

Re: Situation in the Ukrainian SSR, 1986. Perspectives for our activities given the current/projected tendencies in the republic.

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After the wide scale arrests in Ukraine in 1972 and the liquidation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group by 1979, opposition in Ukraine seemed to come to a standstill. The Polish events of 1980 (The rise of Solidarity) had an impact in Ukraine, but no active support for the ideals of Solidarity was visible. There were no new initiatives for any type of dissident or semi-dissident movement. Some samizdat managed to come out, but this was limited in scope and content.

The first signs of an active rise of dissident activity began in approx. 1984/85 with the appearance of the samizdat "Chronicle of the Ukrainian Catholic Church" which was at first edited by the Catholic activist (and human rights dissident) TEREYA Yosyf. When he was arrested in 1985 it was feared that the Chronicle would cease publication. Yet, in Feb. 1986 a new issue appeared (No. 10) and a lengthy petition of Ukrainian Catholics demanding the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate) Church also surfaced at this time. The Catholic movement seems to have enlisted within its ranks a sizable number of people (mostly from the Western oblasts of Ukraine -Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Uzhorod) and from the different appeals and Chronicles, it appears that while this movement is nominally Catholic, it contains many nationalist overtones. Thus it resembles a more traditional Western Ukrainian nationalist movement as opposed to the dissidents of the 1960's and 1970's who concentrated upon human rights and were geographically located in the Eastern oblasts.

The impact this Catholic revival had was noticeable by following the Soviet Ukrainian press. At approximately the time the Chronicles surfaced in the West, a large scale "counter-propaganda" campaign was launched in the media focusing on the Uniate Church, its alleged ties to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) during and after World War II and similar disinformation. Numerous books were published in the Soviet Ukraine on this topic, as well as articles in the party press.

This campaign is still ongoing: new "studies" have been announced which are due to appear in book form in 1986 on this question. It seems from the available data, that the question of a religious, Uniate revival is seen as a major irritant for the leadership and should be combatted at all costs. In informal discussions, Soviet Ukrainian spokesmen have raised the issue of legalizing the Uniate Church - but on the condition that it not have ties to Rome and to the Ukrainian Catholic (emigre) leadership. Some of these discussions (held in the West with emigres and with priests of the Uniate Church) are being conducted through the offices of the World Council of Churches, a definitely pro-Soviet body.

On a different level, apart from the Catholic revival, by about

1984-85 we began seeing the beginnings of a trend in Eastern Ukraine which can loosely be called a "mini thaw", inspired from above in certain instances and with cautious proddings from below. This "mini thaw" has been manifesting itself in the following manner:

1. IN LITERATURE.

In approx. 1983-85 a cautious revival of Ukrainian literature began with the publication of a number of historical novels such as "Ya Bohdan" by Pavlo Zahrebel'ny, the First Secretary of the Union of Writers of Ukraine. The novel deals with a mythical dialogue between Bohdan Khmelnytsky, a Ukrainian national hero and the reader. Khmelnytsky is explaining to the reader why he made certain decisions, what his motivations were and how he wanted himself to be perceived by future generations. This novel generated considerable commentary in the press and literary journals. At the same time, numerous novels with historical themes began appearing, many of them set in Western Ukraine at the turn of the century and concentrating upon the revival of Ukrainian national consciousness under Austro-Hungarian or Polish rule. These novels touch upon some very delicate and taboo questions such as the use of the national language (within the 19th century setting of these novels). For example, a Russian language novel was published in 1985 in Lviv entitled "The Servents of Hell" by Julian Shulmeister. In it he describes how in the 1920's Ukrainian students at Lviv university demanded from their professor that he teach classes in the Ukrainian language. The professor, who was by nationality a Ukrainian, replied: "I am ready to speak in any civilized language, but I regard it shameful to speak in the language of servents, cart drivers and peasants". For anybody familiar with the status of the Ukrainian language today in the universities in Ukraine, and its almost total disappearance from the lecture halls, this passage is very significant indeed. In a similar novel, about Western Ukraine in the 19th century, the author, Roman Lyubkivsky, writes about a mythical Ukrainian begger in Lviv who is deprived of his historical memory, his language (he speaks a mixture of Polish, Ukrainian and German) and ultimately, his very nationality. This also is a thinly veiled criticism of the existing situation in Ukraine where so many Ukrainians speak a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian and for whom the concept of nationality has become blurred due to forceable russification by the regime.

Even more blatant in the past two years has been the publication in the official press of a series of articles by Ivan Dzyuba. Dzyuba was the most prominent Ukrainian literary critic and dissident in the 1960's. His work "Internationalism or Russification?" was the classic Ukrainian samizdat book of the 1960's (published by us, translated into English, French, Italian and Chinese) Dzyuba was arrested in 1973, subsequently recanted and was not published for a number of years. In the early 1980's some of his articles began appearing in the official press, most of them on "safe" topics. In 1985 however, his essay "Shevchenko and Petefi" was published in the official journal "Ukrainska Mova i Literatura v Shkoli". The significance of this is, that this essay circulated in samizdat in the 1960's, we published it in

Suchasnist in 1969. Comparing the two texts, we found that little was changed in the 1985 officially published version. In 1986 two more important articles by Dzyuba were published - and as in the previous case, both had been written in the 1960's and circulated in samizdat (having been refused permission to be published at that time in the official press). All three articles by Dzyuba speak openly of the Czarist policy of russification, of literary freedom and national awareness of Ukrainians.

Along a similar note was the appearance in the April issue of the journal Kiev of an article by Mykhaylo Braychevsky about Halyna SEVRYK, an artist from Kiev. The author, Braychevsky is a prominent historian who wrote a very powerful samizdat piece in the 1960's entitled "Unification or Reunification?" about the treaty "linking" Ukraine and Russia together in 1654. For many years Braychevsky's name disappeared from the press. Now that it re-appeared in 1986, it was in conjunction with this article about Sevryk. Sevryk is an artist who was active in the dissident movement in the 1960's and whose name also disappeared for many years from the press, along with her works which were not exhibited in Ukraine.

These, and other books and articles, all appeared prior to the 9th Congress of the Writers Union of Ukraine which took place in June 1986 in Kiev. As far as we can see, most of this was done with the formal, if not tacit, approval of the Party. It is highly unlikely that any editor would, on his own, publish such material which in the 1960's and 1970's was punishable by a prison term. It is also significant that many of these articles appeared prior to Yevgeniy Yevtushenko's speech in Moscow in the Spring of 1986 where he called for more openness in literature.


The Ukrainian Writers Union Congress held in June 1986 was another highly significant event. The calls by Honchar, Zahrebelny and others for greater use of the Ukrainian language was not merely a literary or linguistic point. Any such calls (like the one made by the former First Secretary of the Ukrainian CP, Shelest in 1964) have definite political overtures and should be evaluated within a political context. The entire Writers Union congress in Kiev, while overshadowed by the Chernobyl accident, raised a number of issues which had to have been a sore point for most Ukrainian writers: the lack of literary criticism, the overwhelming nature of censorship, small print runs, the need to publish writers whose works have been banned for many decades. While all this calls to mind the debates of the 1960's and Khrushchev's "thaw", it seems that the parameters of the discussion in 1986 have been expanded.

## 2. FOLK CUSTOMS

Another aspect, aside from the nominal "literary" discussion of the past few years, has been the increased attention given to such matters as folk songs. According to sources in Ukraine, there is a significant revival of amateur choir groups who specialize in folk songs and who have formulated their positions in an unofficial document in our possession which stresses the

point that Ukrainian traditional music is being abandoned for Russian language pop or rock music and that this is part of russification. From private sources we know that a folk choir has been formed in Kiev whose conductor is Leopold Yashchenko. Yashchenko became prominent in the 1960's when a similar choir under his auspices was disbanded for "nationalist reasons". In 1986, the newly formed choir performed during official and semi-official functions in Kiev. We also know that some, if not most, members of this choir are people who have been involved in some type of dissident activities.

It is difficult to attribute this trend exclusively to Gorbachev's call for "Glasnost". While there is no doubt that "glasnost" is part and parcel of this revival, there is significant pressure from below for this revival. For the past 15 years Ukrainian culture was stagnating along with the economy and any call for a revival in Moscow will almost always be echoed in the national republics by calls for a revival of the national culture, language, knowledge of national history, rehabilitation of cultural (and political, for the difference is sometimes muted) figures shot in the 1930's etc. The Gorbachev initiative will be used in Ukraine as a "green light" by the Ukrainian cultural elite to try and win some concessions for themselves (and for their nation) without eliciting charges of "nationalism" from the more orthodox members of society.



#### OUR POTENTIAL ROLE

In the 1960's we became very closely involved in the national revival in Ukraine. We published and publicized events in Ukraine, distributed our publications there and were at times a bridge between East and West. We also made a number of tactical mistakes, the worst being that we became too closely linked to those people actually in the forefront of the revival. This is not to say that we implicated people over there: if arrests were imminent we could play no role in stopping them. But too often we portrayed ourselves as being "the link" between the emmigration and Ukraine - to nobody's benefit. The other shortcoming was that we tried too often to get people who were involved in literary/political affairs in Ukraine involved in operational activity. This was not needed and foolhardy in some ways.

In the 1960's we published a number of titles of contemporary Soviet Ukrainian literary works in order to popularize it in the West. Some of these books contained analytical pieces by our own authors, in others we did not comment upon the materials and let them speak for themselves. If a similar situation should arise in the near future, we have to be able to popularize the author from inside. Most likely, we should do it without political commentary and not leave that person open to charges of "links to nationalists in the West". If the piece we publish is political, then it is easier to provide political commentary along with it. In any case, our role in the emerging situation will be very important, for past experience has shown us that in a time of "liberalization" Soviet Ukrainian cultural (and political) leaders will be paying close attention to what we write and how

we attempt to present this trend.

One possible scenario for us is to function on a number of levels. On the one hand to maintain contacts to official members of the Writers Union utilizing those emigre writers who follow literary events and politics in Ukraine but who are not openly tracable to us. On another level we should encourage some contacts between officials of the Writers Union and people who are overtly connected to Suchasnist journal in order to elicit official responses to our position. A third level is to stimulate more political debate by increasing book, video cassette etc. distribution inside to selected people who have contacts to those involved in official institutions. And finally, we have to concentrate as well upon mass distribution via third countries (like Poland) in order not to limit ourselves to the cultural elite in Ukraine, but to see to it that our materials go to grass root levels.

If this begining trend, or "mini thaw" is to continue in Ukraine (and the other non-Russian republics of the USSR) it is conceivable that another "dissident movement" might arise which could take up as issues such things as the Chernobil accident, place greater emphasis upon socio-economic problems, workers rights, agricultural reform and so on, along with the basic question of national rights. We have to be prepared to service this potential dissident movement - not only by providing it with the material and technical means for existence, but also insert news about it in the world press, have defense committee's ready to defend political prisoners etc. This will place a greater financial burden upon us and we should look for means to support this type of activity.

We should be prepared for the eventuality that if a dissident movement arises in Ukraine as a result of this current trend, then in all probability it will be different from the one which existed in the 1960's and 1970's. It will probably be more conspiratorial, its demands more radical and will form into organizations, similair to the ones existing in Poland today. Servicing such a movement will be rather difficult given past experiance. One should also plan for the possibilities of such a movement/organization wanting to link up to similair groups in the other republics of the USSR and countries of East Europe. The basis for this type of movement/organization already exists today in the form of the above mentioned Catholic movement in the Western oblasts of Ukraine. It is conceivable that given the proper set of circumstances, this movement can enlarge itself considerably.