii Vsih Demokratychnyh Syl na Vypadok Fashysts'koï Agresii (15.09.1933)

<sup>741</sup> *Poliuvannia na "Val'dshnepa"*, 190

<sup>742</sup> Kulish A., "Smert' i Pokhoron Khvyl'ovoho," in Khvylovy, *Tvory u p'iat'okh tomakh*, Vol.5, 172.

<sup>743</sup> Shapoval and Panchenko (eds.) *Poliuvannia na "Val'dshnepa"*.

of the GPU to place the writer under surveillance. In 1930, after several letters of recantation, the dissolution of all the literary groups that Khvyl'ovyi was engaged in, and almost total silence over the last years, Khvyl'ovyi, as corroborated by one secret report, began “to behave more quietly.”<sup>744</sup> Presumably, this personal file was created in preparation for further purges against Ukrainian intelligentsia, which could be used either against Khvyl'ovyi himself or to force him, if need be, to testify against his colleagues. Overall, the documents in the File S-183, present an image of the communist Khvyl'ovyi, who was dangerously ambivalent in his attitude towards the Soviet authorities. It provided sufficient grounds for further actions, which Khvyl'ovyi, however, avoided by committing suicide on 13 May 1933.

On the other hand, the ideological ambivalence of Khvyl'ovyi played into hand of the contemporary creators of Khvyl'ovyi's persona. It is worth mentioning that Khvyl'ovyi was not rehabilitated in the course of the ‘Thaw’ liberalisation in the 1950s.<sup>745</sup> At the end of the 1980s, during the so-called *glasnost'*, Ukrainian communist intellectuals started to call for “returning Khvyl'ovyi to his readers”.<sup>746</sup> This was also the time when both the autobiographical notes, whose veracity was discussed in the Introduction, and the copies of Khvyl'ovyi's suicide notes, were made public for the first time. The interpretation of these primary sources contributed to a newly emerging narrative of the national communist Khvyl'ovyi. The Ukrainian-minded political elites of the 1980s-1990s ‘appropriated’ the early Soviet history and used the ambivalence of the epoch to create a historical narrative of inherent anti-communist opposition in the KP(b)U, providing legitimacy for their own attempts to withstand the central party leadership.

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<sup>744</sup> GDA SBU, Spr. C-183, ark. 107.

<sup>745</sup> Khvyl'ovyi was rehabilitated in September, 1989. See: TsDAHO, F.39, op.1, spr.819, ark.46-49; TsDAHO, F.1, op.11, spr.2224, ark.60.

<sup>746</sup> See, e.g., Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, “Talant nezvychainyi i superechlyvyi,” *Vitchyzna*, 12 (1987): 144–149

Given the intention, modern interpreters eagerly picked up and widely promoted thereafter an image of Khvyl'ovyi as a romantic, who became ideologically confused in his pursuit of a better social order. The excerpt about Khvyl'ovyi attending a congress of soldiers in Romania in October 1917 with two ribbons pinned to his collar: a red and a yellow-and-blue one as well as his justification (“I wanted to be, so to say, a Ukrainian Bolshevik”<sup>747</sup>) best served the purpose. Overall, the nationalistic approach attempted to rehabilitate and to excuse Khvyl'ovyi for being a communist by finding reasons for his decision to join the party and to remain a party member. In order to cope with the obvious dilemma of him being a talented writer in spite of his party membership, an attempt was made to push the concept of Khvyl'ovyi’s “fatal ambivalence,” which originated partly from his romantic nature and partly from his idealistic belief in Bolshevik populism. In this manner, in 1990, the literary scholar Mykola Zhulyns'kyi attributed Khvyl'ovyi’s party affiliation and later suicide to his naïve infatuation with a revolution: “The Revolution, which sparked his talent and got him to fall in love with it, in a short while betrayed its chosen one. And he, driven by disappointment and despair, with his own death tried to appeal to the Revolution to have mercy for its fanatic knights”.<sup>748</sup> Most recent national historiography persists with the same interpretation of Khvyl'ovyi, highlighting his “permanent inner ambivalence” toward communism, “a game that the writer attempted to play with the system and finally with himself”.<sup>749</sup>

Indeed, there are only a few assertions about Khvyl'ovyi that cannot be contested. Firstly, he was a prominent writer, whose creative manner was defined by his revolutionary experience. Moreover, he was a proletarian writer, and this artistic identity Khvyl'ovyi was

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<sup>747</sup> Khvyl'ovyi, *Uryvok z Avtobiohrafii*, 107.

<sup>748</sup> Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, *Iz Zabuttia-v Bezsmertia (Storinky Pryzabutoi Spadshchyny)* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990), 266.

<sup>749</sup> Shapoval, *Fatal'na Ambivalentnist'*, 12.

trying to preserve, not because of the prevailing ideological expectations, but due to his personal convictions and beliefs in the potential of the working class to begin world history anew. Secondly, he was a member of the Communist Party of the Bolsheviks since 1919 and even during the most severe persecutions remained faithful to his membership card. Yet, Khvyl'ovyi also adhered to an idea of a nationally defined socialist republic, an equal partner in a loose federation with other socialist republics. In the 1920s, with all its inconsistencies and social experiments, this form of statehood could be seen as realistic and feasible. Khvyl'ovyi's views were shared by many Ukraine-minded politicians and public intellectuals. This vision of a Soviet Ukraine was enabled by the very nature of the relationship between the Moscow centre and the border republics at that time.

Khvyl'ovyi can represent an entire generation of disillusioned intellectuals, who witnessed the discrepancy between the ideals of the revolution and their implementation in Soviet Ukraine. Although a Bolshevik party member, Khvyl'ovyi sympathised with the Ukrainian communists and promoted a separatist vision of a Soviet Ukraine and a Soviet Ukrainian culture. Nonetheless, the attempts of the Ukrainian communists and intellectuals to reorganise the power relationship in Soviet Ukraine along with the cultural flourishing of the 1920s were crushed by the forcible tendencies aimed at consolidating the Bolshevik Party and Stalin's Great Turn of 1928/29. Consequently, the figure of Khvyl'ovyi returned to Ukrainian culture and politics layered with contradictory interpretations. The question is how much do we know about Khvyl'ovyi besides those misinterpretations and manipulations with the writer's biography and personality? Yet, Khvyl'ovyi left behind a significant literary contribution, exposing his complex development as a proletarian writer, a Bolshevik and a Soviet Ukrainian.

*Tychyna: a Poet Laureate*

“The shot of Khvyl'ovyi” was a watershed in the relationship between the Moscow centre and Soviet Ukraine. With the suicides of Khvyl'ovyi and Skrypnyk, the national horizon in the KP(b)U was exhausted, and the Moscow leadership was ready to certify their undisputable victory over the republic. The sixteenth anniversary of the October Revolution was seen as an apt occurrence to brandish the progress of Soviet Ukraine, accomplished under the wise leadership of the Communist Party. For this occasion the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* was preparing a special issue dedicated almost entirely to Ukraine. The issue had extraordinary importance: *Pravda*, read worldwide, was meant to debunk rumours about the famine in Ukraine, carefully concealed throughout the period. Instead, the plan was to present a vivid image of the republic and its citizens enjoying the results of the socialist construction, achieved during the Five-Year Plan.

To support the Moscow perspective on the matter, the editorial suggested engaging voices from Ukraine that would corroborate the image and cement the republic's volition for the all-Soviet unity. Given the purpose, the choice of a representative could not be accidental. Preferably, it should be a poet able to capture the very gist of the crucial social transformation in the republic; who accepted the party control and yet with an “uncertain past” (an important moment to prove the re-educating potential of the party); and well-known or even world-known to gain publicity.

The lot fell to Tychyna. A *Pravda* correspondent visited the poet to solicit a verse with the necessary tune. Numerous recollections attest how hesitant Tychyna was to compose poetry on demand; and even more reluctant to have his verses translated for editorial purposes. According to the well-known story, Tychyna at the time had just finished a propagandistic verse intended for a Young Pioneers' periodical. The

correspondent, having read through the rhymes with catchy words and slogan-like rhythm, snatched the verse and appropriated it for *Pravda*'s November issue.<sup>750</sup> Tychyna's verse *Partiia Vede* was published in the original version without translation on page six of the issue.

The first stanza read:

Та нехай собі як знають  
Божеволіють, конають, —  
Нам своє робить:  
Всіх панів до 'дної ями,  
Буржуїв за буржуями  
Будем, будем бить!  
Будем, будем бить! [...]

Let them do what they want,  
Let them go mad, let them agonise, -  
We have our task to do:  
All the lords to the same pit,  
Bourgeois to bourgeois,  
Beat, we will beat!  
Beat, we will beat! (O.P.)

The editorial, written under the same heading “The Party Leads”, praised the “splendid triumph of the kolkhoz Ukraine, which in the current year had fulfilled the plans for grain deliveries ahead of schedule.”<sup>751</sup> Despite the famine, the first page of the *Pravda* issues featured a photo with cheerful kolkhoz members from Odesa, expressing their gratitude to the central party leadership, who guided them towards the better communist future. Tychyna was also mentioned in the editorial. As it was pointed out, this non-partisan poet yet managed to grasp the very gist of socialist construction and discerned the prominent role of the party in approaching communism.

So, Tychyna, with all the controversial past and questionable loyalty, received an approval from the highest party quarters. 21 November 1933 (the date of the publication of the issue) became Tychyna's admission to the Soviet canon and, as the following years had proved, to the very centre of the all-Soviet politics. Yet, there was a price. From now on Tychyna became an intrinsic part of the Soviet politics in Ukraine, a poet laureate who

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<sup>750</sup> Tel'niuk, *Pavlo Tychyna*, 189-201

<sup>751</sup> *Pravda*, November 21, 1933

would abuse his muse to report on every development in the republic. This bounding was neatly marked by an émigré writer Ivan Bahrianyi in one of his caricatures on Tychyna<sup>752</sup>:

Хоч від Києва й руїна,  
Так зате нарком Тичина.  
Хоч й розп'ята Україна,  
Сяє орденем Тичина.  
І радіє Московщина —  
«Україна — це Тичина».

Even though Kyiv lies in ruins,  
Tychyna is a Narkom,  
Even though Ukraine is crucified,  
Tychyna has got another Order,  
And Moscow is joyful –  
“Ukraine is Tychyna” (O.P.)

On the occasion of the seventeenth party congress (“The Congress of the Victors”, 26 January–10 February 1934), summoned to summarise the results of the first Five-Year Plan, Tychyna was commissioned a collection of poetry under the same title *Partiia Vede*. The first edition, worth mentioning, was published without an author on the cover page, suggesting the universal, anonymous victory of socialism. In the thirties, this short collection was constantly re-published in millions of printed copies (it had three editions only in 1934) and was distributed Union-wide. The titles of the verses, bundled in the collection, corresponded to the purpose of the edition: *Partiia Vede*, *Pisnia Chervonoi Armii* [Song of the Red Army], *Pisnia Komsomol'tsiv* [Song of Komsomol Members], *Pisnia Traktorystky* [Song of a Tractor Girl], *Pisnia Kuzni* [Song of a Smithy], *Povitrianyi Flot* [Air Fleet], *Lenin, Narody Idut'* [The Peoples are Coming]. The collection, unsurprisingly, received the most positive reviews, underlining the great political significance of Tychyna’s poetry. A Soviet critic Ivan Kulyk praised Tychyna for embracing “actual militant themes”, which testified “a major victory of ours [the Party].”<sup>753</sup> Similarly, Samiilo Shchupak attested the far-reaching ideological evolution of the poet.<sup>754</sup>

Perhaps, the poet discerned the ‘purifying’ effect of *Partiia Vede*. Later in his autobiography, Tychyna mentioned that the verse and that brief mentioning in *Pravda*

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<sup>752</sup> *Na Tychynu*, in Ivan Bahrianyi, *Poezii (Zbirka)*.

<sup>753</sup> I. Kulyk, “Ukrains'ka Literatura do Z'iizdu”, *Za Markso-Lenins'ku Krytyku*, 5 (1934), 11.

<sup>754</sup> S. Shchupak, “Podolaty Vidstavannia Krytyky”, *Za Markso-Lenins'ku Krytyku*, 6 (1934), 4.

editorial “helped me loads and loads in my work and in all my subsequent life.”<sup>755</sup> In 1935, in a short passage called *Ia Rostu* [I am Growing], written as a preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution, the poet reflected about his experience during the 1930s. The main emphasis, understandably, was placed on the role of the party in Tychyna’s ideological upbringing. This short contribution, however, included an ironic note about the price he had to pay for his future accomplishments: “Thus, I am approaching the plenum filled and overfilled [*napovnenyi, perepovnenyi*]. Hence, at the plenum I will stand as checked and double-checked [*provirenyi i pereprovirenyi*]. I was taken to pieces and assembled again. By roentgen of self-criticism I was examined not even once. Why should not I be brave now?”<sup>756</sup>

In 1937, Tychyna was appointed a Head of the Institute of Ukrainian Literature, the post which he occupied throughout the worst years of Stalin’s purges. The purges changed the outlook of Ukrainian literature significantly. As tallied by Lavrinenko, out of 259 men of letters, who were published in 1930, only 36 stayed active after 1938.<sup>757</sup> In these circumstances, Tychyna as a head of the academic institution dealt with a constantly changing literary environment. The Institute was tasked to prepare a new academic edition of the History of Ukrainian Literature. Those mentioned in the reference volume were included in the new Soviet literary canon. The new literary canon was championed by Tychyna, Ryl's'kyi, and Mykola Bazhan, three prominent poets, who were re-forged during the 1920s to early 1930s. It is worth noting that each poet had his own path towards the heights of socialist realism. While Tychyna gradually evolved towards his position of a

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<sup>755</sup> Tychyna, “Avtobiohrafia,” in Tychyna, *Z Mynuloho v Maibutnie* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1973), 24.

<sup>756</sup> Tychyna, “Ia Rostu,” in Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol. 8.1, 57-58.

<sup>757</sup> Lavrinenko, *Rozstriliane Vidrodzhennia*, 12-13; Luckyj G. S.N., *Keeping a Record: Literary Purges in Soviet Ukraine (1930s): A Bio-Bibliography*, (Edmonton: CIUS, 1988).

poet laureate, Ryl's'kyi submitted after a year-long imprisonment in 1931,<sup>758</sup> and Bazhan adopted the party line in 1934. These poets occupied their distinct position in Soviet culture and politics due to their ability to come to terms with the party politics and attune their poetry to the demands of the times. The party, however, never trusted them fully. Tychyna's friend recalled how sophisticated this manipulation was. According to P'ianov, in Tychyna's personal file there was a snapshot of Vynnychenko, Petliura and Tychyna (with Petliura's hand on Tychyna's shoulder). Before a new award or another trip abroad, this photo was occasionally presented to the poet with the words: "You as well, Pavlo Hryhorovytch?!"<sup>759</sup>

In addition to *Partiia Vede*, in 1938 Tychyna prepared another poetry collection, *Chuttia Iedynoi Rodyny* [Feelings of One Unified Family]. The collection glorified the Communist Party, which had enabled the free development and cultural flourishing of every republic and nation in the Soviet Union. The collection became almost prophetic: in 1939, on the basis of a secret clause of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, territories of Eastern Galicia with significant population of ethnic Ukrainians were occupied by the Red Army and added to the Ukrainian SSR. To celebrate this historical event of the "unification with the mainland" (besides Western Ukraine, western parts of Belorussia and Baltic States were joined to the Soviet Union), representatives from these countries became among the first to be awarded the highest state honour, the newly established Stalin Prize. Tychyna received the First Prize for his *Chuttia Iedynoi Rodyny*, in which he celebrated the historical unity of the Slavic people. On 16 March 1941 the Moscow *Literaturnaia Gazeta* commented on the selection of "those most worthy". The commentator rhetorically questioned: "What unites

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<sup>758</sup> "Sprava no 272 (Z Arkhivu KDB)," *Kyiv*, 2 (1991), 79-101; Vira Aheeva, *Mystetstvo Rivnovahy: Maksym Ryl's'kyi na Tli Epohy* (Kyiv: Knyha, 2012).

<sup>759</sup> Volodymyr P'ianov, "Pravdyvym Bud', ale..." In P'ianov, "*Vyznachni, Vidomi i 'ta Inshi...'* Spohady, *Essei, Narysy*, (Kyiv: Ukraïns'kyi Pys'mennyk: 2002), 48.

the prose of... the verse of... within the sphere of literature?” And he followed: “This works deal with the struggle of the peoples of the Soviet Union against foreigners who would enslave them... Works telling of how a forgotten and oppressed nation unfurled its wings for soaring flight, how a sense of family unity was forged among the nationalities of the Soviet Union.”<sup>760</sup>

On 16 September 1967 “one of the founders of Ukrainian Soviet literature, a prominent poet, academic, journalist, translator, state and civil activist, an academic of the Academy of Sciences of the URSR, a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Hero of the Socialist Labour”<sup>761</sup> passed away. This list, put together by one of the experts on Tychyna is not yet complete. In addition, Tychyna also was a head of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR over the period of two convocations (1953-1959), a deputy of the Supreme Council for seven convocations (1938-1967), a Minister for Education (1943-1948), Laureate of the Stalin Prize (1941), Laureate of the Shevchenko Prize (1962), holder of five Orders of Lenin and holder of two Orders of the Red Banner of Labour. Tychyna became a member of the VKP(b) only in May 1944.

The fates of the two protagonists, although different at first sight, have much in common. Conventionally, the literary and public activities of Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna during the 1920s–early 1930s in Ukrainian studies are examined within the “executed renaissance” approach. Their public significance throughout the 1920s was defined not only by their opposition towards the Soviet policies (mostly, Khvyl'ovyi), but also their leading status among the artistic generation of the 1920s. According to Lavrinenko, a leading proponent of the ‘executed renaissance’ paradigm, Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi

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<sup>760</sup> Quoted in Alla Latyning, “The Stalin Prize for Literature as the Quintessence of Socialist Realism,” in *In The Party Spirit*, 106-128.

<sup>761</sup> Introduction to Tychyna, *Tvory*, vol. 1, 5.

embodied the new neo-baroque literary current of 1917-1933, labelled Ukrainian *kliarnetysm*, (derives from ‘a clarinet’) or literary *vitalism*.<sup>762</sup> For Lavrinenko, Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi played equal roles in this unique literary current: “while Tychyna was descending from the heights of *kliarnetysm* towards communist social-romanticism, Khvyl'ovyi bid his farewell to revolutionary romanticism and was quickly approaching those vacant pinnacles of *kliarnetysm*.”<sup>763</sup> As seen, the decisive year for the scholar is 1924-1925, the publication of Tychyna’s collection *Viter z Ukraïny* and the beginning of the Literary Discussion.

However, as the analysis of the complicated ideological evolution of the two protagonists has shown, the cultural development in Ukraine could hardly be influenced by a single external force. The unification of Ukrainian literature became a result of a complex and non-linear process. The years of the first Five-Year Plan became the last stage of the complex process of political, social and cultural sovietisation of the republic. At the First Soviet Writers Congress, held in Moscow in 1934, different visions of revolutionary, proletarian and Soviet literature were finally unified under the term ‘socialist realism’. Party-mindedness, ideological and class content (*partiïnost'*, *ideïnost'*, *klassovost'*) became the main principles of the new state-approved and state-sanctioned theory of art. It engulfed different artistic currents of the 1920s. More importantly, the two projects of Soviet culture developed and implemented side by side in Ukraine at the time, merged in one Soviet canon of socialist realism. Socialist realism became a culmination of the Bolshevik single, long-term “cultural revolution”, aimed at constructing a new proletarian culture and Soviet

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<sup>762</sup> Iu. Lavrinenko, “Literatura Vitaizmu, 1917-1933,” in Lavrinenko, *Rozstriliane Vidrozhennia*, 939-967.

<sup>763</sup> Lavrinenko, *Literatura Vitaizmu*, 953.

society.<sup>764</sup> In Ukraine, the process of sovietisation was especially multi-faceted, since the success of the Bolshevik project in the republic depended on eliminating other political and cultural alternatives.

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<sup>764</sup> Using David-Fox's understanding of the cultural revolution. See: David-Fox, "What Is Cultural Revolution?"

## Conclusion

At the seventeenth VKP(b) congress, known as “The Congress of the Victors” (26 January–10 February 1934), the results of the first Five-Year Plan were summarised. The central party leadership proudly reported on the remarkable achievements in the national economy and the levels of production, as well as grand transformations in the social and cultural spheres. The results of the first Five-Year Plan, allowed the party leadership to assert the ultimate victory of the working masses, in whose name the revolution had been initially executed. Given the decisive triumph of the proletariat, the party leaders declared a course towards a classless society, subsequently accepted as a slogan for the second Five-Year Plan. As stated by Molotov, the main objective for the following years would be the transformation of the whole toiling population of the country into conscious and active building of a classless socialist society. In such a way, the rigid class-based social structure of the first Five-Year Plan had been rejected; the adherence to class was substituted by the loyalty to the party-state.

The new inclusive paradigm required the redefinition of the ideological foundation of Soviet culture. The ‘proletarian episode’ in the Union’s literature and art was exhausted together with class war of 1928-1931. Instead of narrow-mindedness and sectarian ideology of the class struggle, the newly adopted vision promoted the idea of state-oriented partisan literature, tasked to accentuate the consolidating role of the party-state. As it was stated in the 1932 TsK VKP(b) Resolution “On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organisations,” the existing literary-artistic organisations “ha[d] become too narrow and [were] slowing the serious sweep of [literary and] artistic creativity.”<sup>765</sup> The resolution put

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<sup>765</sup> Resolution of the TsK VKP(b) “On Restructuring Literary and Arts Organizations,” in *Soviet Culture and Power*, 151-152.

to an end institutional and ideological pluralism in the world of letters, as well as any contestant visions of Soviet culture in the Soviet republics. In fact, by 1932 the still existing institutional diversity became a rudiment, a tribute to earlier diversity in literature. As shown in Section Four, any ideological or aesthetic differences between the literary organisations and groupings had already faded away under the onslaught of the party-sponsored VUSPP (and the RAPP in Russia). Instead, the Resolution provided for a single Union of Soviet Writers, which would embrace the new aesthetic method of socialist realism. At the All-Soviet Congress of Soviet Writers, held in Moscow on 17 August 1934, the organisational and ideological setup of Soviet literature was completed.

At the Congress, the term ‘socialist realism’ was defined by Zhdanov, Stalin’s spokesman in cultural affairs. It was presented as “the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism [which] demands of a sincere writer a historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development.”<sup>766</sup> This vague formula rested on the didactic and socially useful understanding of literature and art in general. The usefulness of writers, who became agents of the state and paid employees, derived from their ability to educate people in a proper way. Hence, within the method of socialist realism “truth and historical completeness of artistic representation must be combined with the task of ideological transformation and education of the working man in the spirit of Socialism.”<sup>767</sup>

At the 1934 Congress the Soviet cultural canon was cemented; a unified artistic and institutional method of socialist realism was authorised centrally and endorsed by the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers. It had also marked the decisive end to once heated debates about the artistic orientation, the nature and purpose of art, the social role of artists and writers in the Soviet state. In other words, in the competition between the two models

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<sup>766</sup> Quoted in Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature*, 160-161.

<sup>767</sup> *ibid*, 161.

of Soviet culture in Ukraine, the Soviet culture, as defined centrally, received the complete victory over the separatist vision of Soviet Ukrainian culture, ardently promoted by the Ukrainian communists and artists since the revolution. Ukrainian writers joined the Union of Soviet Writers of Ukraine, a section of the All-Soviet Union. So, Ukraine's writers became executors of the central directives with a limited power to influence the literary agenda in the republic.

However, as the thesis has proven, socialist realism and the Soviet canon can hardly be regarded as a mere invention of the party. As it was shown, the question of cultural sovietisation of Ukraine has no simple answer. The formation of Ukraine's Soviet cultural canon resulted equally from 1) the oppressive literary politics and constant intervention in the cultural sphere; 2) emergence of the national working class and mass audience with clear aesthetic demands and expectations; and 3) the inner artistic evolution of the writers in view of the two factors. Throughout the 1920s, the party, despite its declared non-intervention, was gradually acquiring control in literature, mainly by manipulating the alignment of forces in the world of letters. Socialist realism and the supremacy of the Soviet canon marked the last stage of sovietisation, the endpoint of the decade-long 'cultural revolution' initiated by the Bolsheviks in order to construct a new proletarian culture and Soviet society. Hence, the adoption of socialist realism was not sudden; the shift in the continuum of Soviet cultural life occurred already during the 1920s. As affirmed by Clark "in the mid-1920s, approximately 1924-1926, we can already find the contours of those patterns – institutional, ideological and aesthetic – that in the 1930s were to re-emerge as defining a culture we call 'Stalinism'."<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>768</sup> Clark, *Peterburg*, 184.

The dominance of the Soviet canon was also enabled by the audience. The demands for accessible style and language, optimistic and heroic plots, instructive realistic literature, didactic messages and positive heroes were repeatedly voiced by the working class readers from below. In a way, the simplification and practical orientation of Soviet education influenced pragmatic attitude to art and literature; whereas the preferential position of the working masses in the Soviet society prioritised their demand and expectations. In addition, various educational and cultural organisations (primarily Komsomol) succeeded in creating active, politically engaged, and even militant consumers for Soviet culture. Thus, it was the authoritative voice of the masses demanding “more heroes like X” that had influenced writers in adopting the new aesthetic principles. Hence, the culture of socialist realism was a product of a hybrid, the “power-masses,” functioning as a *single creator*.<sup>769</sup>

Lastly, throughout the decade, the writers, by trial and error, were searching for their own definition of Soviet Ukrainian (or Soviet) culture. The artistic evolution of Ukraine’s writers was heavily influenced by the two above-mentioned factors. Due to the nature of their activity, writers significantly depended on both the readers and the state, which by the decade’s end had become the only publisher and distributor of the printing word. In addition, it was hardly possible to remain self-employed or non-aligned at the time. Hence, the state became the guarantor of writers’ financial security. In order to get the approval of the party, writers, however, needed to compromise and to adapt to the expectations of the “power-masses” hybrid. In addition, especially in the 1930s, aligning with the party vision on literature often came together with some assurance of physical survival.

The two case studies prove the complexity of the cultural transformation in the Soviet society. There were at least two turning points in the gradual process of the Bolshevik

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<sup>769</sup> Dobrenko, *Disaster*, 135.

cultural revolution: the civil war years of 1917-1921 and the year of the great break in 1928/1929, characterised by the change of the ideal cultural types (as defined in the Introduction). During the 1917 revolutions *kul'tura odin* (the avant-garde and revolutionary romanticism) had come into direct conflict with *kultura nol'* (pre-revolutionary culture); while at the turn of the 1920s, *kul'tura dva* (socialist realism) started to gain prominence. As the thesis has proven, there were major internal adjustments in each of the cultural types throughout the 1920s. The cultural transformation of the twenties should be defined not as a mere replacement of one ideal type by another, but rather a complex transformation of *kul'tura nol'* into *kul'tura odin* and consequently *kul'tura dva*. The norms and values of the ideal types did not vanish once the one type gave way to another. As shown through the examination of Ukraine's reading audience, social conservatism was an important factor often neglected by the literary and cultural managers, pre-revolutionary trends remained tangible throughout the decade and were re-introduced into the Soviet cultural canon in the 1930s onwards.<sup>770</sup>

The two case studies demonstrated how complicated the process of self-adjustment was for Ukraine's writers. Both Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna went through a complicated process of self-sovietisation. While the revolutionary and a communist Khvyl'ovyi needed to adjust his romanticism inspired by the revolution and the civil wars to the post-revolutionary routine, the Modernist poet and *intelihent* Tychyna was faced with completely new aesthetics, rejecting the autonomy of arts and demanding his engagement in both political and cultural affairs. During the twenties, the artistic activity of the two men of letters was heavily mediated by politics and the need to take sides in the on-going

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<sup>770</sup> See, e.g., David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956*. (Cambridge MA, Harvard UP, 2002); David Brandenberger, and Kevin Platt (eds.) *Epic Revisionism. Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*. (Madison, WI: Wisconsin UP, 2006).

ideological debates about the concept of Soviet culture in Ukraine. The literary output of the writer Khvyl'ovyi and the poet Tychyna was respectively used as evidence for the potency of different cultural projects competing for dominance at the time. In spite of different levels of public and political engagements, political and aesthetic agendas, Tychyna and Khvyl'ovyi both fell victims to the centralisation drive carried out from Moscow: in 1933, Khvyl'ovyi took his life with a gunshot whereas Tychyna “ascended the Golgotha of Fame”<sup>771</sup> and attuned his poetry to the demands of the party.

Conventionally in the Ukrainian studies, the literary and public activity of Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna during the 1920s-early 1930s is examined within the ‘executed renaissance’ paradigm. According to this approach, which prevails national and diaspora historiographies, the 1920s exposed the greatest potential of the young artistic generation, which was violently interrupted by the Stalinist terror. Following this view, national and moral criteria took priority in the evaluation of authors and their works. In many respects, the present study challenges the paradigm. In the 1920s, as has been proven, Ukraine experienced a complicated and non-linear process of formation of Soviet literature which over the decade had gradually absorbed other alternative non-Bolshevik and proletarian visions of Ukraine’s literature. The study has shown that, firstly, there was more than one current in Ukrainian cultural developments at the time and the literary development of the 1920s cannot be narrowed to only those highly talented writers, who have subsequently constituted the literary canon of the independent Ukraine. Secondly, the ideological and aesthetic evolution of those writers, glorified by national historiography, was far more complex and there is no simple distinction between ‘martyrs’ and ‘perpetrators’ of the regime. Thus, the cultural development of Ukraine did not end in the 1930s, having been

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<sup>771</sup> Reference to Stus.

‘executed’ by the order from above, but evolved into a distinct Soviet culture. Thereby, there is a direct link between the Ukrainian national (rooted in Ukrainian modernism) and Soviet (socialist realism, mediated by Soviet Ukrainian) culture.

As scholars have observed, the doctrine of socialist realism was heavily oriented towards literary practice, meaning that the literary canon was formed by a code of specific novels, written during the time.<sup>772</sup> Thus, every writer, participating in this literary practice, by his own effort defined and enriched the concept of Soviet culture. However, the Soviet canon was contributed not only by what was written at the time, but also by what was deliberately omitted or left aside. In the 1930s, numerous contributions of the Soviet Ukrainian authors were generally regarded unfit for the new literary canon, censored both from the libraries and public remembrance. So, although different, the case studies of Khvyl'ovyi and Tychyna best present the way the discourse of the 1920s decade was manipulated and constructed over time.

Khvyl'ovyi, considered “one of the most outstanding writers of the proletarian age,”<sup>773</sup> after his suicide in May 1933 fell out of the narrative of Soviet culture. In the Soviet Union, his life-long activity was labelled counter-revolutionary, his writings were removed from libraries, and his name could only be used in connection with ‘*khvyl'ovizm*’, a general term to define class enemies. In turn, Tychyna, called “the most prominent Ukrainian poet of the twenties”,<sup>774</sup> ascended to the heights of socialist realism after his propagandistic verse *Partiia Vede* had been published in the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* in November 1933. Nonetheless, the status of a poet laureate required an unblemished revolutionary biography. Hence, his poetic oeuvre underwent critical ideological

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<sup>772</sup> Clark, *Soviet Novel*, 3-15.

<sup>773</sup> Doroshkevych, *Pidruchnyk*, 304.

<sup>774</sup> Sherekh, *Trends*, 102.

evaluation. Consequently, the collection of his selected poetry, published in 1939, included only “neutral” poems from the previous collections. Sixty-three poems, however, did not pass the strict censorship: ten poems from *Soniachni Klarnety* (1918), all twenty-three poems of *Zamist' Sonetiv i Oktav* (1920), thirteen from *Pluh* (1920), eleven from *Viter z Ukraïny* (1924), and six from *Chernihiv* (1931). The poems approved for the publication underwent strict editing in order to polish them from ‘reprehensible’ religious symbolism, references to national history or revolution, allusions to any events which could allow anti-Soviet interpretation.

To a certain extent, the two protagonists similarly disappeared from scholarship. Khvyl'ovyi fell victim of his “ideological ambiguity,” condemned from both ideological sides for being either communist or nationalist. Whereas any objective accounts on Tychyna were shadowed by his status of a poet laureate. The reappraisal of the two protagonists in Soviet Ukraine started only in the late 1980s during the so-called *glasnost'*. In 1988, after more than a fifty-year ban on his name, Khvyl'ovyi was praised from the high Party tribunes of the Ukrainian SSR in connection to his 95th birth and 55th anniversary of his death. Moreover, a set of cultural events was organised with the TsK approval to commemorate the unjust forgotten Ukrainian writer Khvyl'ovyi.<sup>775</sup> Subsequently, in the independent Ukraine, Khvyl'ovyi has become one of the most researched Ukrainian writers. His prose is widely referred to as an example of the unprecedented cultural flourishing of the 1920s and his pamphlets are uncritically used to prove an inherent intellectual opposition to the Bolshevik authoritarianism.

The attitude towards an ‘official’ Tychyna, the one introduced by force after 1933, among the literary critics and audience was rather negative. In 1991, one critic asserted that

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<sup>775</sup> Ivan Drach, Vystup na plenumi pravlinnia Spilky Pys'mennykiv Ukraïny pro neobkhidnist' povernennia chytacham tvoriv M. Khvyl'ovoho, *Literaturna Ukraïna*, (09.07.1987).

“Ninety per cent of Ukrainians do not like Tychyna’s creative work. No, I think I might be mistaken. Not ninety, but nighty nine. Or maybe even more – ninety nine point nine per cent”.<sup>776</sup> Since the late 1980s, however, the attempt was made to introduce another Tychyna, an undeservedly forgotten poet of the early 1920s, who, due to his weak personality and constant fear of terror and violence, had surrendered to the Communist party. In contemporary literary studies, two personas of Tychyna are distinguished: the Symbolist poet of the early 1920s and the Soviet poet laureate. Most of Tychyna’s poetry did not stand the test of time. The literary canon of independent Ukraine included poetry of the ‘early’ Tychyna (up until 1920) and some rare examples of partisan poetry, written during the World War Two (for instance, *Pokhoron Druha* [Funeral of the Friend]).

Overall, the unified Soviet canon in Ukraine, cemented in the early 1930s, was an amalgamation of at least two different Soviet cultural projects: Soviet Ukrainian culture and Soviet culture in the Ukrainian language. The two projects were conditioned by two different political cultures, developed parallel to each other within the institutional framework of the KP(b)U. The distinct project of Soviet Ukrainian culture was promoted by Ukraine-minded communists, advocating Ukraine’s autonomy in political and cultural matters. The project of all-Union Soviet culture was based on Moscow’s central place on the all-Soviet artistic map and the determinant role of the central leadership in defining cultural policies in the Union. The two cultural projects, often implemented simultaneously by different groups of interest, came into direct confrontation with each other. The subsequent triumph of the all-Soviet project was secured by the accelerated processes of economic centralisation and political consolidation Union-wide. Nevertheless, the demise of the Soviet Ukrainian cultural project was only partially caused by the external force. The

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<sup>776</sup> Tel’niuk, *Mistyfikatsiia Poeta*, 182-183.

inherent contradictions within the KP(b)U (the irreconcilable ‘two distinct ancestral roots’ in the party); constant power struggle between the republic’s and central elites as for the amount of authorities the KP(b)U could enjoy, the lack of a single unified vision on what the Soviet Ukrainian cultural project was about, resulted in the weakness and perhaps inevitable failure of the ambitious project of a Soviet Ukrainian culture.

Additionally, the failure of a separatist political and cultural project ironically was caused by the success of korenizatsiia in Ukraine. This preferential policy, designed by the party to pursue multiple often contradictory goals, for a short period of time had created an affirmative image of the Soviet authorities in Ukraine. The accomplishments in the cultural sphere, the promotion of ethnic Ukrainians and the preferential status of the Ukrainian language in the republic made many leftist intellectuals, both in Ukraine and abroad, believe in and side with the Bolsheviks, under whose banner, as believed, the elites could finally build a nationally defined and socially just Ukrainian state. The failure of a separate vision of a Soviet Ukraine, hence, was caused by the support the Ukrainian communists had granted to their adversary, overlooking other potential projects of Soviet Ukrainian state-building.

In general, by 1932, the implementation of korenizatsiia was discontinued. In a way, the implementation of the policy corroborated Petliura’s observation from 1923: “In general, this Ukrainizatsiia looks like a mere tactical move from the Bolshevik side; if it does not give positive results, very soon it will be forgotten.”<sup>777</sup> Nonetheless, Ukrainizatsiia did achieve success. By the end of the first Five-Year Plan, the main goals of the party were largely accomplished, enabling full consolidation of Bolshevik power in Ukraine. Korenizatsiia, designed to neutralise the emergence of local nationalism, succeeded in

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<sup>777</sup> Symon Petliura, *Statti, Lysty, Dokumenty*, Vol. II (New York: VUAN, 1979), 542.

gathering all national activists under the KP(b)U's umbrella. In the 1930s, their services were no longer required. The Soviet regime managed to receive the support it needed simply by dressing a Moscow-dominated party in national colours: it engaged locals into party and governmental work and public administration and promoted Ukrainian leaders to the highest posts in the republic. In addition, during the decade the new generation of Soviet citizens, educated in the Communist spirit, came into existence. As a result, the KP(b)U was transformed into a centralised well-structured organisation with vast representation and legitimacy within the union republic. A mutually beneficial compromise between Ukrainian and Russian communists was found, according to which the KP(b)U could indulge limited autonomy in return for acknowledging the Moscow leadership.

Similarly, korenizatsiia was adopted to mobilise the population for the upcoming transformation of the USSR into a great power. In predominantly rural Ukraine, korenizatsiia was needed to come to terms with the countryside. The peasants were to be encouraged to take part in local administration and, most importantly, to join the ranks of the national proletariat. Nonetheless, korenizatsiia had always been a concession, a soft-line, which was used to prepare the ground until a hard-line policy would be elaborated. Not surprisingly, the curtailment of korenizatsiia concurred with the proclamation of the forced collectivisation in 1929. Instead of coming to terms with the peasantry, their latent resistance was crushed by, firstly, taking away their strongholds, their land and property, and secondly, their physical extermination during the famine of 1932-33.

In general, korenizatsiia, as envisaged centrally, fulfilled its intended goals. On the contrary, the results of Ukrainizatsiia as seen by national intelligentsia were far more ambiguous. Ukrainizatsiia was always favoured and endorsed by a minority in the party, whose political weight had never been enough to defend the cause of national state-building

against the centralist attitude of the majority. Moreover, Ukrainizatsiia did not gain necessary social basis, and, in fact, was supported mostly by Ukrainian socialist intelligentsia. In addition, the policy of a “double bottom” [*podviine dno*] applied to Ukraine’s cultural and political figures: on the one hand, the policy had provided for vast changes in the republic, on the other hand, the enthusiastic intentions of local Ukrainisers ran counter to the policies endorsed centrally. The political campaigns against Shums'kyi and Khvyl'ovyi, and the nationality-based persecutions initiated already in 1926, proved that korenizatsiia had always had its limits and could not be applied to the political sphere. In the end, Ukrainizatsiia, paraphrasing the words of a diaspora commentator, “opened the window for the agents of the occupying power [the Bolshevik party] to see who would be the first to rush to it to catch a breath of fresh air” and “helped the NKVD to make short work of Ukrainian cultural and public activists either non-Communist or Ukrainian communists.”<sup>778</sup>

Undeniably, Ukrainizatsiia resulted in great cultural upheaval, bringing to the fore significant potential of Soviet Ukrainian writers, academics, artists etc. The enforced usage of the national language and a tolerant attitude towards autonomous artistic currents created the preconditions for the fully-fledged cultural flourishing in the republic. Even if we disregard the artificial character of book publishing (which corresponded neither to the readership’s demands, nor to the alignment of literary forces in the republic) and the forced linguistic Ukrainizatsiia (which often remained on the level of changing signs on the streets of the cities in eastern Ukraine or collecting certificates from numerous language courses), korenizatsiia for the first time created a large number of native-language consumers.

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<sup>778</sup> Zadesnians'kyi, *Shcho nam dav*, 159-160.

Yet, what was the product of this cultural renaissance? Ukrainizatsiia endorsed mass production in Ukrainian to satisfy the demands of the audience, aptly manipulated by the party educators. The policy was accompanied by enforced proletarianisation of Ukrainian culture, hence unification of style, themes, and aesthetic devices. Initiated by the great examples of high quality artistic and literary works, national culture in the second half of the 1920s slowly slid towards mass culture with distinct ideological flavour, albeit created in the Ukrainian language. The resultant contributions were Soviet, to warrant its propagandistic and ideologically consistent content, and Ukrainian, to ensure its outreach up to the remotest village in western Ukraine. Overall, due to industrialisation, middle-brow tastes in arts and letters started not only to dominate the cultural sphere, but became a standard, expected to be followed unconditionally. Party-sponsored Ukrainizatsiia, with its orientation towards quantitative objectives, provided for massification of literature, lowering the standards of creative activity to the most unsophisticated readers, newly proletarianised and urbanised peasants, who were learning literacy along with their technical skills.

Cultural and linguistic Ukrainizatsiia, carried alongside modernisation campaigns was intended to change Ukraine's urban identity. Shums'kyi unsuccessfully advocated an accelerated de-Russification of Ukraine's urban centres. After Shums'kyi's demise, Skrypnyk shifted the emphasis towards more ideological compliance. In his view, endorsed demographic Ukrainizatsiia should be accompanied by the creation of a totally Ukrainian urban environment and increase of prestige of the Ukrainian language. Consequently, not only the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians within the working class increased during the

1920s (51.7% in 1926, and 59.2% in 1934<sup>779</sup>), but their identity was shaped during this decade. Liber argues that in the 1920s the urban identity was transformed, “reflecting the Ukrainian transition from marginality to majority in the urban centres.”<sup>780</sup> However, such statements were premature. The belief in natural demographic Ukrainizatsiia was naively based on the assumption that those millions of peasants, who flooded the cities during the Five-Year Plans, would contribute to de-Russification of the proletariat. As anticipated by Hrushevs'kyi, “this nationally aware and civilised [*natsional'no svidomyi i vykhovanyi*] class of peasants [...] will not fall victim to Russification, but will influence the new environment and will lead to the creation of the Ukrainian working class”.<sup>781</sup>

Instead, huge migration from the countryside peasantised the working class. Peasants, despite misconceptions of some intellectuals, did not possess strong national identity and had little connection with Ukrainian elitist urban culture of the time. Industrialisation made those peasants move to the cities, Ukrainizatsiia created the façade of a total Ukrainian environment, but it did not necessarily transform peasants into Ukrainians with a modern urban identity.<sup>782</sup> Also, Ukrainizatsiia did not make Ukrainian the everyday language of the urban population. The Russian language still dominated economic, industrial, political, and academic spheres, whereas Ukrainian was confined to education, propaganda work, and partly the cultural sphere. Instead of becoming mono-lingual (Ukrainian), the urban centres became bilingual, when Russian culture dominated among the workers and state functionaries. The Russian language preserved its superior status and urban citizens, as

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<sup>779</sup> Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*, 77.

<sup>780</sup> *ibid*, 120.

<sup>781</sup> Quote in Kostiuk, *Zustrichi*, Vol.1, 192.

<sup>782</sup> Here I strongly disagree with Liber and his argument on transformed national and social identity. See: Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy*, 119-120.

recalled by the contemporaries, were ashamed of speaking Ukrainian, which could easily suggest their social origin.<sup>783</sup>

Nonetheless, Ukrainizatsiia had supreme importance for constructing Ukrainian identity. In the 1920s the Ukrainian nation was created. Firstly, by means of statistics and ethnography, the diverse peoples inhabiting the territory of Ukraine started to associate themselves with Ukrainians, contributing to the largest ethnic group in the republic. Secondly, the Ukrainian language was codified. The first comprehensive spelling reform, adopted in 1929, widely known as '*skrypnykivka*' (after the then Commissar for Education Skrypnyk) or 'Kharkiv orthography', was a result of thorough discussions among academics and linguists, representing different parts of Ukraine. Hence, in 1929, based on the previous experiences of language reforms, different vernaculars and dialects, which existed on the territory of Ukraine, were codified under the name of the Ukrainian language. Besides, the 'Kharkiv orthography' was adopted in western Ukraine, to facilitate the cross-border communication and distribution of publications. Also, a single narrative of Ukraine's history had been written, uniting ethnically and linguistically different parts of Soviet Ukraine within one discourse. Moreover, the borders of Soviet Ukraine were defined and agreed on with the neighbouring countries.<sup>784</sup>

Ukrainizatsiia strengthened the distinctiveness of a separatist horizon in the KP(b)U, whose representatives elaborated and with varied success implemented an alternative vision of Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian elites were a proactive force in the process of the formation of the Soviet Union. The debates and negotiations between local actors (intellectuals, politicians, etc.) and the Moscow party leadership over the status

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<sup>783</sup> Shevel'ov, *Ukrain's'ka Mova*, 162-163

<sup>784</sup> Francine Hirsch, "Towards an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *The Russian Review*, 59 (2000): 201-226; Borisenok, *Fenomen*, 99-106.

of Ukraine shaped the republic and at large accounted for its distinctive status in the Union. The experience of political autonomy provided for ideological pluralism and unprecedented cultural upheaval in the republic. The success of Ukrainizatsiia campaign resulted from an activist position of local Ukrainisers, who had used the centrally-endorsed initiative for their own nation-building objectives. Within the power struggle between the local and central elites, a distinct and promising current, Soviet Ukrainian culture, was elaborated. Despite the defeat, the separatist vision of Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Ukrainian culture remained tangible throughout the Soviet period in Ukraine.<sup>785</sup>

The significance of national communist projects of state-building was re-affirmed time and again. In 1949, Vynnychenko, residing in France, published a controversial and highly debated *Zapovit Bortsiam za Vyzvolennia* [Testament to Fighters for Liberation]. In it, he asserted that the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian statehood existed in the form of the Ukrainian SSR. Hence, the goals of the national revolution of 1917-1921, as seen by the UNR leader, were achieved. The Ukrainian state was built by the great potential of the Ukrainian nation and sacrifices of national communists, all the “Hrushevs'kyis, Skrypnyks, Iefremovs, Khvyl'ovyi's, even Liubchenkos, and all the conscious Ukrainians, who gave up their freedom and life” for the national cause.<sup>786</sup> The Ukrainian state, according to the former politician, possessed all the attributes of an autonomous and sovereign state. Moreover, in 1945 the Ukrainian SSR became a member of the UN, hence internationally recognised. The Ukrainian state, however, was under occupation by Moscow. Therefore, Vynnychenko called for the liberation of Ukraine and highly praised the commitment of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*UPA, Ukraïns'ka Povstans'ka Armiia*). The merit of the

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<sup>785</sup> Palko, *Ukrainian National Communism: Challenging History*

<sup>786</sup> Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Zapovit Bortsiam za Vyzvolennia* (Kyiv: Krynysia, 1991), 12.

national communists and the UPA fighters was comparable: while the former built the Ukrainian state, the UPA was fighting for its liberation.

In Ukrainian intellectual history, the legacy of national communists did not wither away. The ideas first expressed by Mazlakh and Shakhrai in *Do Khvyli* in 1918 remained vital during the entire period of Soviet rule in Ukraine. National communism became the form of legal opposition to the Soviet authority that arose from the contradiction between the interests of the centralised state (in the Soviet Union as a whole) and claims for national self-determination either in cultural, economic or political dimensions (in the union republic). Apart from the early 1920s, the ideas of national communism succeeded in entering the political scene of Soviet Ukraine at least two more times. In the 1960–1970s, nationally oriented communists were the first to voice the strengthening of the authoritarian regime and to condemn resumed purges of national intellectuals. Finally, during the breakdown of the Soviet Union, sovereign communists legalised the acquisition of sovereignty that led to Ukraine's independence. In both cases, Ukraine-minded political elites referred to the experience of the 1920s to provide legacy for their own attempts to withstand the centralisation drive of the party leadership.<sup>787</sup>

The 1920s decade was perhaps the most complex period in Ukraine's political, cultural and intellectual history. Two concurring revolutions, national and Bolshevik, led to exceptionally violent civil wars, when different form of statehoods competed for authority on the territory of Ukraine. The Bolsheviks, the only party to remain in power in 1921, were faced not only with the economically and socially devastated country, but also with an almost totally alien population, which at large did not support either the ideology or the political methods introduced by the new authorities. In 1921, the long process of political,

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<sup>787</sup> E.g., Ivan Dziuba, *Internationalism or Russification?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

economic and cultural sovietisation of Ukraine had begun; a process which took almost a decade to be completed. While establishing the Soviet regime in Ukraine, the Bolsheviks met with an unexpected rival, the Ukrainian communist movement and the distinct Ukraine-minded group in the KP(b)U, who, throughout the decade, challenged and opposed the centralising tendencies of the Moscow-led Bolsheviks in the republic. Apart from the political sphere, the most intense competition between the two political cultures occurred in the cultural sphere, where different projects of Soviet culture were put to the test. The triumph of the all-Soviet project was contributed both by the uncompromising stand of the central leadership and the lack of solidarity among Ukrainian communist elites. This study of cultural sovietisation leads to a better understanding of the complex process of establishing and consolidating the Soviet regime in Ukraine, its seventy-year-long history and legacy, still tangible in independent Ukraine.

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