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# Reinventing the Ukrainian Left: Assessing Adaptability and Change, 1991–2000

ANDREW WILSON

THE real story of the 1999 Ukrainian presidential election was not the apparently easy victory of the incumbent, Leonid Kuchma, but the defeat of the left opposition. Having spent his previous term of office (1994–99) building up the myth of ‘leftist obstruction’ to cover up his own lack of reform initiative, Kuchma now seemed bent on destroying the temporarily disoriented left as a serious political force in his second term. On the other hand, in a parallel universe the left could easily have won the election. Left-wing candidates took 45.1% of the first round vote, before Kuchma, only 36.5% in the first, came out an easy winner against his preferred Communist opponent in the second, by 56.2% to 37.8%.

This article mainly examines what John T. Ishiyama has defined as ‘communist successor parties in Ukraine’, namely ‘those parties which were formerly the governing party in the communist regime and which inherited the preponderance of the former ruling parties’ resources and personnel’.<sup>1</sup> Defining ‘preponderance’ is problematical in the Ukrainian context. The Communist Party of Ukraine had 2.96 million members in January 1991. Its largest successor, the new Communist Party, had only 160,000 as of January 2000. If one reverses the definition, however, there are three main successor parties in Ukraine that unquestionably derive a preponderance of *their* members and resources from the Communist Party of old: the new Communist Party (which held its founding congress in June 1993); the Socialists (October

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<sup>1</sup> John T. Ishiyama, ‘The Communist Successor Parties and Party Organizational Development in Post-Communist Politics’, *Political Research Quarterly*, 52, 1999, 1, pp. 87–112 (p. 88) (hereafter ‘The Communist Successor Parties’).

1991) and the Rural Party (December 1993).<sup>2</sup> Given its long experience of Soviet rule and the weakness of pre-existing civil society, Ukraine has no 'historical' parties as such; although several historical traditions can be invoked (particularly by the Socialists). Ukraine has, however, at least one essentially brand new leftist party, the Progressive Socialist Party (founded April 1996), which is strong on the rhetoric of Soviet success and subsequent betrayal, but has little organizational continuity with the old Communist Party. Several others were beginning to emerge as Ukraine entered a new electoral cycle in 2000–02. The total number of parties is in itself important. The left spectrum is already crowded, and the Ukrainian party system as a whole has to date been somewhat lopsided, with a preponderance of 'effective' parties on the left.<sup>3</sup>

### *Hypotheses*

This paper presents eight key hypotheses to explain why the left's dominant political strategy to date has been in Ishiyama's terms 'leftist-retreat' (highly conservative policies and a ghetto mentality) rather than 'pragmatic-reform' or 'national-patriotic';<sup>4</sup> and why this has been a key factor in reducing electability. First, and most obviously, the successor parties have been shaped by the manner of their succession. The relative inflexibility of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) in the endgame of the Soviet era is mirrored in the highly conservative policies of its namesake after its re-formation in 1993. Emerging from what Ishiyama and Herbert Kitschelt have called a 'patrimonial communist' regime,<sup>5</sup> the new Communist Party has enjoyed huge standstill advantages of name-recognition, organizational carry-over and captive networks of work-based patronage, as well as benefiting from the general weakness of alternative political parties and civil

<sup>2</sup> See also Andrew Wilson, 'The Ukrainian Left: In Transition to Social Democracy or Still in Thrall to the USSR?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 49, 1997, 7, pp. 1293–316 (hereafter 'The Ukrainian Left'); and Wilson, 'The Long March of the Ukrainian Left: Backwards Towards Communism, Sideways to Social-Democracy or Forwards to Socialism?', *The Masaryk Journal*, 3, 2000, 1, pp. 122–40. Highly recommended are the two excellent Ukrainian studies, Oleksii Haran' and Oleksandr Maiboroda, *Ideini zasady livoho rukhu v Ukraini: chy vidbuvaets'sia dreyf do sotsial-demokratii?*, Kiev, 1999 (hereafter *Ideini zasady*); and Haran', Maiboroda et al., *Ukrains'ki livi: mizh leninizmom i sotsial-demokratiiu*, Kiev, 2000 (hereafter *Ukrains'ki livi*).

<sup>3</sup> Four out of nine in 1998, according to Peter R. Craumer and James I. Clem, 'Ukraine's Emerging Electoral Geography: A Regional Analysis of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections', *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 40, 1999, 1, pp. 1–26 (p. 15) (hereafter 'Ukraine's Emerging Electoral Geography').

<sup>4</sup> John T. Ishiyama, *Communist Successor Parties in Post-Communist Politics*, Commack, NY, 1999, pp. 224–26.

<sup>5</sup> Ishiyama, 'The Sickle or the Rose? Previous Regime Types and the Evolution of the Ex-Communist Parties in Post-Communist Politics', *Comparative Political Studies*, 30, 1997, 3, pp. 299–300; Herbert Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems. Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Competition*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 23 (hereafter *Post-Communist Party Systems*).

society as a whole (hence also the difficulty of constructing a moderate left alternative).

A second particular feature of the Ukrainian 'transition' is that parties that were not themselves transitional, but were completely banned in 1991, like the Ukrainian and the Russian Communists, were tempted to demand the restoration of the *status quo ante* when they were allowed to reform in 1993. Parties that did not have such a hibernation period (the Hungarian Socialists, the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party, and the Socialist Party of Ukraine, given its early foundation in 1991), have had to do more to adapt to circumstance.

Thirdly, because the Soviet Ukrainian regime 'never had to confront an alternative vision and practice of modernization',<sup>6</sup> the Ukrainian left, the Communists in particular, have to date remained steeped in the mythology of Soviet development. Party leader Petro Symonenko was proud to declare in the election year of 1999 that 'we have not betrayed Communist ideology one iota'.<sup>7</sup> His party has yet to adjust to a decade of Ukrainian independence, which it still mythologizes as nothing but 'the artificial revival of provincial pan-Ukrainianism, liberalization taken to the absurd, and leavening by brutal monetarism — that is the modern Ukrainian state'.<sup>8</sup> The Rural Party has adjusted opportunistically, only the Socialists have genuinely adapted.

In theory, the years since 1993 ought to have diminished the significance of these original influences. However, a fourth factor, early (initial) electoral successes in parliamentary elections in March 1994, only five months after the Communists' official registration in October 1993, and again in March 1998 — less so in the presidential elections of 1991 and 1994 — convinced the Communists in particular that they had no need to reform.

Nor, fifthly, have the Ukrainian parties moderated their policies after the experience of government (to date), as they have remained in opposition. The Ukrainian left has experienced neither the lure of relative success enjoyed by their Polish counterparts in office between 1993 and 1997, nor the sobering disasters that befell the Bulgarian successor party in 1994–97. The *prospect* of governing has, however, increasingly moderated Socialist Party policy, especially after 1998. Belatedly and hesitantly, it even began to affect the Communists in the last weeks of the 1999 presidential campaign. Only since 1998–99, therefore, has a real debate about strategy finally begun to take place.

<sup>6</sup> *Post-Communist Party Systems*, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Komunist*, 20, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> From Symonenko's speech to the fifth party congress in June 2000, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 3, 2000, p. 13.

A further factor is the dynamics of party competition on the left, which are at least superficially different from those in Russia.<sup>9</sup> Whereas the threat from the far left has been a key factor making ‘social-democratization’ of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) difficult — even after the 1996 election — this threat is seemingly less obvious in Ukraine. The Progressive Socialists in theory occupy such a space, but in practice are a uniquely local hybrid and to an extent an artificial phenomenon. Nor do the Ukrainian Communists have to compete, as their Russian counterparts do, with the nationalist right. Rivalry with the Socialists ought to have encouraged them towards the centre ground. It has not. Our explanation lies in hypothesis six: because of the national question, the regional support bases of the two parties only partly overlap. The Socialists, whose strongest backing is in central Ukraine, have not threatened the Communist core vote in the south-east, so the latter have been under little pressure to move towards the Socialists’ ground. The Communists would, however, lose votes to an as yet nascent far left in east Ukraine if they were to move to the centre. Fixed and only partially overlapping support bases have also added to the difficulties of constructing left unity and/or a truly all-national politics in Ukraine, and encouraged parties of both left and right to remain tribunes for particular sub-electoralities rather than seeking to aggregate their demands.<sup>10</sup>

Our last two hypotheses again relate to the legacy of ‘patrimonial communism’, and a political culture, like Russia’s, of quasi or virtual democracy. The seventh key factor is the gradual transformation of the left parties — particularly the Socialist and Rural parties, even the Communists to an extent — from programmatic and/or cadre parties with strong local bases of clientelistic support into parties of new corporate capital, or at least into parties with semi-hidden but important ‘new business’ networks.<sup>11</sup> This has helped encourage practical moderation — more precisely a growing gap between rhetoric and action — but it has also prevented the left from making a stronger challenge to the existing system of economic and political power.

Finally (eighth), any full analysis cannot neglect the purely political means that have been used both to hamper the progress, and maintain the conservative politics, of the left. Kuchma in particular has skilfully played the game of divide and rule to prevent the left punching at the

<sup>9</sup> Ishiyama and Sanar Shafqat, ‘Party Identity Change in Post-Communist Politics: The Cases of the Successor Parties in Hungary, Poland and Russia’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 33, 2000, 4, pp. 439–56, emphasize the two factors of ‘party success’ and the ‘structure of political competition’.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, ‘Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 23, 1993, pp. 521–48.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, ‘The Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions’, *Party Politics*, 1995, 1, pp. 447–72.

political weight theoretically granted by the (high and stable) level of social support indicated in 1994 and 1998. Either side of the 1999 election the left was once again subject to defections, splits and the launch of rival parties — not all of which were internally generated.

### 1. *The Last Days of the Communist Party in Ukraine*

The first factor to be considered is the circumstances of the genesis of the successor parties: the local traditions from which they emerged; the extent to which the original party was already reformulating its politics before 1989 or 1991; and the manner of the succession.<sup>12</sup>

As often, however, it depends where you start. Looking backwards from 1989, the highly orthodox local Communist Party and its majority current, Soviet patriotic and loyal Leninist, had been totally dominant since the 1930s. Even under the relatively flexible Petro Shelest, party leader from 1963 to 1972, the party followed in the wake of changes emanating from Moscow.<sup>13</sup> The Communist Party ‘of Ukraine’ remained a constituent part of the CPSU right up until the very last days of the USSR. Although it had its own Politburo and Central Committee, it never adopted its own programme or struck out on its own. In fact, it vehemently denounced the Lithuanian Communist Party for so doing in 1990. The local regime never made any ‘preemptive strike’. There were no round-table negotiations with the opposition, no ‘transplacement’ of regime.<sup>14</sup> Even when so-called ‘national communists’ began to reach out to the former opposition, most were increasingly semi-detached from the party.

On the other hand, in the earlier ideological ferment of 1917–1930 the Ukrainian left had been genuinely pluralistic, with local socialists, non-Bolshevik communists and ‘national communists’ within the CP(b)U in competition with orthodox Leninists. Many of these traditions were beginning to revive in 1989–91, laying the foundations for at least the modern division between the Socialist and Communist parties. That said, the vast majority of left-wing debate, and consequent ideological capital, focused on the all-important national question —

<sup>12</sup> John T. Ishiyama, ‘Communist Parties in Transition: Structure, Leaders and Processes of Democratization in Eastern Europe’, *Comparative Politics*, 27, 1995, pp. 146–77.

<sup>13</sup> On the last days of the old Communist Party of Ukraine see Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith*, Cambridge, 1997, chapter 4 (hereafter *Ukrainian Nationalism*); Zenovia Sochor, ‘From Liberalization to Post-Communism: The Role of the Communist Party in Ukraine’, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 21, 1996, 1–2, pp. 147–63 (which carries over into the period after 1991); and Volodymyr Lytvyn, *Politychna arena Ukraïny: Dïuvi osoby ta vykonavtsi*, Kiev, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> *Post-Communist Party Systems*, p. 29; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, OK, 1991, p. 276.

either the promotion of Ukrainian sovereignty (eventually independence) or opposition to it — there was almost no discussion of ‘social-democratization’ before 1991 that could carry any impetus into the independence period. Moreover, in 1989–91 Ukraine’s ‘alternative’ left traditions were largely revived outside of a Communist Party seemingly incapable of revisiting its own past. It was always the right (Rukh in 1989) or centre (in 1990, when the local Democratic Platform gave up on its attempts to democratize the party from within) that left the party, which never had to face defections or new challengers to its left. The all-Union conservative group *Unity* had a strong local presence, but was tolerated because its views were close to leadership sentiments.

The splits left the rump Communist Party more conservative than ever and would-be reformers even more isolated. Oleksandr Moroz, the relatively pragmatic leader of the Communists’ parliamentary group, called on the leadership to ‘distance themselves from the centre’ (i.e. Moscow) in the summer of 1991.<sup>15</sup> Borys Oliinyk, a former advisor to Gorbachev who had also played a part in the foundation of Rukh, helped set up an initiative group named *Fraternity* to press for a properly parliamentary party committed to ‘building sovereignty, the defence of working people from an untamed market and achieving national accord’. When rebuffed, he began to think out loud in the first half of 1991 about forming some kind of Ukrainian ‘Party of Social Justice’.<sup>16</sup> These were isolated voices, however. The party leadership under Stanislav Hurenko was more interested in building links with hardliners in Moscow.

It was only after the failure of the coup attempt in August 1991, during the very parliamentary debate which produced the Declaration of Ukrainian Independence (24 August), that Moroz promised ‘to take responsibility on [him]self for the organization of a Ukrainian Communist Party’.<sup>17</sup> By then it was too late. The last official party plenum on 26 August declared that it ‘considers it necessary to take a decision on the full independence of the Communist Party of Ukraine’;<sup>18</sup> but the presidium of parliament voted to suspend the party’s activities on the same day, and then to ban it completely on 30 August. Even then,

<sup>15</sup> Oleksandr Moroz, ‘Zapyska v prezydiuu plenumu TsK KPU (lito 1991)’, in the collection of speeches and documents, *Kudy idemo?* Kiev, 1993, p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> Borys Oliinyk, *Dva roky v Kremli*, Kiev, 1992, p. 37; Vasiliu Sekachev, ‘Sotsialisticheskaia partiia Ukrainy i osobennosti ukrainskoi partiinoi sistemy’, in Dmitrii Furman (ed.), *Ukraina i Rossia: obshchestva i gosudarstva*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 205–23 (p. 206). The latter is a useful study in its own right.

<sup>17</sup> *Holos Ukrainy*, 28 August 1991.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Postanova plenumu TsK Kompartii Ukrainy’, in Stanislav Hurenko *et al.* (eds), *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Ukrainy. Khronika zapreta*, Donetsk, 1992, pp. 50–51 (p. 51) (hereafter *Khronika zapreta*).

it was unclear if the plenum had actually declared the party's independence, or only its intention to do so at a proposed emergency congress that was never to take place.

## 2. *Socialists and Communists: Accommodators and Hibernators*

It has been argued elsewhere that those successor parties which emerged as a result of a long initial process of transition through bargaining with opposition élites (Poland, Hungary) are more likely to play by the new rules of the new democratic game.<sup>19</sup> In Ukraine this failed to happen. Moreover, the sudden political rupture in August 1991 forced the Communist Party into a two-year hibernation period when it had no real need to make any compromises. Some adjustments were necessary to win re-registration in 1993, but not many. By 1993 the authorities in Kiev were preoccupied with general economic and political discontent that many thought would endanger the stability of the new state itself. By contrast, Moroz's Socialist Party, which held its founding congress as early as October 1991, was decisively marked by the endgame of the Soviet era.

Moroz was also helped by the reluctance of the higher party leadership, even Oliinyk, to involve themselves with his party. At first, Moroz planned to launch a 'Party of Social Progress' or (Oliinyk's earlier suggestion) 'Social Justice', indicating a possible centre-left trajectory; but his hopes of creating a mass base for the new party forced him to settle on the name 'Socialist Party' as a compromise with the large number of former communists seeking shelter under the first available flag of convenience (the Socialist Labour Party, the nearest equivalent in Russia, also founded in October 1991, experienced similar problems).<sup>20</sup> In its early years Moroz's party was therefore an awkward hybrid, albeit less so after the defection of its more hardline members to the Communist Party when it was revived in 1993 (see below).

The Socialists' early struggles at least produced a clearer line on the national question. In October 1991 the new party had supported 'the struggle for the independence of Ukraine', but had stressed a model of independence based on 'the equality of all individuals regardless of nationality' and had condemned 'the destructiveness of the isolation of Ukraine from the other republics of the former USSR'.<sup>21</sup> After

<sup>19</sup> Helga Welsh, 'Political Transition Processes in Central and Eastern Europe', *Comparative Politics*, 26, 1994, 4, pp. 379–94; Michael Waller, 'Adaptation of the Former Communist Parties of East Central Europe: A Case of Democratization?', *Party Politics*, 1, 1995, 4, pp. 473–90.

<sup>20</sup> Joan Barth Urban and Valerii D. Solovei, *Russia's Communists at the Crossroads*, Boulder, CO, 1997, pp. 21–23 (hereafter *Russia's Communists*).

<sup>21</sup> *Materialy ustanovchoho z'izdu Sotsialistychnoi partii Ukraïny*, Kiev, 1991, pp. 16, 3 and 17.

1993–94 the latter qualification at least increasingly tended to disappear.<sup>22</sup> Moroz has therefore claimed that the Socialists have been a party ‘of Ukrainian statehood since the day we were born’.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the party’s early economic programme was notable only for its root and branch opposition to any type of ‘reform’.<sup>24</sup>

The Communist Party did not completely disappear in August 1991.<sup>25</sup> Many nominal ‘Socialists’ were in reality marking time pending its revival. A second faction was the semi-secret committee entrusted by the same August 1991 plenum of the old party Central Committee ‘to represent [the party’s] interests’ during ‘the period of temporary suspension of the activity of the party structures of the CPU’ — and of course to work to overturn that ‘temporary suspension’.<sup>26</sup> A third group of more impatient activists formed a series of tiny ultra-left parties in 1991–92; in particular the hardline Union of Communists of Ukraine, which had strong links with its Russian equivalent,<sup>27</sup> and made much of the running in reforming a communist grassroots in late 1992 and early 1993. Ultimately, however, the first and second groups were better placed to revive the workplace networks of the Soviet era that would prove the key to the party’s future success.<sup>28</sup> Whereas the Union of Communists was prominent at the first key revival meeting, the March 1993 ‘All-Ukrainian Conference of Communists’ in Donetsk, they had largely been purged (as with their counterparts in Russia) by the time the CPU’s official revival congress was held in the same city in June 1993. As the presidium of the Ukrainian parliament had declared in May that ‘citizens of Ukraine who share communist ideas may establish party organizations in accordance with the laws of Ukraine’ — but stopped short of granting permission for the revival of

<sup>22</sup> *Programme of the Socialist Party of Ukraine*, Kiev, 1995, pp. 12–13. This variant of the party programme was actually drawn up by Nataliia Vitrenko, so much of the message is still buried in her militant language.

<sup>23</sup> *Ideini zasady*, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskaia i politicheskaia situatsiia na Ukraine i zadachi SPU na blizhaishie dva goda’, *Tovarysh*, 6, 1992.

<sup>25</sup> There is very little English-language literature on the new Ukrainian Communists. A notable exception is Joan Barth Urban, *The Communist Movements in Russia and Ukraine*, Washington, DC, 1998, which was updated as Urban, ‘The Communist Parties of Russia and Ukraine on the Eve of the 1999 Elections: Similarities, Contrasts, and Interactions’, *Demokratizatsiia*, 7, 1999, 1, pp. 111–34. See also Urban, ‘Kommunisticheskie partii Rossii, Ukrainy i Belorussii (bezuspeshnyi poisk edinstva v raznobrazii)’, in Dmitrii Furman (ed.), *Belorussiia i Rossii: obshchestva i gosudartva*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 393–415. The party now has a website at [www.kpu.kiev.ua](http://www.kpu.kiev.ua).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Postanova plenumu TsK Kompartii Ukrainy’, in *Khronika zapreta*, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> *Russia’s Communists*, pp. 24–25.

<sup>28</sup> Sarah Birch, ‘Nomenklatura Democratization, Electoral Clientelism, and Party Formation in Post-Soviet Ukraine’, *Democratization*, 4, 1997, 4, pp. 40–62.

the party of old — the assembly was rather awkwardly billed as the party's '1st (29th)'.<sup>29</sup>

The new party was radical enough — in many ways even more radical than the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.<sup>30</sup> It gritted its teeth in formal compliance with the new order, promising to 'act within the constitution and the existing laws' of Ukraine; but the party's underlying message was clear to all. It attacked the legal basis of Ukrainian statehood as the two-stage 'counter-revolutionary, anti-socialist coup' of August 1991 and December 1991, and called for 'the rebirth on a new and exclusively voluntary basis of a union of the fraternal peoples of the independent states formed on the territory of the USSR'. It made a blanket condemnation of 'the forcible capitalization of all spheres of life' — even though real (partial and only partially successful) economic reform in Ukraine only began in October 1994.<sup>31</sup> Still, although Ukrainian nationalists immediately called for the party to be banned, they failed to notice that the more radical agenda of the Union of Communists (the party to join with the Russian Communists and declare itself the legal successor of the CPSU, restitution of all CPSU 'property' from the state, full restoration of the USSR), had actually been put to one side. The Ukrainian Communists would always be caught in two minds, almost apologizing for not really being the local branch of the CPSU, but not legally allowed to be such.<sup>32</sup> The new party made no attempt to claim that it had become 'more Ukrainian' or to reposition itself in the national communist traditions of 1917–20 and/or the Soviet 1920s.

The third main 'successor party' in Ukraine, the Rural Party (*Selians'ka partiia Ukraïny*), emerged almost as quickly as the Socialists, holding a first conference in January 1992 and a founding congress in December 1993 (the long gap being an early indication of the party's weaknesses of formal structure). In essence, however, the new 'party' was little more than a political version of the main Soviet rural organization, the Rural Union. Despite the left-wing rhetoric of its leaders, it has always been an accommodator — in fact one well-versed

<sup>29</sup> Valentyn Yakushyk (ed.), *Politychni partii Ukraïny*, Kiev, 1996, p. 44 (hereafter *Politychni partii Ukraïny*).

<sup>30</sup> The Socialist Party cheekily reprinted a Ziuganov article on 'abandoning dogmas' in the party journal *Tovarysh*, 10, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> From the party programme developed in 1993–94 and finalized in 1995. See 'The Ukrainian Left', p. 1300, and *Partiia Komunistov vozrozhdaetsia. Dokumenty i materialy vtorogo etapu Vseukraïns'koi konferentsii i s'ezd KPU*, Kherson, 1993.

<sup>32</sup> See Petro Symonenko's introduction to the relaunch of the journal *Komunist Ukraïny*, 'Z vidrodzhenniam, "Komuniste Ukraïnu"! ', 1 (787) 1999, pp. 3–7 (hereafter 'Z vidrodzhenniam'); and Petr Simonenko (Petro Symonenko), *Istyny rozhdaiutsia v sporakh. . .*, Kiev, 1999, passim (hereafter *Istyny*).

in the art of lobby politics, having to date frustrated all plans for land privatization and/or real reform of the collective farm system.<sup>33</sup>

The final piece in the left-wing jigsaw in the 1990s was the Progressive Socialist Party. The party claimed its origins as an ideological splinter group from the Socialists, after Nataliia Vitrenko, head of the party's Theoretical Council, was expelled from their ranks in 1995; but it cannot be so easily classed as a 'accommodator' or a 'hibernator'. Party rhetoric promised rejection of almost every aspect of the new order, but it arrived late with a specific purpose, sponsored by Kuchma, to split the left-wing vote and convince the IMF that there was someone worse than him around. As such, it should really be discussed below, in section eight. Significantly, despite her strident populism, Vitrenko always concentrated her fire on the twin ogres of Western imperialism and international finance and their plans for 'the peaceful colonization of Ukraine'.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *Nostalgia Culture*

There is an obvious threat to democratization if successor parties 'cling to their pre-transition political identities and organizational practices'.<sup>35</sup> In Ukraine it is political identities which have proved most resilient. The Communist Party, which defines itself as 'the inheritor of the *ideas and traditions* of the CPU, as it existed until its banning in August 1991',<sup>36</sup> has placed a high premium on nostalgia culture since its revival (its membership is disproportionately elderly — 67.6% were over fifty in 2000, and 45.1% were retired or unemployed).<sup>37</sup> Hence the survival of the resolutely uncharismatic Petro Symonenko as party leader. Like Gennadii Ziuganov in Russia, he is actually an appropriate symbol for a party which seeks to depict itself as the honest second echelon, the rank and file betrayed by the egotistical leadership of the Gorbachev era, the honest toilers of *nasha strana* versus the cosmopolitan élite of *eta strana*.

As in many parts of the former Soviet block, left conservatism has sought to revive itself through the cooption of local nationalism, but in Ukraine this has to date meant the nationalism of a vanished state, the

<sup>33</sup> At the time of writing, it was too early to judge the import and/or impact of the Yushchenko government's 2000 land reform measures.

<sup>34</sup> *Holos Ukrainy*, 22 September 1998.

<sup>35</sup> John T. Ishiyama, 'Sickles into Roses? The Successor Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Post-Communist Politics', *Democratization*, 6, 1999, 4, pp. 52–73 (p. 70) (hereafter 'Sickles into Roses').

<sup>36</sup> *Prohrama Komunistychnoi partii Ukrainy*, Kiev, 1996, p. 47, emphasis added (hereafter *Prohrama Komunistychnoi partii Ukrainy*). The formulation is more typical than that appearing a few pages earlier (p. 3), defining the party as both an 'ideological [*ideina*] and organizational successor', emphasis again added.

<sup>37</sup> 'Kompartiia Ukrainy v tsifrakh', *Komunist Ukrainy*, 2, 2000, pp. 36 and 38 (hereafter 'Kompartiia Ukrainy').

USSR. Despite the passage of time, the Communist Party has remained completely loyal to the Soviet past, painted in particularly glowing colours in the *Historical Theses* produced by the party to celebrate its 80th anniversary in 1998.<sup>38</sup> The party relaunched its theoretical journal *Communist of Ukraine* in 1999, proudly proclaiming its continuity with the original first published in 1925, but its function is more to confirm the true faith than serve as a forum for new ideas.<sup>39</sup> The party rarely uses the word ‘mistakes’ in reference to the Soviet period, and rarely mentions dangerous topics such as the Purges or the Famine of 1932–33. Indeed, the party is capable of giving the impression that things Soviet only began to go wrong with Khrushchev’s ‘adventurism’ (as late as 1999, the party was publishing material that cast the Stalinist period in a favourable light);<sup>40</sup> although its normal formula blames ‘departures from Leninist principles’.<sup>41</sup> Lenin himself is still sacrosanct, the guiding genius of ‘the Leninist Communist Party of Ukraine’, a party proud to continue ‘speaking in the words of Lenin’.<sup>42</sup>

Symonenko has therefore turned the accusation of ‘conservatism’ on its head. ‘Our party does not deny its history [. . .] the tragic events of the recent past have not swayed our devotion to true socialism, to the ideals of Great October [1917]. We are “conservative” only because we keep faith in the ideas of socialism, workers’ power, and a voluntary union of the peoples of a USSR that was criminally destroyed’.<sup>43</sup> It was ‘important to remember what is indisputable: a mighty economic legacy was created in the years of Soviet power that Ukraine has been living off in all the subsequent years of “independence”’.<sup>44</sup> The only concession to new circumstances, buried deep in the 1995 party

<sup>38</sup> *Tezy do 80-richchia Komunistychnoi partii Ukraïny (1918–1998 rr.)*. Kiev, 1998. The ‘Theses’ were in fact so conservative — even more conservative than the survey published by the old party in 1990 — that the party leadership decided not to publish them. See also Symonenko, ‘O 80–letii Kommunisticheskoi partii Ukraïny’, *Komunist*, 29, 1998. For the 1990 version, see ‘Zaiava XXVIII z’kzdu Kompartii Ukraïny pro stavlennia do istorichnoho mynuloho’, *Materialy XXVIII z’v’izdu Komunistychnoi partii Ukraïny (Druhii etap)*, Kiev, 1991, pp. 110–12. After 1999 Symonenko shifted slightly, accepting the danger of ‘the alienation of youth from the party’, and claiming that ‘the Communist Party [. . .] has never distanced itself from the repressions and abuses which were committed in the course of building socialism’; Symonenko, ‘Vylyk chasu i Kompartii Ukraïny’, *Komunist*, 26 (June) 2000, p. 3 — at the same time as stressing that many of Stalin’s achievements ‘were great, historical’ (hereafter ‘Vylyk chasu’).

<sup>39</sup> Oleksandr Hosh, ‘Ideolohiia derzhavy – chy mozhlyva vona?’, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 1, 1999, pp. 42–49.

<sup>40</sup> *Komunist*, 46 and 52, 1999; *Ukraïns’ki livi*, p. 234.

<sup>41</sup> Volodymyr Orlov, ‘Leninskaia partia avangardnogo tipa’, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 2, 2000, pp. 18–34 (p. 22); Petro Symonenko, ‘Leninizm — nasha znamia’, in *ibid.*, pp. 5–17 (p. 7) (hereafter ‘Leninizm’).

<sup>42</sup> ‘Z vidrozhenniam’, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3 and 5.

<sup>44</sup> Volodymyr Orlov, ‘Takiie raznye predvybornye programmy’, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 2, 1999, pp. 8–16 (p. 15). The original is in Russian, with the word ‘independence’ mockingly printed in Ukrainian.

programme, was the admission that ‘it would be utopian to try and revive a socio-economic system of different relations, which existed in different conditions, under different principles and different organizations of production and distribution, different social-class structures of society, a different level of consciousness’.<sup>45</sup>

Even if circumstances had changed, the party’s analytical tools — in particular their faith in historical materialism and the class struggle — had not.<sup>46</sup> The first convinced the party that despite the setbacks of 1989–1991, socialism was still the society of the future. If anything, the prospects for real socialism were brighter, now that careerists like Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Kravchuk had left the party. The second led the party to claim that, whereas the ‘post-industrial West’ now had only a ‘quasi-proletariat’, many parts of Ukraine were actually being *de*-modernized, economically and socially disconnected by ‘globalization’, and dramatically repauperized.<sup>47</sup> ‘People are surviving on what they accumulated in the years of Soviet power: that is, they are not yet a classic proletariat as they still have much to lose (a flat, a car, a dacha, etc.). But their full proletarianization will come sooner or later.’<sup>48</sup> Given the ‘rebirth of class antagonism and class struggle’ since 1991, and the oppression of the new proletariat by ‘a comprador bourgeoisie [. . .] behind which stands world imperialism headed by the USA’,<sup>49</sup> there were, in short, plenty of reasons why the Ukrainian left should be ‘more left’ than the parties of social democratic Europe.<sup>50</sup> Even the Socialists could attack globalization in terms of Kautsky’s theory of ‘ultraimperialism’ — ‘the end of inter-imperial wars and the beginning of the common exploitation of the world by international finance capital’.<sup>51</sup> There was, Symonenko therefore claimed, ‘no basis for social democracy of the Western type in Ukraine’. The ‘softening of class antagonism’ in the West was only possible because the local working class, as part of the ‘golden billion’, lived ‘as parasites on the labour of the countries of the world periphery’ to which Ukraine was rapidly

<sup>45</sup> *Prohrama Komunistychnoi partii Ukraïny*, p. 26.

<sup>46</sup> Volodymyr Balenok, ‘Bezsmertne vchennia pro bezsmertnu ideiu’, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 1, 1999, pp. 8–16.

<sup>47</sup> According to Symonenko, ‘the striving [by some] to avoid the class approach disorientates the workers and objectively aids the further capitalization and colonization of Ukraine’: *Komunist Ukraïny*, 3, 2000, p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> Comments made by Communist deputy Vasyl’ Tereshchuk, speaking at the round-table published in *Komunist Ukraïny*, 1, 2000, pp. 21–28 (p. 28).

<sup>49</sup> ‘Leninizm’, pp. 11, 10 and 15.

<sup>50</sup> See the comments made by the Communist theoretician Ivan Khmil’ at a round-table in Kiev to discuss Haran’ and Maiboroda’s first book in September 1999, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 2, 1999, pp. 93–94. Compare the argument by Iryna Terlets’ka of the SPU that the ‘Communists’ links are not with any leading group or social strata, but with those people oriented to the past’; as quoted in *Ideini zasady*, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> *Ukraïns’ki lvi*, p. 82, quoting Volodymyr Kizima of the SPU.

being consigned. Ukraine could not expect any ‘lessening of class antagonism, only the reverse’.<sup>52</sup>

The Communists have opposed every aspect of economic reform in Ukraine — including all privatization, whether large, medium or small — unless an enterprise was small enough to have no employees to exploit.<sup>53</sup> Despite the 1995 programme talking of support for all forms of ownership, its preferences were clear: including ‘the preservation of state property in basic spheres of industry’, ‘the restoration of state and workers’ control’, ‘renationalization’ of illegally privatized industry, ‘a savage war against shadow business’, ‘the restoration of planned price-formation, a moratorium on price increases for basic food products’, ‘the restoration of a state currency monopoly and a monopoly on external economic activity [. . .] banking activity, other financial-credit institutions’.<sup>54</sup> In the words of Symonenko’s more simple summary, ‘our task is not to ameliorate capitalism [*sic*], but to have done with it’.<sup>55</sup>

Communist nostalgia is also for the culture of the lost ‘new civilization’ of the Soviet era. According to Communist deputy Yurii Solomatin: ‘we are Soviet communists; we are Soviet people; we are Soviet patriots’.<sup>56</sup> It might be pointed out that this residual Soviet ‘nationalism’ does not refer to a specific ‘nation’. It is, at least superficially, supra-national, and normally comes wrapped in a *rhetoric* of ‘anti-nationalism’ and ‘the friendship of the peoples’. Nevertheless, given the frequent references by Symonenki and others to a ‘Soviet people’ (*sovetskii narod*), located in a ‘Soviet homeland’ (*sovetskaia rodina* or *sovetskoe Otechestvo*), it also refers to a specific community, with its own group myths and boundary markers.<sup>57</sup> There was precious little evidence of loyalty to the new Ukraine, even of ‘national communism’ in a party that specifically condemned the ‘danger [. . .] of the attempt to revive so-called “Ukrainian communism”’.<sup>58</sup> Borys Oliinyk was often touted as the potential leader of such a movement, but it had no

<sup>52</sup> ‘Vykyk chasu’, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Although twenty-nine Communists actually voted in support of Kuchma’s October 1994 reform programme (forty-six were against), totally misreading his intentions.

<sup>54</sup> From the Communist Party’s 1998 election programme in Hryhorii Andrushchak *et al.*, *Vybory '98*, Kiev, 1998, p. 10; and the version of the party programme in *Politychni partiï Ukraïny*, p. 100.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Leninizm’, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Komunist Ukraïny*, 4, 2000, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> *Istiny*, pp. 35 and 87. On this issue during the USSR’s actual existence, compare Rogers Brubaker, who argues in his *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, 1996, p. 28, that the ‘emergent [Soviet] entity was explicitly conceived as supra-national, not national’; and Roman Szporluk, who in *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union*, Stanford, CA, 2000, p. xxxv, states that ‘I continue to believe that the Soviet state tried to create a Soviet nation and in the course of several decades claimed to have succeeded’.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Leninizm’, p. 9.

formal existence. Oliinyk's version of Ukrainian identity was, in any case, predicated on assumptions of East Slavic fraternity and pan-Slavic solidarity (in 1999 he vehemently denounced the NATO Kosovo campaign in a pamphlet provocatively entitled *Who's Next?*).<sup>59</sup> The Communists have co-opted much of the popular opposition to nationalizing policies perceived to be emanating from Kiev, and in their stead have promoted the idea of Ukraine as a bi-cultural state, without any attempt to place 'the interests, rights and specific traits of one nation above those of other nations and nationalities', and in which 'the Ukrainian language' should not be 'over'-privileged, but left alone to enjoy 'its natural development, purged of the imposed language of the diaspora. The Russian language, as the native language of half the population of Ukraine, [should be given] the status of a state language alongside Ukrainian'.<sup>60</sup>

This mix of policies has more appeal than pure Russian nationalism in Ukraine, and has won the Communists much proxy support. Ethnic Russians are more likely to vote Communist in Ukraine, but so are many ethnic Ukrainians, particularly Russophones, who share Russian values of Soviet nostalgia and/or East Slavic nationalism.<sup>61</sup> The party itself is broadly representative of Ukraine outside of the western region: 64.9% of members are Ukrainian, 28.7% Russian.<sup>62</sup> However, that constituency itself has a shifting identity. Soviet nationalism<sup>63</sup> is still strongly supported by the party's powerful Donbas faction, led by Volodymyr Moiseienko (ironically head of the parliamentary committee on 'state-building'), and the semi-autonomous Crimean party, led by Leonid Hrach. This internal party left was instrumental in forming the *Soiuz* ('Union') group in the Ukrainian parliament in 1995 (twenty-four out of thirty-four members were Communists) and its successor 'Communists for the Revival of the USSR' (twenty-five to thirty deputies). The latter was the driving force behind the all-Ukrainian Union 'For the Revival of the USSR' set up in July 1998, and led by Moiseienko.<sup>64</sup> The party left were also keen supporters of the 'Union of Communist Parties (CPSU)' set up with successor parties from other

<sup>59</sup> Borys Oliinyk, *Khto nastupnyi?*, Kiev, 1999. See also the selection of Oliinyk's poetry under the title 'Khto zh tse nashu khatu rozvalyv?', in *Tovarysh*, 30, 2000.

<sup>60</sup> From Symonenko's speech to the 1993 party congress, *Partiia Komunistov vrozhdaietsia*, p. 23; and the 1998 programme, *Vybovy '98*, p. 10. 'Natural development' is a euphemism for maintaining the linguistic status quo.

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Wilson and Sarah Birch, 'Voting Stability, Political Gridlock: Ukraine's 1998 Parliamentary Elections', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 1999, 6, pp. 1039-68 (p. 1049) (hereafter 'Voting Stability').

<sup>62</sup> 'Kompartiiia Ukrainy', p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Serhii Hrabovskiyi, 'Petro Symonenko oholosyv v Ukraini rekonkistu', *Den'*, 22 April 1997, uses the populist term 'Soviet national-socialism'.

<sup>64</sup> *Komunist*, 36, 1998. A smaller group of twenty, 'For the Union of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia', appeared in January 2001: *RFE/RL Daily Report*, 18 January 2001.

post-Soviet states in 1993, seeing it as a model of confederal relations for the parent states and the potential catalyst of a new union. The Ukrainians even opposed plans put forward by the CPRF in 1995 for a change of name that would allow the UCP(CPSU) to become a deterritorialized supra-national coordinating body, some kind of broader (i.e. not just post-Soviet) 'International' — ironically ensuring that it would be sidelined as a nostalgia forum.

Gradually and belatedly, however, the Ukrainian Communists have begun to supplement their nostalgia-heavy Soviet nationalism with a vaguer East Slavic nationalism that may have more long-term appeal outside of the core territories of the Donbas and Crimea, and is a more suitable vehicle for generalized nostalgia without specific policy commitment (Moiseienko was sidelined at the party's 2000 congress).<sup>65</sup> The USSR is of course not going to be restored tomorrow (Symonenko has ruled out unity 'as a protectorate of the Russian bourgeoisie').<sup>66</sup> Fortunately, the Ukrainian Communists have rediscovered the natural link from Soviet to East Slavic or Eurasian nationalism in the supposed common 'economic civilization' and proclivity for collective labour of all the East Slavic peoples. 'Soviet man [...] did not emerge from nothing — before him stood the courageous Slavic-Rusich, the labour-loving Ukrainian peasant, the self-sacrificing Cossack.'<sup>67</sup>

The 1999 Kosovo war helped spur this gradual evolution. Symonenko (and Oliinyk), as with Ziuganov, have increasingly spoken of a world naturally divided into cultural 'civilizations'; and of the need to defend the 'unity of canonical Orthodoxy', even the 'Orthodox geocultural space', as the 'common riches' and cultural foundation of the Eastern Slavs in the natural struggle with the Islamic South and the expansionist West. Kosovo was therefore only a continuation of 'centuries of intrigue of Catholicism against Orthodoxy'. 'Catholic Poland', it is claimed, 'supported the bombers and Protestant Estonia even wanted to take part in the aggression' (*sic*).<sup>68</sup> In the Ukrainian context, the main carrier of this 'civilizational tradition' (the idea that 'the Orthodox cultural-historical heritage is the common riches of the Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian peoples') is the branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is still loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Communists have begun to speak out in its support.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Ukraïns'ki livi*, p. 237.

<sup>66</sup> 'Leninizm', p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Serhii Syrovats'kyi, 'Pravoslavia i stanovlenie dukhovnykh osnov obshchestva', *Komunist Ukraïny*, 2, 2000, pp. 74–76 (p. 76) (hereafter 'Pravoslavia').

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>69</sup> Petro Symonenko, 'Komunisty pro tserkvu ta її rol' u zhytti suchasnoi Ukraïny', *Holos Ukraïny*, 26 May 1999, pp. 6–7 (hereafter 'Komunisty pro tserkvu'); *Ideini zasady*, p. 50. For a Socialist version of the anti-Catholic position, see Irina Markovskaia, 'Ukrainskii Ol'ster, ili dlia kogo my sami sebïa zavoevyvaem?', *Tovarysh*, 12, 1998.

During his keynote television broadcast of the 1999 presidential campaign Symonenko, having earlier revealed his youthful baptism, openly declared his sympathy for ‘canonical Orthodoxy’, i.e. the Moscow Patriarchate (if the Russian Communists can manage such a metamorphosis from a militantly atheistic past, so can the Ukrainians).<sup>70</sup> The rival Kievan Patriarchate and Autocephalous Churches are, in contrast, condemned as ‘pseudo-religious groupuscules’ that aim to take ‘Ukraine back to the religious wars of the late Middle Ages’; while ‘the Greek Catholics [are simply] carrying out their [traditional] traitorous mission in the eastern strategy of the Vatican’ — not to mention the Western-sponsored ‘totalitarian sects’ and their ‘attacks on Ukraine’s traditional faith’.<sup>71</sup> The Communists have therefore called for ‘political and Orthodox [*pravoslavnyi*]-clerical circles to unite and stand in a common front in the defence of the orthodox [*ortodoksal’nyi*] religion of our fatherland, our peoples and countries against the serious Euro-spiritual threat’.<sup>72</sup>

The Progressive Socialists display their own particular version of nostalgia culture. Party leader Nataliia Vitrenko has styled herself as Ukraine’s only ‘true Marxist’, and considers the Soviet Union’s only period of true Marxism to be the years of War Communism (1918–21) — in contrast to Symonenko’s alleged praise for ‘the nomenklatura barracks socialism’ of the 1936 Soviet constitution. The current Communist leadership are mere ‘defenders of the [class] interests of the higher nomenklatura’, the same people who had betrayed the party under perestroika and were now ‘plunging into commerce’. In contrast, her party stood ‘on the other side of the barricades’, defending ‘worker interests’ and the proper legacy of that ‘great state — the Soviet Union’.<sup>73</sup>

The Socialist Party, in sharp contrast, has trod a more delicate path. Whereas Moroz’s party has been perfectly happy to make political capital from nostalgia for the good old days, it has also sought to legitimize itself in local non-Soviet traditions, such as ‘the just orientation towards the priority of the individual over state doctrine in the federal, civic (community) socialism of Mykhailo Drahomanov’ (1841–95), and his key insight, shared with many Ukrainian socialists in 1917–20, that ‘without a united decision of the national and social

<sup>70</sup> Vadym Halynovs’kyi, ‘Problemy mizhreligiiinykh stosunkiv u prohramakh kandydativ u Prezydenty Ukraïny’, *Vybory-99*, 1, 1999, pp. 30–32 (p. 32) — referring to Symonenko’s broadcast on 28 September. See also the Communists’ pre-election appeal to the faithful, ‘Pobeda i spasenie Rodiny budut zaviset’ segodnia i ot nas s vami’, *Komunist*, 43, 1999.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Pravoslavia’, p. 74; ‘Komunisty pro tserkvu’, *Istiny*, pp. 214–16.

<sup>72</sup> Vladyslav Suiarko, ‘Relihiinyi i politychnyi klerykalizm’, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 2, 1999, pp. 41–47 (p. 43).

<sup>73</sup> Nataliia Vitrenko, ‘Otkrytoe pis’mo Pervomu sekretariu TsK KPU Petro Simonenko’, dated 1999, [www.vitrenko.kiev.ua](http://www.vitrenko.kiev.ua).

problems the successful development of Ukraine is impossible'. The party has also claimed the inspiration of 'national communists like Vasyli' Shakhrai [1888–1919], Mykola Skrypnyk [1872–1933], Khrystyian Rakovs'kyi [1878–1941], and also the *Borot'bisty* (Oleksandr Shums'kyi, [1890–1946] and others)' — in truth a rather disparate bunch.<sup>74</sup> Whereas the Ukrainian Communists considered the collapse of the USSR an unfortunate 'result of the Cold War against us', the Socialists accepted that it was 'not accidental, although this was not a crisis of socialism, but of the state-bureaucratic system'. There was good and bad under the Soviet Union, but towards its end only 'the bureaucratization of society, careerism and the divorce of the party and economic nomenklatura from reality'.<sup>75</sup>

#### 4. *Early Successes of the 'Left Block'*

As of 2001, the Ukrainian left has yet to return to government. It has, however, been more successful electorally than its equivalent in Russia, in at least two senses. Both countries have a communist and a leftist rural party; both Ukrainian parties have, at least initially, polled more strongly. Ukraine also has the Socialist Party, which has no real equivalent in Russia. This overall relative strength has to date discouraged the Ukrainian left from any major ideological reformulation. It has also made it difficult to abandon the 'left block' strategy first developed for the 1994 elections — an advantage then, but now increasingly something of a barrier to flexible tactics.

The Russian Communists had a much slower take-off than their Ukrainian counterparts; in part because they initially had to compete with Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party for protest votes. In the 1993 Duma elections they won only 12.4% and forty-two seats (9.3% overall, the third largest party); before their breakthrough in 1995 with 22.3% and 157 seats (34.9%, the largest party, although the size of the party faction was exaggerated by statistical overrepresentation, and defections had reduced the party's ranks to 129 by 1999); creeping up to 24.3% in 1999. Ziuganov won 32.04% in the first round of the 1996 presidential election and 40.7% in the second, but only by standing as the candidate of the left-nationalist coalition the 'People's-Patriotic Union of Russia'. Against Putin in 2000, he was rather more closely identified with the CPRF, but the withdrawal of the stronger centre-left candidates from the race (Primakov, Luzhkov) allowed him to win 29.4%.

<sup>74</sup> 'Prohrama Sotsialistychnoi partiï Ukraïny. Nova redaktsiia', *Tovarysh*, 10, 2000, p. 2 (hereafter 'Prohrama Sotsialistychnoi'). The *Borot'bisty*, more properly the Ukrainian Socialist-Revolutionary Party of Communist Fighters, like the Ukrainian Communist Party (see section eight), were a non-Bolshevik left party in 1918–20.

<sup>75</sup> *Ideini zasady*, p. 7; 'Prohrama Sotsialistychnoi', p. 2.

The Agrarian Party of Russia (*Agrarnaia partiia Rossiï*), made more of an initial impact, with 7.99% of the list vote and thirty-three seats in 1993; but declined just as quickly as the CPRF gathered strength, slumping to 3.8% and twenty seats in 1995 — although Communist ‘loans’ eventually allowed them to form a faction of thirty-seven. In the 1999 elections the party failed to mount a separate list. One side joined with Primakov and Luzhkov’s Fatherland-All Russia movement, the other returned to the Communist fold.

Electoral systems and political circumstances have never been exactly parallel in Russia and Ukraine, but the Ukrainian left has been consistently stronger. The Ukrainian Communists have benefited from peculiarities of the Ukrainian electoral system (the preservation of single mandate voting in 1994, the mixed system with a 4% barrier adopted in 1998), which, while handicapping political parties in general, have given a comparative advantage to the party as the strongest contender in a weak field.<sup>76</sup> However, the CPU has won similar results under different systems, emerging as the largest party in both 1994 and 1998, having already reached its potential in 1994, with (originally) ninety-five seats (28.1% of the total). The supposed Communist ‘breakthrough’ in 1998 — 24.6% of the list vote and 122 seats overall (27.1%) — was therefore in fact largely only a repetition of 1994. The CPU would have won even more seats than the CPRF in 1995, but for the fact that there was less statistical distortion in Ukraine, the barrier for representation having been set at 4% rather than 5%.<sup>77</sup> After the 1998 poll, the Ukrainian Communists came close to securing for Symonenko the powerful position of chairman of parliament. He stood seven times in the protracted contest, coming closest on 18 June, when he got 221 votes, only five short of the necessary majority.

The Rural Party originally won eighteen out of 338 seats in the 1994 elections, but its ranks soon expanded to fifty-two, as rural ‘independents’ then had no other home. Of the thirty-four deputies elected on a joint slate with the Socialists in March 1998, fifteen declared their allegiance to the Rural Party when the alliance broke up in September. Thereafter, the party declined like its Russian counterpart. One half remained close to the Communists, eight temporary Communist ‘loans’ briefly keeping the party faction above the minimum threshold (now fourteen) from December 1999 until February 2000. The other half cleaved to the centre, linking up with nine former Social Democrats (after more oligarchic manipulations) to create a new centre-left

<sup>76</sup> Ishiyama, in ‘The Communist Successor Parties’, correctly identifies the electoral system and the strength of presidential power as factors inhibiting the formation of mass parties in Ukraine.

<sup>77</sup> Only five parties would have crossed a 5% barrier. The CPU would then have won 104 out of 225 list seats (46.2%): calculations from *Parlament*, 1, 2001, p. 23.

faction, *Solidarity*. Unlike Russia, however, the Rural Party's decline was due less to its failure to distinguish itself from the Communists than the arrival of a new rural competitor, the Agrarian Party (see below).

In 1994 the Socialists won fourteen seats; which, with six Communist loans and five independents was enough to allow them to form a faction (twenty-five deputies then being the minimum requirement). In 1998 the Socialists won 8.6% in alliance with the Rural Party and thirty-four seats (third place overall — nineteen eventually declared as Socialists), although the Communists' 24.6% placed them further ahead than in 1994. The Progressive Socialists were also a surprise success, with 4.05% and sixteen seats.

Adding all the above together, it can be seen that the total left vote in Ukraine has been consistently higher than in Russia, where it was 20.4% in 1993, 32.2% in 1995 and 27.8% in 1999.<sup>78</sup> Simply put, the prospect of a properly united left actually winning an election has always been more real in Ukraine than in Russia. In 1994, with the majority of votes going to non-party candidates, the left parties' 21.8% outscored the right's 13.8% and the as yet disorganized centre's 4.3%.<sup>79</sup> After scooping up some independents, the three left parties initially controlled 37.6% of the seats in parliament, rising to 43.5% by October 1994. Moroz was elected chairman. In 1998, given the adoption of a semi-proportional system, a more precise figure can be given for the left vote; which, with some smaller parties, was an impressive 41.4% (see Table 1).

The Ukrainian left has also enjoyed relative electoral success at a local level, although most local politics in Ukraine is non-party. The Communists emerged as the largest single force in both 1994 and 1998, winning 168 seats on oblast councils in 1994 (out of the 333, 21.4% of all deputies, who were members of any party); and 273 in 1998 (councils then had more seats, but the Communist deputies actually represented a higher proportion, 33.1%, of the 679 who were party members).<sup>80</sup> The Communists also emerged as the largest single party in the Crimean assembly after the 1998 elections with thirty-six out of 100 seats, allowing their local leader Leonid Hrach to become chairman of the assembly. The other left-wing parties have much less

<sup>78</sup> Only the Communists and Agrarians are counted for 1993 (not 'Women of Russia'). In 1995 I have included the main two parties plus the Anpilov group and Ryzhkov's 'Power to the People' (1.6%), but not the pro-Kremlin Rybkin block or Fedorov's 'Workers' Self-Government' (4.0%). In 1999, with no separate Agrarian list, 'Peace, Labour, May' (0.57%) is included as left, but not Brintsalov's millionaire's vehicle (0.24%).

<sup>79</sup> *Ukrainian Nationalism*, p. 136. Compare the calculations in Sarah Birch, *Elections and Democratization in Ukraine*, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 84 — using a slightly different database.

<sup>80</sup> 'The Ukrainian Left', p. 1308; Information from the *Ukrainian Regional Project: Data Book*, information compiled and kindly supplied by Eugene M. Fishel of the US State Department, regtab. 051 and 052.

of a local base. In the 'non-political' countryside, the Rural Party won only twenty-one oblast deputies in 1994 and a mere sixteen in 1998 (see below). The Socialists won thirty-two oblast deputies in 1994 and twenty-six in 1998, making them the fifth largest party in local government.

The Ukrainian left has fared less well in presidential elections. The political opportunity structure of Ukraine's semi-presidential system, together with the winner takes all nature of the two-round majoritarian electoral process, obviously do not suit their minority, albeit strong minority, position. All the left parties have maintained their vehement opposition to constitutional presidentialism. The December 1991 election came far too soon, even for the Socialists, despite Moroz briefly contemplating a challenge. The same was true of the Communists in 1994, who chose to sit out the contest between Kravchuk and Kuchma, despite emerging as the largest party after the parliamentary elections in March. The party had only been registered in October 1993; and most of its leaders, including Symonenko, had only emerged on to the national stage as people's deputies in March. Moroz stood and won 13.1%, but this was far less than the left vote for parliament. An additional reason for sitting on the sidelines was that the Communists were prepared to pay almost any price to unseat first Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk, whom they detested for his role in the destruction of the USSR, and backed Kuchma as the man most likely to achieve this aim.<sup>81</sup>

The 1999 election was a different matter. 'Left Block' unity disappeared and nascent political divisions were painfully exposed, with the leaders of all four main parties running as much against one another as against Kuchma. In narrow party terms, the Communists were most successful. Symonenko fought his way through to the second round after coming second to Kuchma in the first with 22.2% (Kuchma won 36.5%) — although this was exactly the scenario that Kuchma had long sought to engineer to maximize his chances of reelection (see section eight). Moroz won 11.3%, Vitrenko 11% (Oleksandr Tkachenko, Moroz's successor as chairman of parliament and de facto head of the Rural Party, withdrew at the last moment). Symonenko was easily beaten in the second round, by 56.2% to 37.8%.

After 1999, the easy optimism of 1994 or 1998 was no longer possible. Some, pointing to the 45.1% the left candidates had in fact achieved in the first round, stuck to the Fabian belief that support for the left was still on a rising trend (see Table 1).

<sup>81</sup> See the commentary in *Komunist*, 16, 1994.

Table 1: *Electoral Performance of the Ukrainian Left Parties, 1994–99*<sup>82</sup>

	1994 (seats)	1998 (seats)	1998 (% list vote)	1999 (% list vote)
Communists	95	122	24.65	22.2 (37.8)
Socialists	14	19(34)	8.56	11.3
Rural Party	18	15(34)	*	—
Progressive Socialists	—	16	4.05	11.0
Working Ukraine	—	1	3.06	—
Other left	—	—	1.10	0.6
[Left share of total	127/338	173/450	41.42%	45.1%]
	(37.6%)	(38.4%)		

\* Joint Socialist-Rural Party list

In practice, the atmosphere had changed completely between 1998 and 1999.<sup>83</sup> Kuchma's supporters had made it very clear they were not prepared to let the left take power. All the left parties began losing support in parliament (see section 8). For Symonenko, appealing to the Socialists at their eighth congress in May 2000, the left's priority had to be mere survival, making the preservation of the 'Left Block' strategy even more vital.<sup>84</sup> For others, a complete rethink was now necessary.

##### 5. *Moderation in (pursuit of) Government*

Moroz and his supporters preferred to argue that there was a natural ceiling of support for the 'Left Block' strategy — as perfectly illustrated in 1999. Their discussion of an alternative 'Polish route' to power — a more social-democratic party line leading to the creation of a broader left-centre alliance — had in fact begun as early as 1993–95, when the communist 'sleepers' left the party. One of Moroz's allies, Volodymyr Kizima, tentatively proposed a theoretical background for such a strategy in what he called 'libertism'. This neologism did not appear to be a fully-fledged doctrine, but Kizima defined its aims as 'a balance of social forces' and a strengthened legal order, alongside traditional socialist values of fraternity, 'social self-governance' and social defence, rather than class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>85</sup> Whereas the Communists targeted the new poor, Oleh Rybakov, first

<sup>82</sup> Sources: 'The Ukrainian Left', p. 1303; 'Voting Stability', p. 1040; *Ukrains'ki livi*, pp. 182–93.

<sup>83</sup> See the speech by Iosyp Vins'kyi, head of the Moroz campaign, 'Uroky vyboriv Prezydenta Ukraïny', *Tovarysh*, 49, 1999 (hereafter 'Uroky vyboriv Prezydenta Ukraïny').

<sup>84</sup> *Tovarysh*, 22 and 23, 2000.

<sup>85</sup> Volodymyr Kizima, 'SPU — partiia pravogo poriadka, aktivnogo neutraliteta i libertizma', *Tovarysh*, 36, 1994; author's interview with Kizima, 6 February 1996. See also the two articles by Kizima in the party journal *Vybir*, 1–2, 1997, pp. 97–118 and 138–42. Kizima took over the editing of the journal from Vitrenko in 1996.

secretary of the party in Dnipropetrovsk, quoted Marcuse at a 1998 theoretical conference on 'Marxism-Leninism and Social Democracy' on the declining revolutionary potential of the proletariat and the consequent need for a 'Popular Front' strategy to bring the left to power.<sup>86</sup>

Moroz was, however, unable to move to the centre as quickly as he would have liked, as his initial musings led to the serious split in Socialist ranks in 1995–96 that led to the creation of the Progressive Socialist Party (see above). Moreover, Communist criticism of his pragmatic compromises with the government as parliamentary chairman were echoed by much of the 'nostalgic ballast' in his own party.<sup>87</sup> Real change was therefore delayed until after the 1998 elections, when Moroz's failure to be re-elected chairman of parliament also left him freer to consider new options. At the party's post-mortem congress in June 1998, Moroz complained of 'still being in the shadow of the Communist Party', and adopted the 'new course' slogan, now preferring to describe himself and the Socialist-Rural Block as 'left-centre'. To one Ukrainian commentator at least, the congress was therefore a key turning point, a 'Ukrainian Bad Godesberg', a belated but decisive repudiation of the Marxist past.<sup>88</sup> Moroz attempted to define the Socialists' ideological evolution:

We do not think it appropriate to take only Marxism-Leninism as our theoretical base [...] this is only one of the sources of development of theory and social practice, [although] I emphasize that we recognize its historical importance and role in securing the development of the USSR and other countries of the former socialist camp. Besides pre-Marxist and Marxist socialist ideas, the theoretical sources for the activity of the Socialist Party are general-democratic thoughts and conceptions, the rich theoretical work and practical experience of the parties of the Socialist International concerning the economic and political democratization of modern society, the anti-repressive and anti-totalitarian researches of neo-Marxists, other leftists and democratic civic (ecological, women's, youth, etc.) movements [...] we are against any dictatorship, even if it is the dictatorship of the proletariat [...] class struggle, especially in its radical forms, can [only] lead not to a broadening, but to a narrowing of the sphere of social justice in society. [We do not believe in] the ideology of victory and defeat [...] but a calculation of the interests of all [...] we are a party of the consolidating type [standing] for a variety of forms of political, economic, social and ethnic [life].<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Ideini zasady*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>87</sup> *Politychni partii Ukraïny*, p. 55.

<sup>88</sup> Serhii Moruhin, writing in *Stolichnye novosti*, 1–14 July 1998, as quoted in *Ideini zasady*, p. 12. The authors of the latter are rather more sceptical that the congress marked a decisive turning-point.

<sup>89</sup> From Moroz's speech to the congress, *Novyi kurs Ukraïny*, Kiev, 1998, pp. 13 and 21 (hereafter *Novyi kurs Ukraïny*).

In contrast to the Communists' absolute opposition to market reform and obstinate defence of the traditional building blocks of Soviet society (large industry, the urban working class),<sup>90</sup> the Socialists now sought to broaden their appeal to the nascent middle class and the honest 'industrialist' to whom they promised 'political and economic stability and defence from organized crime and corruption'. Moroz's manifesto for the 1999 presidential election called for 'an end to tax terror' and 'a lowering of the tax burden, especially on the wage fund'.<sup>91</sup> In practical politics, the Socialists increasingly took a 'statist' line, no longer demanding any fundamental changes in the constitutional order (the Communists wanted to dismantle the 'authoritarian' presidential system and reopen divisive ethno-linguistic and foreign policy issues). Moroz played a key role in negotiating the 1996 Constitution, helped to defuse inter-parliamentary conflict in February 2000, and even emerged as the champion of a Ukrainian rule of law in the Gongadze scandal that erupted the following November. When the new prime minister, Viktor Yushchenko, introduced his belated programme to relaunch economic reform in April 2000, ninety-seven out of 103 votes against were provided by the Communists, but the Socialists abstained (and Solidarity — the remnants of the old Rural Party — largely voted in favour).<sup>92</sup>

Despite his defeat in the 1999 election and the consolidation of the Communists as the main party on the left, Moroz continued to proclaim the advantages (and dangers for the Kuchma administration) of the party's post-1998 'New Course', as did younger and more centrist elements in the party who criticized his late decision to back Symonenko in the second round. After the election, they began to talk about linking up with parties of the centre and centre-right to create a new 'third force' between the President and the Communists.<sup>93</sup> The problem for Moroz's 'Polish route', however, has always been a lack of obvious allies. The parties to the Socialists' immediate right are either too small (Yurii Buzduhan's Social Democratic Party) or too compromised (the majority of Ukraine's so-called centre parties). Moroz has been forced into 'leap frogging' tactics, signing a three year 'cooperation agreement' with the centre-right group Forward Ukraine! in February 2000 (which Moroz hoped Buzduhan's party would join),<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> For a Communist attack on the 'vulgar socialism' of the Socialists' post-1998 ideological approach, see Ivan Hrushchenko, 'O sotsialnoi strukture obshchestva i obostrenii antagonisticheskikh protivorechii v strane', *Komunist Ukrainy*, 3, 2000, pp. 49–54.

<sup>91</sup> 'Joint programme of the Socialist and Rural parties', *Vybory '98*, p. 51; 'Election programme of Oleksandr Moroz', in Mykola Tomenko et al (eds.), *Pravo vyboru: Prezydent Ukrainy-1999*, Kiev, 1999, p. 73.

<sup>92</sup> *The Romyr Report*, 3, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> See the debate in *Tovarysh*, 48, 1999; and 'Uroky vyboriv Prezydenta Ukrainy'.

<sup>94</sup> *Tovarysh*, 9 and 10, 2000.

and even winning some support on the right. The Socialist rank-and-file would not, however, support the party itself leap-frogging to the right. Moroz has therefore continued to insist that the party could find a specifically Ukrainian niche between communism and pure social democracy. As he shopped around for new ideas for the party, it was significant that one possible exemplar was not New Labour or the SPD,<sup>95</sup> but the ‘modernizing’ *Parti communiste français*. The draft of the new party programme published in February 2000 was centred on the idea of ‘democratic socialism’, not ‘social democracy’.<sup>96</sup> Even then, Moroz had to stress defensively to the party that the former term, awkwardly reminiscent of the Gorbachev-Yakovlev era, ‘was not an appropriation from the West and not a betrayal of our former ideals, nor isolation’.<sup>97</sup> Despite stressing its support for a ‘variety of economic approaches’, the party still found it difficult unambiguously to endorse the idea of private property, especially in land. While some proposed a formula of ‘socialized capitalism’, Ivan Chyzh, head of the party group in parliament, preferred to talk ‘not of social-capitalism, but capital-socialism’.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, even this was too much for the party’s more traditional members, who formed a self-styled ‘Socialist Platform’ within the party in late 1999. The radicals preferred to blame Moroz’s relative failure on his own ambition and the party’s post-1998 drift away from the Communists. The group, which included three deputies (Chyzh, Serhii Kiiashko and Mykola Lavrynenko) and Vasyl’ Arestov, former head of the Kiev city party, were promptly expelled in two waves in November 1999 and February 2000.<sup>99</sup> The ‘modernizers’ were able to take control of the party’s Political Council, only seven out of whose twenty-one members were re-elected in November 1999.<sup>100</sup> But the incident once again demonstrated a long term problem for the Socialists — while the Communists possessed a strong party base but no charismatic leader, Moroz was well-respected but presided over a party he could not always control.

The Communist Party on the other hand, was not really running for victory in 1999. It only began to change its political strategy when it was seeking to maximize its losing vote in the second round. One section of the party concluded from the 1994 and 1998 elections that the Left Block strategy would deliver an eventual legislative majority;

<sup>95</sup> Although the party journal *Vybir*, 1–2, 2000 reproduced material from the Socialist International, including the Blair-Schroeder declaration.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Prohrama Sotsialistychnoi’ pp. 3–5.

<sup>97</sup> Moroz at the party’s eighth congress in May 2000, *Pro Zemliu, Konstytutsiiu i ne til’ky*. . . Kiev, 2000, p. 118.

<sup>98</sup> *Ukrains’ki livi*, p. 229; *Ideini zasady*, p. 57.

<sup>99</sup> *Jamestown Monitor*, 15 December 1999, 3 and 23 February 2000.

<sup>100</sup> *Ukrains’ki livi*, pp. 227–28.

but even they only planned to use that majority to appease their supporters economically, protected by the president's constitutional primacy from having to run the country as a whole. A more cynical view is that the party was seeking merely 'to raise its market price' in parliament.<sup>101</sup> The Communists had explicitly rejected the Socialists' idea of a left-centre or 'popular front' strategy in 1998–99, refusing to consider entering any 'coalition of political forces' with such different 'class interests', and preferring to preserve their self-image as 'the only remaining political force that openly and principally stands for the Socialist perspective'.<sup>102</sup>

Only in the weeks between the two rounds did the Communists make any attempt to change course, when six other leftist candidates were persuaded to sign a joint declaration with Symonenko denying any threat of a 'red revanche' (the others were Moroz, Tkachenko, and the minor candidates Yurii Karmazin, Oleksandr Bazyluk, Volodymyr Oliinyk and Mykola Haber — Nataliia Vitrenko being the one notable absentee). Symonenko brazenly but implausibly sought to co-opt Moroz's 'Polish route' by comparing himself to Alexander Kwasńiewski. As Symonenko correctly pointed out, 'nobody would think to accuse [the Polish President] of such a political dye' (redness). Symonenko also promised a coalition government, a voluntary renunciation of some presidential power, no Bolshevik methods of persecution, 'the equality of all forms of property, and [strikingly] the promotion and support of the development of private industry'. Equally striking was the statement that 'the aim of the programme is the building of a sovereign, independent, democratic and law-based state'. We 'will not', Symonenko pledged, 'join any union, which limits this sovereignty or draws it into military conflict'.<sup>103</sup>

A week before the election was obviously too late to make such sweeping changes — or at least, they did not carry the conviction or make the dramatic impact they would have earlier in the campaign. Moroz was of course the real potential Kwasńiewski, and had constantly stressed that only a centre-left candidate, i.e. himself, was

<sup>101</sup> 'Petro Symonenko: shchaslyvyi peremozhenyi', in Volodymyr Ruban (ed.), *Naperedodni. Vybory '99*, Kiev, 1999, pp. 22–25 (p. 24).

<sup>102</sup> Symonenko in *Tovarysh*, 32, 1998. The Socialists repeated the appeal in December 2000 — see *Tovarysh*, 50, 2000. For the distinctly unenthusiastic reply, see the open letter, 'Politychnii Radi Sotsialistychnoi partii Ukraїny', *Komunist Ukraїny*, 1, 2001, pp. 42–43.

<sup>103</sup> 'Do hromadian Ukraїny. Zvernennia kandydativ u Prezydenty Ukraїny', *Komunist*, 45, 1999, p. 1. After nine years of independence, the party's 2000 congress finally inserted a phrase into its traditional formula of 'voluntary reunion' — that this would have to be 'on the basis of preserving state independence' — although in Symonenko's speech this phrase became 'state sovereignty': 'Za vriatuvannia Ukraїnu, za sotsialistychnyi shliakh rozvytku', *Komunist Ukraїny*, 3, 2000, pp. 40–48 (p. 44); and Symonenko's speech in *ibid.* (p. 15).

electable.<sup>104</sup> Symonenko's 37.8% in the second round was considerably less than the combined left candidates' 45.1% in the first, and even less than Ziuganov's 40.7% in 1996.

The only hint that some Communists were seriously addressing the electability issue came with rumours that leading members such as Heorhii Kriuchkov (the main party ideologist and head of the parliamentary committee on National Security and Defence Issues), preferred to support Tkachenko, who was running on a more obviously East Slavic nationalist ticket, or back Moroz. After Moroz visited Moscow in September 1999, several newspaper reports claimed Ziuganov had leant on Symonenko to withdraw in Moroz's favour.<sup>105</sup> Symonenko, however, stayed in the race for narrow party reasons, and the concessions made between the rounds were soon forgotten — at least by the party leadership, which preferred to blame its defeat on electoral violations and the mass media's power to persuade 'a significant part of the population to vote against their own objective interests'.<sup>106</sup>

In his post-election reports to the party Central Committee in December 1999 and March 2000 Symonenko chose to interpret the result as a demonstration of 'an intensification of the class struggle' by the new Ukrainian bourgeoisie and a vindication of the party's defensive priorities. Having met the party's real goal, if not the general left interest, in maximizing a losing position, Symonenko was probably safe until 2002. He even ventured to call the campaign 'a success [. . .] because it became a great stimulus to the growth of [our] party organization',<sup>107</sup> as well as strengthening the party's 'avant-garde' function and spreading its general 'influence in society'.<sup>108</sup> The party would have to wait for generational turnover to produce real change. (Relative) 'modernizers' like Kriuchkov in fact proposed little more than less stridency in rhetoric. At the 2000 party congress, Symonenko denied there was any need to update the 1995 party programme. Its declared tasks had not been met.<sup>109</sup> Only a few voices sounded notes of

<sup>104</sup> See also Yuliia Tyshchenko, *Vybory-99: yak i koho my obyraly*, Kiev, 1999, especially pp. 212–44.

<sup>105</sup> *Den'*, 15 September 1999; *Kommersant'—Daily*, 26 October 1999; *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 27 August 1999. The story was strongly denied by Valerii Mishura, then editor of *Komunist*, in an interview with the author and Sarah Birch on 12 November 1999. See also the denial of party splits in *Komunist*, 42, 1999; and, for a Socialist critique of Communist tactics, 'Uroky vyboriv Prezydenta Ukrainy'.

<sup>106</sup> Central Committee member Borys Novikov, speaking at the round-table in *Komunist Ukrainy*, 1, 2000, p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> 'Vykyk chasu', p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Symonenko, 'O politicheskikh itogakh vyborov Prezydenta Ukrainy', *Komunist*, 49, 1999; Symonenko, 'O politicheskoi situatsii i zadachakh partiinykh organizatsii', *Komunist*, 10, 2000, pp. 2–3 (p. 3).

<sup>109</sup> 'Vykyk chasu', p. 4.

alarm beneath the surface.<sup>110</sup> In reality, the Communists have grown used to the luxuries of permanent opposition. Like their Russian counterparts, they have no real desire to make the compromises that would facilitate, and of course result from, their participation in government. One Communist, Ivan Sakhan', was minister of labour under Kuchma (like Yurii Masliukov, the communist who was Russian first deputy prime minister in 1998–99), but semi-detached from the rest of the party, which is safely immune from patriotic appeals to share the burdens of office.

## 6. *Dynamics of Left Competition and Support*

### (i) *Axes of Competition*

Superficially at least, the dynamics of intra-left party competition in Ukraine differ significantly from those in Russia. First, Ukraine has competition along the Communist-Socialist axis, which has no real parallel further north or indeed in many states of the former Soviet block. Lithuania has both the Democratic Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party, but the latter is a historical party from the inter-war era — although it has faced similar problems to the Ukrainian Socialists in defining an image distinct from the former Communists (Democratic Labour).<sup>111</sup> In Russia, would-be socialists and social democrats tend to be found in the moderate wing of the CPRF. The closest Russia has come to establishing a strong socialist party was the left-centre block created by the then Duma chairman Ivan Rybkin for the 1995 elections (unless one counts Sviatoslav Fedorov's Party of Workers' Self-Government, which won 3.98% in 1995). Significantly, Rybkin's group was a Kremlin-sponsored affair and almost a complete failure, winning a mere 1.1% of the vote. The Socialist Labour Party has failed to find any lasting success. In the 1999 Duma elections Vladimir Brintsalov's Russian Socialist Party won a mere 0.24%, the Socialist Party of Russia 0.09%, the Social Democrats 0.08%.

Secondly, because in Ukraine (Ukrainian) nationalists and communists are polar opposites the CPU does not have to compete, as the CPRF must, with far right parties such as Russian National Unity. Ukraine does have a political fringe of such Russian nationalist and East Slavic nationalist parties, but to date it has remained small indeed; largely because the Communist Party itself has proved better suited to

<sup>110</sup> As part of the party's post-election analysis, Ivan Myhovich and Oleksandr Baryshpolets' pointed out that 'the idea of Ukrainian statehood has become a serious ideological value in the east and south of the country, not just in the west', and that the party had yet to face the importance of 'the growth in our society of left-centre sentiments'; *Komunist Ukrainy*, 1, 2000, pp. 22–23.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Bukowski and Barnabas Racz (eds.), *The Return of the Left in Post-Communist States: Current Trends and Future Prospects*, Cheltenham, 1999.

representing the vague nostalgia nationalism of Ukraine's ethnic Russian and/or Russophone population.

Thirdly, because the Ukrainian Communists and Progressive Socialists are themselves so left wing, there has been no real political space to organize on their left. In Russia, after a boycott of the 1993 Duma elections, Viktor Anpilov's neo-Bolshevik Russian Communist Workers' Party, as the main part of the block 'Communists — Working Russia — for the Soviet Union', won 4.5% of the vote in 1995 — more than Yegor Gaidar's Democratic Choice party. Despite a damaging split and the careful competition of the CPRF after 1995, the far left was still around in 1999, when Anpilov's group won 2.2% and the rival 'Stalinist Block for the USSR' 0.6%. In contrast, none of the dozen or so fringe leftist parties in Ukraine managed to collect the 200,000 signatures needed to stand in the 1998 elections (only a couple had been really active in 1994). Nor would any meet the full definition of a 'successor party'. Ukrainian commentators have depicted the Progressive Socialist Party and its supporters as both ultra-leftist and socially 'marginal', 'lumpen elements' or 'hopeless social outsiders'. In fact Vitrenko and her party drew support from across the mainstream left electorate, and even tapped some hitherto non-voters (see below).<sup>112</sup> Vitrenko is therefore not a simple Ukrainian equivalent of Anpilov; she places more stress on *ouvriériste* populism than High Stalinism and great power patriotism. She has, moreover, sought to advertise her local roots. After all, her 1997 book is called 'Save Ukraine', not 'Save the USSR'. Her party congresses are decorated with portraits of the radical Ukrainian writer Lesia Ukraïnka, from whose poem *Lights Before Dawn* (1892), with its call to 'Arise, the living, those with thoughts of rebellion! The hour of work has come!' the party paper also takes its name.<sup>113</sup>

In theory therefore, the Ukrainian Communists ought to be most concerned with competition from the Socialists to their right. Other factors have prevented this happening, however. First, the party leadership has always had one eye over its shoulder at the potential growth of a far left in south-east Ukraine, especially given their early rivalry with the Union of Communists, still eking out a perilous existence.<sup>114</sup> Its members, including party leader Tamil' Yabrova, have close contacts with, and even shared membership in, Anpilov's Russian party. Other 'true' fringe parties include the several Ukrainian branches of Nina Andreeva's All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks —

<sup>112</sup> Mikhail Pogrebinskii, 'Prezidentskie vybory na Ukraine', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 17 August 1999, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> Nataliia Vitrenko, *Spasti Ukrainu*, Kharkiv, 1997; *Ideini zasady*, p. 35.

<sup>114</sup> The party journal *Marksizm i sroemennost'* displays a clear all-Soviet mentality. See, *inter alia*, no. 1, 1998.

renamed the Party of Communists (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine in 1993 in order to gain official registration. The party considers itself the true heir of the original CP(b)U, which supposedly betrayed its principles after its change of name in 1953. This is an interesting argument, but, unfortunately, not even one that was really made in the 1950s. The party is one of Ukraine's smallest, with only forty reported members as of January 1998. Other groups include the Union of Labour set up in 1997; the Communist Party (of Workers), established in 1998; and the tiny Renovation Communist Party of Ukraine, active only in Odessa. A Trotskyist group, the Young Revolutionary Marxists, has existed since 1992.<sup>115</sup> The existence of such groups indicates the existence of a potential electorate in east Ukraine, but one which has been contained to date by the positioning of the Communist Party. As yet, there is no equivalent of the 'Communist pluralism' to be found in Russia.

Then there are the factors which have helped to minimize competition between the Communists and the Socialists. First, although the Socialist Party was formed first, in its original incarnation (1991–93) it was something of a holding operation for would-be communists. Secondly, the Communist Party emerged as the dominant party on the left in 1993–94 largely through displacement rather than competition. Half the Socialists' members (some 40,000) simply transferred to the Communists. Adam Martyniuk, first editor of the Socialist paper *Tovarysh* ('Comrade'), became the first editor of its Communist rival *Komunist*. A third factor was the 'Left Block' strategy adopted in 1994. There were many instances of direct Communist-Socialist competition in the elections, but fewer than amongst the parties of the right and centre (in 1998 the two competed in 111 out of 225 constituencies).<sup>116</sup> That said, there have always been tensions over defining the nature of the 'Block'. For the Communists, it is an alliance of principle, based on the parties' 'affinity in origin from a common womb — the Leninist Party of Bolsheviks, the former CPSU'.<sup>117</sup> The Socialists, however, saw the arrangement as largely tactical, and became increasingly nervous that the Communists would always dominate such a block.

The key reason limiting Communist-Socialist competition, however, is that the two parties' support bases only partially overlap.

### (ii) *Bases of Support*

Broadly speaking, at least until Moroz adopted his 'New Course' on economic and social policy in 1998, the main difference between the Communists and Socialists (and the reason the two parties failed to

<sup>115</sup> *Workers' Power*, (United Kingdom) March 2000, p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> *Ukraïns'ki livi*, p. 116.

<sup>117</sup> 'Deklaratsiia pro spil'ni dii ta yedynoho kandydata livykh syl', *Komunist*, 12, 1999.

merge in 1993–94) was their different line on the national question.<sup>118</sup> This has provided the Socialists with their most obvious niche, all the more so because on socio-economic questions, as in Russia,<sup>119</sup> it has proved difficult to establish a more general profile for either democratic socialism or social democracy between the better known brand names of market, reform and nostalgia communism. Significantly, the ‘nationalization’ of Moroz’s party came before its (partial) ‘social-democratization’. The Socialists have also suffered from not having obvious patronage or civil society carry-over-advantages from the previous ‘patrimonial’ regime type — in short from not operating in an East-Central European environment. Consequently, the Socialists’ support base is principally an ethno-linguistic and regional subset of the general ‘protest’ electorate, tilted towards central Ukraine and rural and small town Ukrainophones.<sup>120</sup> Voters with strongly negative attitudes towards the market can be found in either Communist or Socialist camps; voters with strongly negative attitudes towards Ukrainian nationalism tend to gravitate towards the Communists.<sup>121</sup> As a proxy party of ethno-linguistic protest, the Ukrainian Communists have that extra edge compared to the CPRF and extra depth of support in south-east Ukraine; but this is also what creates the political space for the Ukrainian Socialists. Arguably, in fact, the Socialists are one of Ukraine’s most patriotic parties. Between the Soviet nationalism of the Communists, the corrupt and opportunistic centre and the hyper-nationalism of many on the right, they have added considerable stability to the state-building process.<sup>122</sup>

Some surveys have also pointed to age as an important differentiating factor in the two parties’ support bases, although here the available evidence is more ambiguous. The left electorate as a whole is undoubtedly relatively elderly. Craumer and Clem claim that the Socialist-Rural electorate in 1998 was somewhat older than the Communist, in part because it was also more rural and more female.<sup>123</sup> However, another 1998 survey found that the elderly (fifty-five and over) were more than twice as likely to vote Communist in 1998 (37.8%) than voters under twenty-nine (10.8%); compared to 50% more likely to vote for the Socialist-Rural Block (5.2% compared to

<sup>118</sup> Sekachev, ‘Sotsialisticheskaia partiia Ukrainy’, p. 213.

<sup>119</sup> See *Russia’s Communists*, passim.

<sup>120</sup> As argued by Moroz himself. See *Novyi kurs Ukrainy*, pp. 13–15; and *Tovarysh*, 25, 1998. See also *Ukrains’ki livi*, pp. 124–32; and the highly detailed maps in Yurii Shaihorod’s’kyi (ed.), *Vybory 98. Dokumenty, statystychni dani, analiz*, Kiev, 1998, endmaps nos. 12 and 27.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Voting Stability’, pp. 1047–51 and 1053–57; ‘Ukraine’s Emerging Electoral Geography’, pp. 18–19 and 22–23; Vicki L. Hesli, William M. Reisinger and Arthur H. Miller, ‘Political Party Development in Divided Societies: The Case of Ukraine’, *Electoral Studies*, 17, 1998, 2, pp. 235–56.

<sup>122</sup> See, also, the commentary in *Ideini zasady*, p. 35.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Ukraine’s Emerging Electoral Geography’, p. 18.

3.4%) and rough equality for Rukh (10.5% to 10.8%).<sup>124</sup> Underestimation of the Socialist-Rural electorate may have been the problem here. The author's own research confirms that language and ethnicity, region of residence and attitudes towards 'national' values are all important.<sup>125</sup> Because this is the main reason for the Socialists' existence, however, the party does not exercise the 'pull' on the Communists that it otherwise might.

Tension over the 'national' issue and its regional manifestations have also been apparent between the Rural Party and the more 'patriotic' Agrarian Party (*Ahrarna partiia Ukraïny*) set up in 1996. The latter's programme is notable for its emphasis on loyalty to the existing constitution and a robust defence of statehood 'based on national interests' — its very existence providing another contrast with Russia.<sup>126</sup> Comparison of the two parties is difficult. They did not compete in 1994, and in 1998 the Agrarians just missed the 4% barrier with 3.7%. Long-term, however, the Rural Party was clearly losing ground to its newer rival. The Agrarian Party won eight territorial constituencies, compared to the Rural Party's paltry two out of the Socialist-Rural Block's extra five. Although support for the Agrarians was highest in the west (16.9% in Rivne), opportunistic rural power-holders (led by Yurii Karasyk, minister of agriculture from 1997 to 1998, and his predecessor Anatolii Khorizhko) were jumping ship *en masse*, depriving the 'leftier' party of its resource base. The total vote for Agrarian candidates in the constituencies was 784,287, more than twice the Rural Party's 327,321.<sup>127</sup> Evidence from the simultaneous local elections placed the Agrarians even further ahead, with 115 seats on oblast councils (second only to the Communists' 273), compared to the Rural Party's sixteen.<sup>128</sup> Ukraine therefore seemed more likely than Russia to preserve a rural 'successor party' albeit under a different guise — more 'patriotic', but not necessarily any more 'social democratic'.

As regards the Progressive Socialist Party, there is mixed evidence as to the nature of its support. The party obviously took some votes from the Communists and Socialists. In the 1998 elections, the party broke the 4% barrier in an impressive twelve oblasts, all of which were in east-central Ukraine, on the margins of traditional Communist and traditional Socialist territory. On the other hand, Vitrenko's strident populism also tapped some new voters. One poll in May 1999 showed

<sup>124</sup> Iryna Bereshkina, 'Vybyry-98 yak protses politychnoho samovyznachennia naselennia', *Politychnyi portret Ukraïny*, 21, 1998, pp. 18–28 (p. 24).

<sup>125</sup> 'Voting Stability', pp. 1046–49.

<sup>126</sup> See the party programmes in *Politychni partii Ukraïny*, pp. 410–12 and 5–10 (p. 6).

<sup>127</sup> See the database of the University of Essex et al, at [www.essex.ac.uk/elections](http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections).

<sup>128</sup> *Ukrainian Regional Project: Data Book*, regtab. 052.

her support bearing up across all social groups (24% from the 'poorest', 22% from the 'middle class'), ages (23% amongst those aged fifty-six to seventy, 18% from the under thirty-fives) and levels of education (20% from those with incomplete secondary, 22% from those with higher or unfinished higher education).<sup>129</sup> Her presence in the 1999 presidential election helped to push up the left vote from around 40% to around 45%, so roughly half of her 10.97% could be seen as new votes.<sup>130</sup> Her supporters divided surprisingly evenly in the second round; 30.5% intended to vote for Kuchma, 31.7% for Symonenko.<sup>131</sup> Populism, rather than acting as a tribune for social marginalism, seemed to be the real basis of her support. One analyst has even classed her electorate — in 1999 at least — as 'centre-left'.<sup>132</sup>

### 7. *New Business Influence*

Our analysis would not be complete without paying attention to some of the less visible parts of Ukrainian life. Political parties in Ukraine are often shells or fronts for business interests. This trend is most marked amongst the often entirely virtual parties of the 'centre', but it has not escaped the left.<sup>133</sup> The Communist Party, like its Soviet predecessor, has continued the Soviet practice of appointing many 'ordinary workers' as candidates, but these are often the most susceptible to outside pressure from new monied interests. The Communists have also accepted businessmen 'parachuted' into their ranks (for businessmen seeking a free ride into parliament, the Communists are after all the largest party). That said, Communist businessmen tend to represent state behemoths (numerous mine directors, for example, Volodymyr Matvieiev from Mykolaiv's main shipbuilding concern), or smaller private businesses (for example, Volodymyr Petrenko of the Kiev firm *Viktoriia-RUS*) rather than Ukraine's new corporate giants. Ukraine's new banking class was noticeably absent from the party's 1998 list. On the other hand, many old Communists are themselves born-again businessmen, including even Stanislav Hurenko, the last leader of the old CPU in 1990–91, and now deputy head of the metals trading joint venture *Navasko*. The need to preserve even these limited interests has often moderated the party line.

<sup>129</sup> Ukrainian Institute of Social Research, *Monitoring hromads'koi dumky naselennia Ukrainy*, Kiev, 5, 1999, pp. 11–12.

<sup>130</sup> Turnout was higher in 1999. As a percentage of the total electorate, the left vote went up from 29.7% to 32.5%. Calculations by Professor Valerii Khmel'ko of the University of the Kiev-Mohyla Academy.

<sup>131</sup> *KHIS Omnibus Survey, November 1999*; as quoted in Sarah Birch, 'The Ukrainian Presidential Election of 1999', paper presented at the LSE, December 1999.

<sup>132</sup> See also the analysis prepared by Valerii Khmel'ko in *Ukrains'ki liui*, pp. 208–13.

<sup>133</sup> Sarah Birch and Andrew Wilson, 'Political Parties in Ukraine: Virtual and Representational', in Paul Webb et al, *Political Parties at the Millennium: Emergence, Adaptation and Decline in Democratic Societies*, Oxford, 2001.

An enabling factor in this development has been the considerable practical autonomy of the parliamentary party in comparison to its Soviet era equivalent. Indeed, according to Joan Barth Urban it has been virtually a law unto itself, having 'taken over most of the logistical functions of the Soviet-era Central Committee headquarters'.<sup>134</sup> The Communists' parliamentary faction, especially with its business contingent, has often taken a more flexible and centrist line than the party leadership, most notably in the final vote on the new Ukrainian constitution in June 1996. The party Central Committee fulminated against a 'bourgeois' and 'anti-Soviet' document,<sup>135</sup> but the party faction divided more or less in three, with twenty for and twenty-nine against, ten abstentions and twenty present but not voting. Significantly, calls by party radicals for mass expulsion of the recalcitrants initially came to naught,<sup>136</sup> but *did* eventually play a part in the selection of candidates for 1998.<sup>137</sup>

As regards the Socialist Party, the main factor encouraging the development of business linkage has been the search for a more independent line and the consequent search for new sources of finance. The hostility of the state apparatus under Kuchma has also forced it to seek independent means of support. The party first accepted businessmen on to its party list for the 1998 elections (fully one fifth of the thirty-three eventually elected with the Rural Party),<sup>138</sup> such as Volodymyr Makaienko (*Ukhozprombank*) and Volodymyr Satsiuk (*Ukrros*). More cautiously, Moroz also began to build links with the *Hromada* party controlled by former prime minister Pavlo Lazarenko. The prospect of an alliance between Moroz's left-centre popularity and *Hromada's* money was deeply worrying for president Kuchma as he faced reelection in 1999. It was not allowed to develop. Lazarenko was forced to flee the country on corruption charges in February 1999, although only after Moroz had done considerable damage to his image by failing to vote for the lifting of Lazarenko's parliamentary immunity. Significantly, further defections of business supporters occurred after the November 1999 presidential election. Satsiuk, Anatolii Novyk of the Ukrainian Press Group, and Mykola Kushnirov, Secretary of the Socialists' Political Council and another media player, all decided to leave the party to protect their business interests.

<sup>134</sup> Urban, *The Communist Movements in Russia and Ukraine*, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> See the blistering attack by Symonenko and Kriuchkov, 'Ne mozhna nekhtuvaty voliu narodu. Chomu komunisty ne mozhut pidtrymaty novyi proekt Konstytutsii?', *Holos Ukrainy*, 26 December 1995.

<sup>136</sup> *Ideini zasady*, p. 14.

<sup>137</sup> Author's interview with Valerii Mishura, 12 November 1999; *Ukrains'ki livi*, p. 114.

<sup>138</sup> *Ukrains'ki livi*, p. 114.

The Rural (and Agrarian) parties, in contrast, have always been sectoral parties for which ideology has been of little interest, defending the interests of monopsonists like *Khlib Ukraïny* and *Sakhar Ukraïny* ('Bread of Ukraine', 'Sugar of Ukraine'). De facto party leader Tkachenko, already notorious for the \$70 million that disappeared from his *Land and People* concern in 1994, used his position as chairman of parliament in 1998–2000 to promote 'left businesses' such as *Ukrros* and *Interagro* with Satsiuk and others.<sup>139</sup> The easy success of such lobbying efforts, and the existence of a captive rural electorate, are key reasons why relatively little has been done to establish a formal extra-parliamentary structure for the two rival rural parties.

### 8. *The Political Factor*

It is impossible to give a true picture of left-wing politics in Ukraine without discussing the role of the purely political factor, the well-practised post-Soviet habits of political manipulation and *kompromat*. Under first president Leonid Kravchuk (1991–94), there were rumours that the Socialist Party was established with a degree of official connivance as a safety valve for left-wing discontent, given the nervousness of the country's turncoat communist leadership as to the depth of support for newly-won independence. Unfortunately, the right does not seem to have been privy to whatever calculations the new leadership had made. They certainly did not see the new party as a bulwark against the far left and were soon demanding that it be banned,<sup>140</sup> paradoxically making it more difficult for the Socialists to consolidate themselves and for the authorities to head off the revival of the Communist Party.

Kuchma has been much more ruthless. Divide and rule was his favourite tactic. Obviously artificial 'spoiler parties' created to head off the rise of the left at the 1998 elections (Working Ukraine, the Party of Defenders of the Fatherland, the All-Ukrainian Workers' Party and the Party of Women's Initiatives) won 4.8% of the vote. If the Progressive Socialists (4.05%) and Agrarians (3.7%) are included in the same category, the total 'spoiler' vote was over 12%. It has frequently been alleged that Vitrenko's party in particular was backed by a presidential administration bent on splitting the left vote and on diverting the left towards unelectable extreme gesture politics. Moreover, Ukrainian commentators have referred to Vitrenko as 'Zhirinovskii in a skirt', referring to a similar contrast between anti-government rhetoric and a surprisingly loyal voting record. The rest of the left cried particular foul

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138–39.

<sup>140</sup> For example Rukh, at its 1992 congress declared itself 'against the recreation of Communist Party structures under "renovated" hoardings'; *Ukhvala III Vseukraïns'kykh zboriv Narodnoho Rukhu Ukraïny*, document in author's possession, p. 3.

when the Progressive Socialists failed to support a motion of no-confidence against the government in October 1998, resulting in the attempt falling twenty votes short.<sup>141</sup> De facto, the party has certainly seriously disrupted the relative left unity of 1994. It has always stood alone — a planned alliance with the (unregistered) Workers' and Pensioners' Parties for the 1998 elections came to naught.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, Vitrenko's autocratic rule over her party, her constant conflict with colleagues and regional organisations 'creates the impression that [she] is doing everything possible to prevent the Progressive Socialists from becoming a real force'.<sup>143</sup>

Pressure to divide and rule increased in the build-up to the 1999 election. The Kuchma administration considered, quite correctly, that Moroz would be a more difficult opponent than a more radical leftist, and devoted most of their energies to devising a dirty programme of *kompromat* to undermine his campaign.<sup>144</sup> Vitrenko was encouraged as an alternative,<sup>145</sup> allowing the more stable Communist vote to come through in the centre. In parliament, a damaging ruling by the Constitutional Court in December 1998 allowed deputies elected on party lists to swap sides or create new factions. The Socialist-Rural alliance ended; the Rural party faction disappearing into *Solidarity*, which was basically a vehicle to tempt as many leftists as possible into the centre-right 'New Majority' created in January 2000 (it was chaired by the chocolate magnate Petro Poroshenko, head of the Ukrainian Investment Group).<sup>146</sup> Having served its function, the Progressive Socialist faction was dissolved in February 2000, after defections left it without the necessary minimum fourteen members. New 'virtual left' factions emerged, in particular a revamped Working Ukraine, which shrugged of its poor showing in 1998 to become the second largest group in parliament (forty-six deputies) by September 2000 — thanks to the fact that its leaders, Viktor Pinchuk and Andrii Derkach, were business 'oligarchs' with close links to the Interior Ministry and Security agencies.

The big prize, however, would be inflicting serious collateral damage on the Communists. In February 2000 Rukh deputies introduced a provocative bill to ban the party; several oblast councils in west Ukraine

<sup>141</sup> See the vote analysis and consequent criticism in *Komunist*, 43, 1998.

<sup>142</sup> The two parties were originally supposed to be allocated 25% of the places on the Progressive Socialists' list: Vasyl' Yablons'kyi and Yaroslav Latko, *Suchasni politychni partii Ukrainy*, Kiev, 1999, p. 17.

<sup>143</sup> 'Nataliia Vitrenko: nezakinchena istoriia populizmu', in V. Ruban (ed.), *Naperedodni. Vybori '99*, Kiev, 1999, p. 33.

<sup>144</sup> See the litany of complaint in *Tovarysh*, 46, 1999.

<sup>145</sup> Discerning fact from rumour is of course difficult; but, unlike Moroz, Vitrenko was extremely prominent on state TV in early 1999.

<sup>146</sup> Sergei Rakhmanin, 'Fraktsiia "deputatskoe assorti"', *Zerkalo nedeli*, 4 March 2000.

did so on their own turf. More likely, given the tactics used by Kuchma in the past, was the launch of a rival party. One obvious straw in the wind was the emergence of a 'Ukrainian Communist Youth Union' in March 2000. Its leader, deputy Oleksandr Starynets', attacked the former Komsomol and 'the proponents of class struggle [which] in practice has led only to the loss of millions of our fellow-countrymen', and called for the creation of a 'new type' of Communist Party 'based on' the principle of Ukrainian statehood.<sup>147</sup> A 'Communist Party (Renewed) of Ukraine', reportedly backed by one or more of the leading oligarchs held a constituent meeting in July 2000.<sup>148</sup> Six deputies left the Communists proper in the Spring — given the relative discipline of the Communist faction, not that substantial a breakaway.<sup>149</sup>

There was also much talk of setting up an, as yet leaderless, 'Ukrainian Communist Party'. In the Ukrainian context, the use of the adjective 'Ukrainian' rather than the epithet 'of Ukraine' implies a more distinctly national orientation. The 'Ukrainian Communist Party' (the UKP or *Ukapisti*) was also the name of the party which provided a national communist alternative to the Bolsheviks between 1920 and 1925.<sup>150</sup> Significantly, the existing Communist Party responded to moves to 'reestablish' the UKP with a detailed historical commentary arguing that its 'self-dissolution' in 1925 was 'not because of "pressure" or "persecution" from the RCP(b) and CP(b)U, as bourgeois nationalist authors have asserted then and now', but because 'the Leninist nationality policy' (*korenizatsiia*) adopted in 1923 and the need for a united front against common enemies rendered the existence of 'an obscure party of the village rabble and Ukrainian populism' no longer necessary. The party journal reprinted two articles it first published in 1925 (Mykola Skrypnyk's 'On Ukapism' and UKP leader Andrii Richyts'kyi's 'Towards a United Party') that supposedly proved the

<sup>147</sup> *RFE/RL Daily Report*, 13 March 2000.

<sup>148</sup> *Eastern Economist*, 24–30 July 2000. Would-be party leader Mykhailo Savenko, then of Working Ukraine, had originally been elected as a 'Progressive Socialist' in 1998.

<sup>149</sup> Similar machinations were possibly under way in Russia, with the launch of Gennadii Seleznev's reportedly Kremlin-sponsored 'centre-left' *Rossia* movement in July 2000; *Kommersant-Daily*, 18 July 2000. After the Gongadze scandal burst on Kuchma in November 2000, however, it was possible that the powers-that-be might lay off the Communists in return for not pushing the issue in parliament. Greater state influence on the party might then encourage it to embrace the kind of reform options it seemed incapable of choosing on its own, and/or increase the tension between leadership and rank-and-file.

<sup>150</sup> Sergei Rakhmanin, 'Chernaia koshka v komnate bez zerkal', *Zerkalo nedeli*, 26 February 2000; *Komunist*, 10, 2000.

point.<sup>151</sup> Symonenko dismissed the new 'UKP' as an artificial force that would be 'pseudo-Communist, nationalist and pro-presidential'.<sup>152</sup>

As Ivan Chyzh had also set up an 'All-Ukrainian Union of the Left', known as *Justice* when it was registered in May (with three sitting deputies as members), it was possible that several new left-wing parties might emerge before the next parliamentary elections scheduled for 2002. Chyzh's motives, however (and those of his backers), were probably not ideological (other reports had him lined up as a potential leader of the new UKP, and he regularly voted the Kuchma line). Although his background was as a Socialist sympathetic to the Communists, *Justice* called itself 'left-centre' and planned to compete with the 'new' Socialists.

The left's strength in parliament was therefore considerably reduced after Kuchma's reelection — from 171 in November 1999 (122 Communists, twenty-three Socialists, twelve Rural Party, fourteen Progressive Socialists) to 135 in March 2000 (115 Communists and twenty 'Left-Centre' Socialists, assuming the twenty-one *Solidarity* deputies had departed the left camp for good), plus a handful of now homeless individuals.<sup>153</sup> The Socialists, moreover, increasingly acted on their own. This was a considerable departure from the electorate's original verdict in March 1998 — and a key factor enabling the creation of the 'New Majority' in January 2000. A similar pattern was observable in the 1994–98 parliament, when the left began with 37.6% (127 out of 338) of deputies, and ended with 32.9% (139 out of 422).<sup>154</sup>

### Conclusions

The Ukrainian left has already had a long march. A decade after 1991, it has yet to return to power as so many of its sister parties in east and central Europe have done. Moreover, the march is likely to get even longer. Many key transformation processes began relatively recently and still have a long way to go. The 'social-democratization' of the Socialists only really began in 1998 (after the false start in 1995–96); the Communists' drift towards East Slavic nationalism in 1999 (after Kosovo); the formation of new 'virtual left' rivals for both in 2000.

<sup>151</sup> *Komunist Ukrainy*, 1, 2000, pp. 68–74. The quotations are from the commentary 'Pisliamova "Komunist Ukrainy"', in *ibid.* (pp. 77 and 75). Compare the polemic by the people's deputy and 'gas baron' Ivan Diiak, *Khto zakhystyt' nash narod i derhavu: Komunistychna partiia Ukrainy chy Ukraïns'ka komunistychna partiia? Shtrykhy do istorii ta s'ohodennia Kompartii Ukrainy*, Kiev, 2000.

<sup>152</sup> 'Vykyk chasu', p. 4.

<sup>153</sup> *UNIAN*, 21 March 2000; *Parlament*, 1, 2001, p. 49. The Communists were down to 111 members by December 2000.

<sup>154</sup> *Interfax-Ukraine*, 9 September 1997.

Urban and Solovei have suggested at least three future trajectories for the Russian polity: 'East-Central European', 'Gaullist' ('a conservative but welfare-oriented nationalist solution'), and a 'blocked society' (post-war Italian) variant.<sup>155</sup> In Ukraine the 'East-Central European option' is basically Moroz's 'Polish route'; but, given the rivalry between Communists and Socialists, a closer analogy might be the 'long march of the French left' to power in 1981. The main protagonists are the same, as might the various stages of the 'long march'. First, the Communists establish themselves as the dominant party amongst the left opposition (France in 1969, Ukraine in 1993–94). Secondly, a united left block is created between the two parties (France 1974–78, Ukraine 1994–98). Thirdly, the internal dynamics of that block are transformed, with the Socialists becoming the dominant partner, allowing the left as a whole to become electable — whilst *also* succeeding with the difficult trick of combining an opening to the centre with maintaining left unity as a whole (France 1978–81).<sup>156</sup>

Following all of these steps would be a tall order for the Ukrainian left. The evidence from 1998–99 was that its path to power had been blocked by the kind of black arts simply not possible in 1970s France, as well as by the total failure of the left itself to move anywhere beyond stage two (and perhaps even regressing from that stage) and the seeming inability of the Socialists to capture Communist support. The 1998 election was possibly the last outing for the 'left block' strategy that had helped to constrain potential divergence since 1993–94. So long as the Communists remain the dominant left party, a 'Polish' or 'French' route is unlikely in Ukraine. Could the Communists themselves reform? Their version of a 'Gaullist' strategy was unlikely to involve any significant change to the party's socio-economic programme;<sup>157</sup> and their (East Slavic) 'nationalist solution', in current circumstances, was not a *governing* strategy and would not make the party any less of a pariah.

Other alternative scenarios might broadly be described as 'modern Italian', with a reinvented centre-left (the Socialists playing the role of the Democratic Left) becoming a potential party of government, and the irreconcilables (the CPU as the Refoundation Communists) remaining in noisy opposition, happy to forget about modernizing party ideology and concentrate on preventing any real challenge from the extremes.<sup>158</sup> The Socialists would have to be careful, however, not

<sup>155</sup> *Russia's Communists*, pp. 190–92.

<sup>156</sup> R. W. Johnson, *The Long March of the French Left*, London, 1981.

<sup>157</sup> The Communists were a long way from adopting the kind of strong state, infant industry, selective development, 'East Asian' model that was a more likely recipe for an East Slavic Gaullism.

<sup>158</sup> See also the comparisons made by Viktor Yakunin in *Tovarysh*, 34 and 36, 1998.

to meet the same fate as their Italian counterparts after 1963 — entering and broadening a potential governing coalition, but eventually being destroyed by the poisoned chalice of oligarchs' support. A Socialist defection from the Left Block could also be combined with a general 'post-war Italian' variant, with the radical left maintained as a big enough threat to ensure the permanent government of the centre-right; or the deadlock of '1980s Britain', with a seriously damaged and divided left unable to challenge for power for a decade or more. Ukraine is already showing many signs of becoming a 'blocked society'. The added difficulty in consolidating democracy in such a scenario — if not all the communist successor parties are able to lead their followers to acceptance of its core values, and if the parties themselves are demonized for their 'anti-system' politics — is obvious.<sup>159</sup>

What light do the original hypotheses throw on such possibilities? The channels of historical succession are an important, but fading factor. Soviet *mythology*, however, is likely to remain potent until the current regime has greater success in providing an alternative vision of modernization. 'Early electoral success' is now of decreasing relevance, given the left's disunity and electoral defeat in 1999 and the political onslaught against it in 2000. New political strategies — either abandoning the hope of a 'Left Block' majority or seeking to achieve a majority by other means — will have to be found for the next elections due in 2002 and 2004, before which the left will also have to decide whether it really wants to govern or not. The dynamics of party competition, the very existence of the Socialist (and Agrarian) parties, make a 'move to the centre' more possible than in Russia, but the consolidated Communist electorate does not. Business influence is likely to remain a factor constraining the real possibilities for anti-system politics, and potentially also encouraging the drift of the main parties away from their electorates. Finally, given the political manoeuvring against the left in 2000, its immediate problem is mere survival and competing with new 'virtual' alternatives aping its traditional slogans; in which case the first test for the no longer united left will be whether it is able to regain the level of support in the polling booth that political means have deprived it of in parliament.

<sup>159</sup> 'Sickles into Roses?'