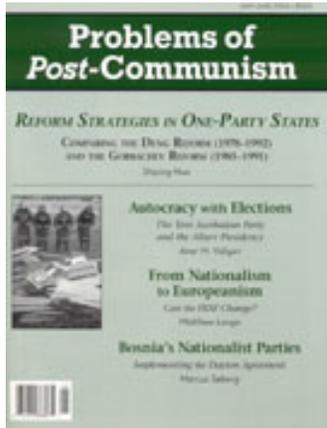


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Political Leadership and Ukrainian Nationalism, 1938-1989 : The Burden of History

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Political Leadership and Ukrainian Nationalism, 1938–1989

The Burden of History

Hiroaki Kuromiya

Throughout history, Ukraine's leaders have found themselves in a tug-of-war between Moscow and the West.

WHO will succeed Leonid Kuchma as the third president of independent Ukraine? Kuchma's decision not to manipulate the constitution and the Supreme Court to remain in power for a third term has been good for Ukrainian democracy. However, like the former president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, who installed Vladimir Putin as his own successor, Kuchma is maneuvering to install his favorite candidate, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, as the next president, in the face of a popular movement backing former prime minister Viktor Yushchenko. Whoever succeeds Kuchma it seems unlikely that a leader will emerge as a decisive winner and articulate a clear and determined vision for the future of Ukraine. Even in independent Ukraine, the influence of the country's former overlord, Russia, remains strong. Russia ardently courts Ukraine (especially through business concerns), and Ukraine, in turn, flirts politically with its eastern neighbor. At the same time, the lure of the West (represented by the European Union, NATO, and the United States) is equally strong. In March 2004, for example, Ukraine had 2,000 soldiers deployed in Iraq, the fifth-largest contingent behind the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy (2,700), and Poland (2,400). Russia had none.

This article does not pretend to predict the future of Ukraine, but it does analyze some long-term trends in the political thought of the country's leaders. Whether the winner of the 2004 presidential race follows in his

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predecessors' footsteps remains to be seen. But no matter what program Ukraine's next president articulates, he is likely to face the same set of restraints that bedeviled his Soviet and post-Soviet predecessors.

Ukraine is one of the largest countries in Europe. It is much larger in terms of geography and population than Poland, which is by far the largest of the recent EU entrants, and geographically it is even larger than France. Ukraine is a new country and, in general, little understood. American Russia specialists often have only the vaguest of ideas about Ukraine and its history. A great majority of textbooks still refer to Kievan Rus as Kiev Russia, even though Russia as such did not then exist. The field of Ukrainian studies tends to be both isolated and isolationist. This state of affairs obtains in many areas, from international security and political economy to literature and culture. Yet it is inconceivable to envision a stable "Central Europe" or "Eastern Europe," however one may define these terms, without a finer and more profound understanding of this enormous, yet obscure, country called Ukraine.

While no part of history is truly discrete, this article concentrates on the era after the Great Terror of 1937–38. With the liquidation of most of the Ukrainian political leaders who had believed in Moscow's "Ukrainization" policy, it was the post–Great Terror leadership that defined the complex course leading to Ukraine's independence from Russia in 1991. Their tenure coincided roughly with Stalin's 1939 reunification of most of the Ukrainian-speaking territories that had been divided among several neighboring powers in the aftermath of World War I.

Some of Ukraine's most prominent political leaders are well known, but many others remain faceless gray figures. Nikita S. Khrushchev and Lazar M. Kaganovich are perhaps the best-known. Their records in Ukraine are infamous, and their roles in political repression are widely documented. Yet few know, for example, that Kaganovich, a native of Ukraine and perhaps the most ruthless executioner of Stalin's policy, spoke the Ukrainian language and, according to his own account, was inspired to become a professional revolutionary after reading the literary work *Talisman* (whose hero, like Kaganovich, was Jewish) by none other than the Ukrainian nationalist and writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Kaganovich's political enemy.¹

As this story suggests, most Ukrainian leaders were violently anti-separatist but not necessarily anti-Ukrainian.² In fact, many first secretaries had very fond feelings for Ukraine and its people. As a group they promoted Ukrainian interests, so long as these did not interfere with

all-Union interests, and they were very proud of the fact that Ukraine achieved a stable "statehood" under the Soviet regime. However, they remained ambivalent about Ukraine's future in world history, a reflection of its precarious position between East (a Russian orientation) and West (a European orientation). This ambivalence is still evident among their post-Soviet successors. It is not yet clear whether future Ukrainian leaders will be able to extricate themselves from this historical bind.

Khrushchev, who ruled Ukraine from 1938 to 1949 (with a short hiatus after World War II when Kaganovich replaced him) may have been purely hypocritical when, at the beginning of World War II, on July 6, 1941, he addressed the Ukrainian people as "Comrades, Workers, Peasants, Intelligentsia of the Great Ukrainian people!" using the heroic history of the Ukrainian people to full effect:

The cursed enemy has captured part of our native Ukraine by a perfidious attack. This cannot frighten our mighty militant people. The German dog-knights were slashed by the sword of the warriors of [Prince] Danylo of Galicia [who founded Lviv in the thirteenth century], by the sabres of Cossacks under Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, and the Kaiser's hordes were destroyed by the Ukrainian people under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin in 1918.³

True, Khrushchev did not fail to remind the "great Ukrainian people" of their "brother, the great Russian people." Yet it was also Khrushchev who consciously promoted the awakening of Ukrainian national sentiment—within certain limits—to win the war.⁴ This new awakening led to serious complications after the war, including a ruthless civil war against nationalists that lasted for several years, mainly in western Ukraine. Khrushchev made it clear that Ukrainian independence was anathema to Moscow. As soon as western Ukraine was liberated from the Germans, Khrushchev addressed the population as "Dear Brothers, Ukrainians, and All Citizens Who Reside in the Western Region of Our Native Ukraine!" Emphasizing the Soviet liberation of Ukraine, Khrushchev challenged the nationalists:

What [kind of] independent Ukraine can exist, when now Ukraine already is free and Soviet, where the Ukrainians are the masters of their situation? Everything is set to serve the Soviet Ukrainian people: our workers live by the laws decided according to their will, develop their own native culture, speak in their native tongue, lay their own national cultural foundations, create their own poems, their own arts. All that the people have achieved by their own labor is inscribed in the great Stalin constitution.⁵

But if independence was anathema, statehood was something to be propagated because Soviet power had created a Ukrainian “state” in the form of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1947, in discussing a letter from the “Ukrainian people” (drafted by the famous writer Oleksandr Korniiichuk) to Stalin on the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution, Khrushchev and others (including his deputy, Demyan S. Korotchenko) made a point of emphasizing the “statehood” (*gosudarstvennost*) of Ukraine as something given by Lenin and Stalin. They even went so far as to claim that Ukraine was an “independent” (*samostoiatelnoe*) state.⁶

Of course, it was not the kind of statehood that the nationalists wanted, but nonetheless Ukraine, united for the first time since the seventeenth century, had attained a degree of international legitimacy by securing a seat in the United Nations. (This may have been the factor that encouraged Stalin to allow Ukraine to have its own ministries of foreign affairs and defense.) Indeed, Ukraine sent its own delegation to the founding conference for the United Nations, held in San Francisco in April–June 1945. Upon returning from California, the head of the delegation, Dmitrii Z. Manuiskii (1883–1959), an old Ukrainian hand and a former Comintern leader, submitted a report to Khrushchev:

The Ukrainian delegation regarded its role as follows: in fundamental issues in which our Soviet state has a vital stake we will support the line of the [Soviet] Union delegation by all means. In secondary issues, however, both in discussion and voting we will hold an independent position. Indeed our delegation carried out this role from the beginning to the end.⁷

With some satisfaction, Manuiskii reported that the Ukrainian delegation had disagreed with the all-Union delegation on certain issues, thereby piquing the curiosity of other participants at the conference.⁸ The unprecedented debut of Ukraine on the international scene highlighted its lack of experience as an “independent” international force. Manuiskii pointed out that the Ukrainian delegation, somewhat timid and unsure because of its lack of diplomatic experience, had missed out on many opportunities to assert its views. Furthermore, the delegates’ inadequate knowledge of English hampered their effectiveness. Evidently encouraged by their experience, however, Manuiskii proposed that Ukraine exchange diplomatic representatives with other countries to strengthen its prestige and pave the way for other Union republics to enter the United Nations. Without an exchange of diplomats, Manuiskii warned,

the United States and the United Kingdom would regard membership for Ukraine and Byelorussia (Belarus) as merely a concession to gain two extra votes for the Soviet Union at the United Nations.⁹

Manuiskii’s euphoria over Ukraine’s “independent” role on the international scene led to very little substantive change, however. Clearly Moscow did not intend for Ukraine to play so prominent a role, and the Ukrainian ministries of foreign affairs and defense had no independence at all. Ukraine’s international ambitions, however limited, were frustrated by Moscow.

Oleksii I. Kyrychenko: The First Ukrainian Leader of Ukraine

Shortly after Stalin’s death in March 1953, Khrushchev appointed the first ethnic Ukrainian to the political leadership of Ukraine, Oleksii I. Kyrychenko.¹⁰ Ukraine’s first Ukrainian leader, however, was a firm believer in a *Soviet* Ukraine, not an *independent* Ukraine. His rule, like Khrushchev’s tenure as first secretary of the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s, was marked by contradictions. Ironically, Kyrychenko opposed Moscow’s de-Stalinization policy even as he spoke out in favor of Ukraine’s interests. In September 1956, for example, Kyrychenko argued forcefully that the de-Stalinization policy was destabilizing Ukraine.

Recently, according to the decision of the Commissions of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union and judicial organs concerning amnesty and the serving of prison terms as well as by the Order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union dated 10 March 1956 and the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union dated 15 May 1956, a large number of former bandits, participants in the underground OUN [Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists], bandit accomplices, and Uniate [Greek Catholic] priests (from 1954 to August 1956 alone more than 20,000) have returned from the place of imprisonment and exile to the western oblasts of Ukraine.

In a number of districts and cities in the western oblasts of Ukraine, the return of such a large number of these people is creating a tense situation with regard to securing work placements and living quarters for them: the houses which had belonged to these people are now distributed to re-settlers from Poland and Czechoslovakia, collective farm activists who suffered at the hands of bandits, and a number of administrative, cultural, and educational institutions such as village soviets, collective farm administrations, hospitals, schools, libraries, and kindergartens. Moreover, a significant number

of houses were torn down and transported when collective farmers of the western oblasts were resettled to other oblasts of Ukraine.

The return of former members of nationalist organizations to the western oblasts of Ukraine from the place of imprisonment is not desirable also for political reasons: in these oblasts the primary rings of the organized underground and armed bands of the OUN were defeated only in 1951 and finally eliminated at the end of 1955.¹¹

Kyrychenko sought to convince Moscow that the political situation in western Ukraine was still unstable and would only be exacerbated by the return of nationally minded Ukrainians. Seeking to shield Ukraine from the unruliness of neighboring countries in Eastern Europe in the wake of Stalin's death, Kyrychenko vigorously fought against Moscow's efforts to ease control. Perhaps surprisingly, Kyrychenko's understandable fears were not widely shared by the powers that be in the Kremlin. As a result, a significant number of former gulag prisoners continued to return to western Ukraine, where the grip of Soviet power was still weak.

Petro Shelest: Resistance to Russification

Under the leadership of Petro Iu. Shelest, as during the Kyrychenko era, Ukraine was fraught with inconsistencies. Shelest was first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party from 1963 to 1972 (i.e., under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev). Western scholars often credit him with promoting Ukrainian interests in the face of growing pressure for Russification. When Ukraine's economic interests were at stake, Shelest fought determinedly against the central authorities in Moscow. Like Manuilskii, Shelest was tempted by the prospect of Ukraine's rise to the international stage. In 1965, for example, he wrote a letter to Moscow explaining:

In conversations [with foreign countries at various meetings and conferences of the United Nations] the representatives of these countries noted that for a variety of reasons they cannot conduct direct trade with the Soviet Union. So they are forced to have trade with the Soviet Union through neutral countries which involves many difficulties, but trade through Ukraine, as a member of the UN, would eliminate these difficulties and would have a positive impact on the development of foreign trade.

In my opinion, the question of facilitating Ukraine's direct economic links with foreign countries deserves

attention in the overall plan for foreign trade of the Soviet Union.

In recent years the international authority of Soviet Ukraine as a sovereign state [*suverennaia derzhava*], founding member of the UN, and a participant in numerous international organizations has grown immeasurably.¹²

This letter alarmed Moscow, and, like Manuilskii, Shelest failed to achieve his "statist" ambition.

Many Ukrainians believe that Shelest boldly promoted Ukrainian interests. He organized the publication of the acclaimed multi-volume *Istoriia mist i sil Ukrainskoi RSR* (The History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), for instance, and he authored a famous book, *Ukraino nasha Radianska* (Our Soviet Ukraine), in 1970. In the latter work Shelest deplored the inadequate attention given to Ukrainian history and culture in Soviet Ukraine. Proud of his Cossack ancestry, he described the Zaporizhian Cossack Sich as democratic in nature, quoting both Karl Marx and Taras H. Shevchenko, the nineteenth-century Ukrainian national poet, whose denunciations of Catherine II for disbanding the Sich were well known. Shelest's glorification of Ukraine's Cossack origins, which implied its difference from supposedly autocratic Russia, annoyed Moscow greatly.¹³ After reading a Russian translation specially prepared for them, the Party leaders in Moscow attacked Shelest and ordered all copies of the book burned.

Shelest did not capitulate easily, however. When Mikhail Suslov, Brezhnev's ideological spokesman, dismissed the Cossacks as an "archaism," Shelest taught him a lesson: Without the Cossacks, he maintained, Suslov would not have been there. It was the Cossacks who had saved the country from the Tatar hordes and the Turks, and conquered the southern lands. Along the way, Shelest deplored Suslov's "great-state nationalism."¹⁴ Like Kaganovich, Shelest also liked Volodymyr Vynnychenko, whose works he wanted to publish in Ukraine. Moscow did not give permission.¹⁵

Shelest's attitude toward the Ukrainian language is also interesting. His son testifies that at home he spoke Russian exclusively. Shelest once gave his son a book of Shevchenko's poetry translated into Russian.¹⁶ Ukraine was dear to Shelest ("exiled" in Russia, he requested, like Shevchenko, that he be buried in Ukraine when he died), but he could not separate Ukraine from the Soviet Union (or Russia). Nevertheless, he fought for the Ukrainian language, especially against the Russian "chauvinist" claim that Ukrainian was merely a "half-breed" (*surzhyk*) of Russian.¹⁷

Shelest was no friend of Ukrainian nationalism, however. He thought of nationalism as something “scary” and disliked both chauvinism and nationalism, whether expressed as separatism or open dissidence.¹⁸ All the same, after his fall in 1972, Shelest was criticized for fostering nationalism and the dissident movement, which was particularly intense in Ukraine.

In other political respects, Shelest was a hard-line Stalinist. He supported Brezhnev’s coup against Khrushchev. Yet Shelest was not in favor of Brezhnev’s détente. His attitude stemmed from Ukraine’s position as a republic situated between Eastern Europe and Russia. Eastern Europe had greater influence on Ukraine than on Russia. The 1956 Hungarian uprising deeply affected Shelest, who was convinced that such occurrences had to be prevented by all means. Newly available materials have revealed that it was Shelest, fearful of a spillover of the Prague Spring into Ukraine, who became the architect of the infamous Brezhnev doctrine.¹⁹ However, by the late 1980s, Shelest had come to the conclusion that the doctrine was a mistake that diminished the role of the Soviet Union as a socialist state.²⁰

In 1972, relieved of his post as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Shelest was removed from Ukraine and, like Shevchenko and the famous Ukrainian film director Oleksandr Dovzhenko, virtually exiled to Russia. He later recalled that his departure for Moscow was the darkest day of his life. When the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine became an independent country in 1991, Shelest seemed somewhat like a split personality, simultaneously a Stalinist and a Ukrainian patriot. When asked about his emotions on the day Ukraine attained its independence, Shelest answered: “I don’t know. Should I be pleased that my country has become independent, or should I be distressed that my other country, which I have served all my life, has perished?”²¹ This divided sentiment symbolized the complex position of Ukraine with regard to Russia.

Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi: The Last Soviet Ukrainian

Volodymyr V. Shcherbytskyi, first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party from 1972 to 1989, came to power in the wake of Shelest’s forced departure for Moscow. Shcherbytskyi had worked with Shelest for some years and shared many of his policies. Of Cossack descent like Shelest, Shcherbytskyi was an ardent Ukrainian patriot. Yet the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 is



Supporter of Ukraine’s opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko holds a Ukrainian flag during a rally in downtown Lviv, western Ukraine, November 18, 2004. At right is a monument to Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. (AP Photo/Sergei Grits)

said to have changed his attitudes about things Ukrainian, making him much more cautious.²² Indeed, he is said to have refused all unofficial interviews. His caution probably helped him survive in power, for his tenure spanned the Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev administrations. Hailing from Dnipropetrovsk oblast, Shcherbytskyi retained much respect for his fellow countryman and Moscow boss, Leonid I. Brezhnev. At least in his early years, Shcherbytskyi was a member of Brezhnev’s “Dnipropetrovsk mafia.”²³ The Ukrainian “mafia” was so powerful that a joke went around: “In the history of Ukraine there is the pre-Petrine period, then the Petrine period, and now the Dnipropetrine period.”²⁴

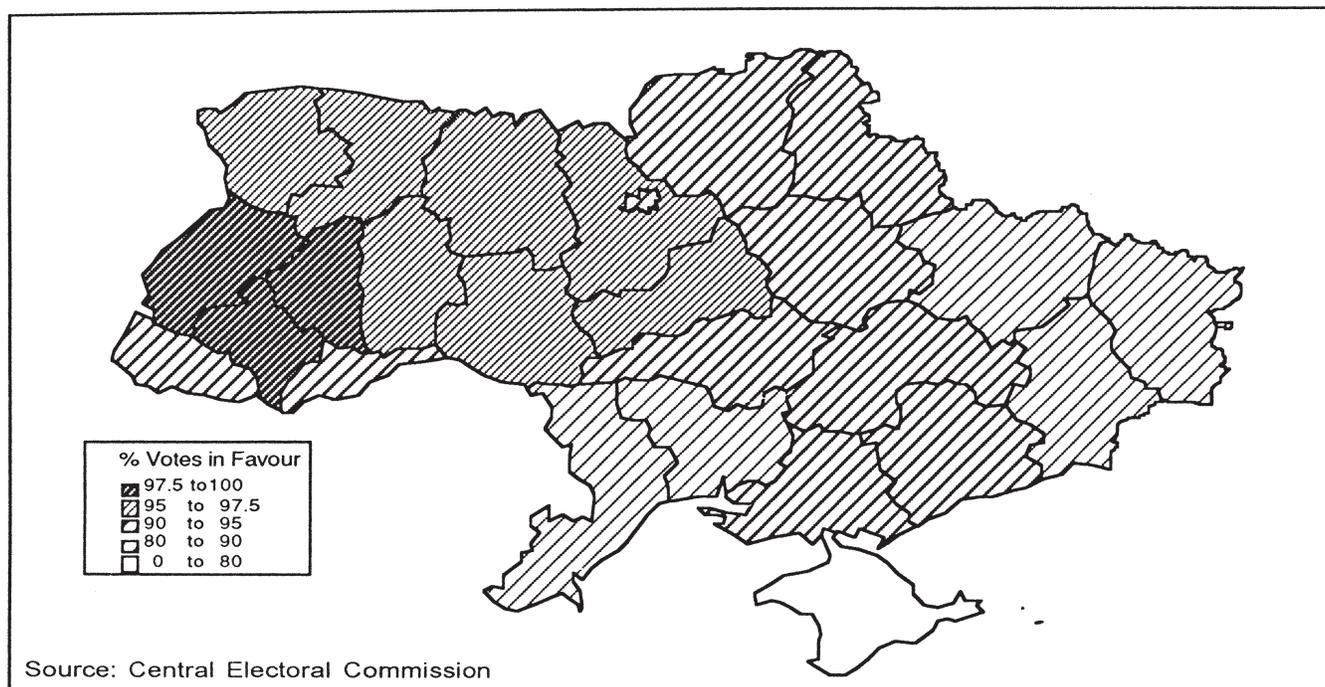
Shcherbytskyi embraced the anti-Shelest campaign, treating Ukrainian dissidents harshly, as was characteristic of the Brezhnev period. Shcherbytskyi believed that any national questions dating to before the revolution had been fully solved under the Soviet government. In his mind, there was no room for nationalism in any form (even though he defended the use of the Ukrainian language, promoted Ukraine’s particular interests, and defended certain aspects of Ukrainian culture, such as Shevchenko’s poetry).²⁵ When the Crimean Tatars demanded the right to return to their native lands, Shcherbytskyi maintained that it was a Union-wide (not just Ukrainian) problem.²⁶

Unlike Brezhnev, Shcherbytskyi appears to have had some principles. He refused to let his family and relatives enjoy special privileges, for example. Upon taking office, he reportedly closed a store patronized exclusively by the Central Committee bosses.²⁷

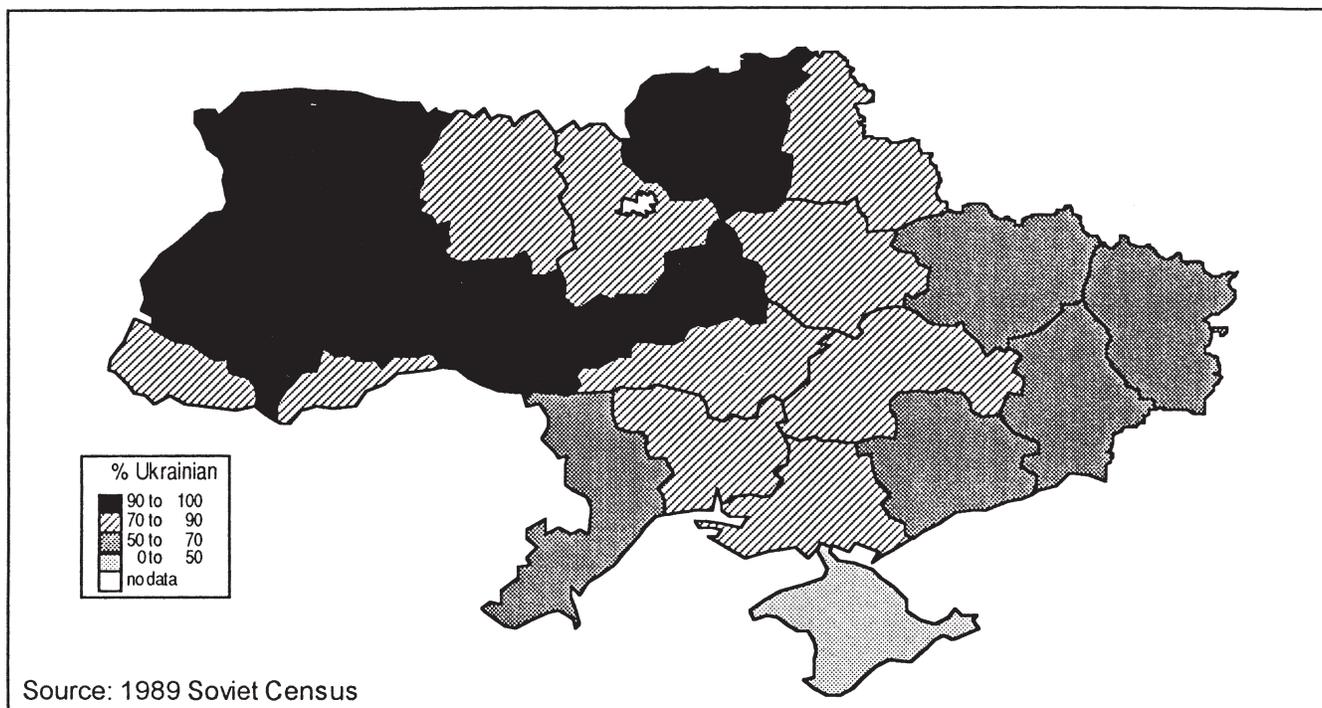
Ukraine: Territorial Administrative Structure



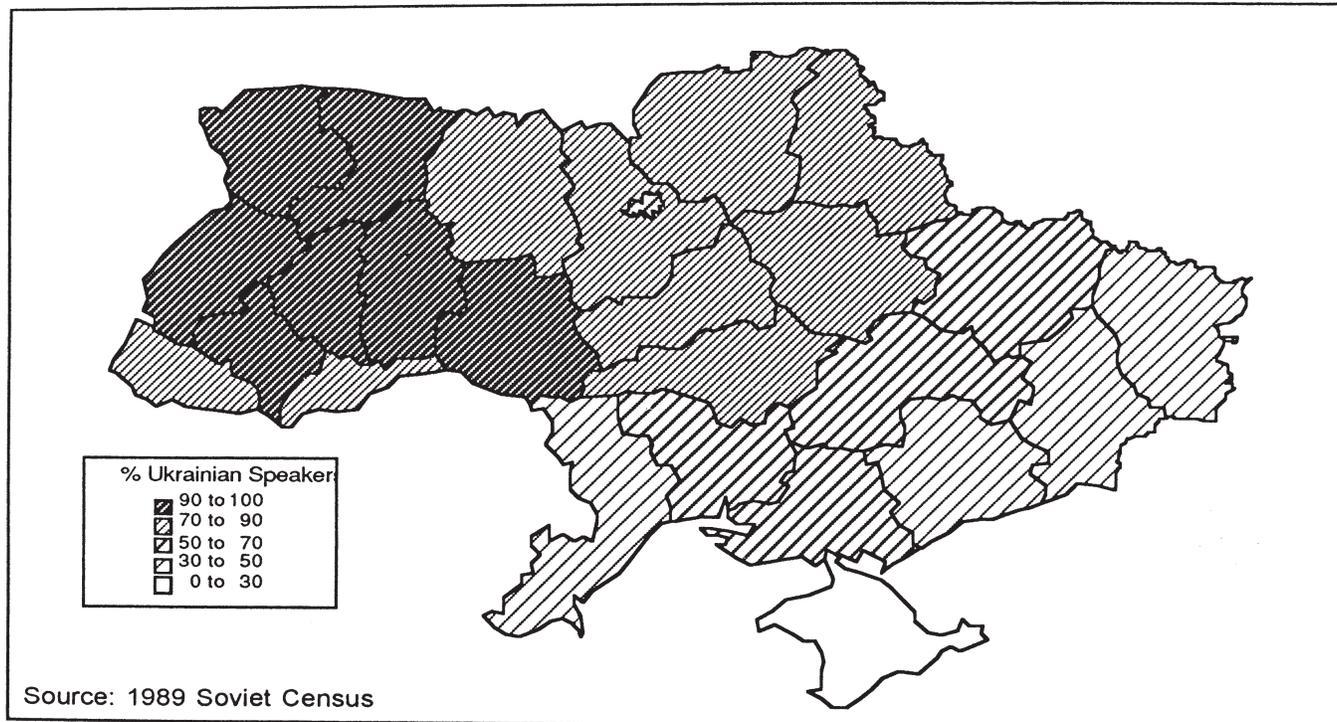
Referendum on Independence (December 1, 1991)



Ethnic Ukrainians



Ukrainian as Native Language



Maps reprinted from Taras Kuzio, ed., *Contemporary Ukraine: Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. xviii-xxi.



The 2004 Ukrainian presidential election to succeed President Leonid Kuchma (center) pitted Western-oriented opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko (left) against Eastern-oriented Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich (right). (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev)

Shcherbytskyi's respect for Brezhnev apparently declined as the Brezhnevite "stagnation" became entrenched. When he was asked to serve in Moscow (as was Shelest before him), Shcherbytskyi, unlike Shelest, refused to go. Calling the ruling clique in the capital "Moscow boyars" (*moskovskie boiars*), he confided to his associates, "I don't want to take part in this political game."²⁸

Shcherbytskyi apparently welcomed Gorbachev's reforms as inevitable. Yet in the end, they broke him as a politician. The 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe was probably the turning point. Shcherbytskyi understood that Ukraine could not do without nuclear power stations, but some years before the Chernobyl affair, he and other Ukrainian leaders as well as Ukrainian scientists had expressed great concern about the condition of the country's nuclear power stations. Faulty design, low-quality parts, and poorly trained operating staff combined to produce some serious accidents in nuclear power stations even before the one in Chernobyl. Shcherbytskyi complained to Moscow, which centrally controlled and managed nuclear energy, about the Kremlin's lack of concern and demanded immediate action, warning of possible "catastrophic consequences." Moscow did very little.²⁹

When the worst nuclear accident in history took place in April 1986 in Chernobyl, not very far from the Ukrainian capital, Moscow did not keep Kyiv fully informed of the nature and extent of the accident.³⁰ It is not entirely clear who collected data and how Moscow and Kyiv dealt with the information. Obviously the state security service (KGB) played a central role. On April 26, soon after the accident took place, the Kyiv KGB filed urgent secret reports with the KGB in Moscow and the Ukrainian KGB, which only two days later re-

ported to the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party.³¹ Shcherbytskyi's actions in these tense days are not entirely clear. Relieved nuclear specialists reported to the Central Committee that Kyiv had escaped heavy radiation, although other parts of Ukraine and the Soviet Union were not so lucky.³² Yet the danger the accident posed to the capital was plainly clear. There was a panic situation in Kyiv.

Given the extraordinary circumstances, Shcherbytskyi wanted to cancel one of the most important events in Soviet Ukraine, the May Day commemoration. In fact, one day earlier, on April 30, the radiation level in the city began to rise significantly. When Shcherbytskyi called to clear the cancellation with Moscow, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev told him that he would be expelled from the Party if the parade did not take place. Dedicated as he was to the Party, Shcherbytskyi felt obliged to hold the parade. Ukraine's Party leaders, including Shcherbytskyi, brought their families to the event as if to demonstrate to the onlookers and indeed to the whole world that all was well.³³

The terrible history of the Chernobyl disaster changed Shcherbytskyi completely, according to his aide.³⁴ He hardly spoke at the May 5, 1986, Politburo meeting devoted to Chernobyl.³⁵ Shcherbytskyi nevertheless continued his work. On May 7, despite optimistic reports on the situation in the capital, he ordered the evacuation of children from Kyiv.³⁶ In his May 22 report to the Central Committee in Moscow, Shcherbytskyi noted that 89,360 people had been evacuated from the danger zones and, in general, that people appreciated the measures taken by the Communist Party. Yet in what may have been a veiled criticism of the Kremlin, he also noted that Moscow's failure to respond promptly to Kyiv's inquiries regarding admissible radiation levels had caused "serious difficulties."³⁷

A severe "internal crisis" sapped Shcherbytskyi's strength. He seemed to fear some unexpected, decisive event. He became disillusioned with Gorbachev and resigned from his post in September 1989. Shcherbytskyi died a broken man, the last of the Soviet Ukrainian Mohicans, in February 1990, almost two years before the Soviet Union collapsed.³⁸

Independent Ukraine

Shortly after Shcherbytskyi's death and the failed coup in Moscow, Ukraine declared its independence. It was a decisive event, overwhelmingly supported by the people of Ukraine, even in the heavily Russified east and Crimea. It was also a strange event, in that inde-

pendence was enacted by communists who appeared to have turned nationalist overnight. In fact, the former communists saw independence solely as an opportunity for self-preservation. This picture is comparable to Russia's "independence" from the Soviet Union, in which former communists played a similar role. The ubiquitous blurring of the line between political leaders and organized crime also seems common to post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine.

For all its troubles and difficulties, Russia has largely shed the old political elite, symbolized by the rise to power of Vladimir Putin. A former KGB functionary born in 1952, Putin is, in a sense, a product of the Soviet system, yet his rise and the emergence of numerous political and economic leaders in Russia marks a significant generational and historical break with the communist past, even if one discounts Putin's nostalgia for the "glorious" past of the Soviet Union. The current political leadership of Russia projects no explicit imperialist ambitions toward Ukraine, just as former colonial powers do not generally aspire to resurrect their empires.

But Ukraine has not shed its old power elite. President Leonid Kuchma, born in 1938, is slightly younger than his predecessor, Leonid Kravchuk, born in 1934. But despite the rise of new political and economic leaders in Ukraine, the old political elite is still in power. While some observers argue that Russia has developed a semblance of democracy, Ukraine's political system is widely regarded as completely corrupt and dysfunctional. Tellingly, Putin is popular in Russia, whereas Kuchma is disliked in Ukraine.

In time Ukraine's old guard will inevitably retire from the political scene. But does the younger generation of Ukrainian political leaders have a new vision? While what kind of future Ukraine makes for itself is an existential question for Ukraine and Ukrainians, choices in history are never purely existential. There are certain constraints that will affect any Ukrainian political leader.

Ukraine's geopolitical position between East and West is the most enduring constraint. The pull toward Russia has defined Ukraine's position in the world since the seventeenth century. Ukrainian leaders have rarely been indifferent to Ukraine's particular interests as opposed to those of Russia, but few have escaped the allure of federalism, seeing Ukraine within the greater framework of "Russia." The "founding father" of modern Ukraine and the country's great historian, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, long hesitated before declaring independence in early 1918, well after the Russian Provisional Government had been toppled by the Bolsheviks. The

communist leaders discussed in this article never dreamed of a Ukraine beyond the embrace of Russia (or the Soviet Union). President Kuchma, a fence-sitter like the Cossack hetmans of long ago, has tried to please both Russia and the West. In recent years Kuchma has been criticized both for visibly orienting Ukraine toward Russia and for sending Ukrainian soldiers to Iraq in order to "buy amnesty from the United States."³⁹ As Ilya Prizel aptly noted:

In a way, the proclivity of the Ukrainian elite to swing from one foreign sponsor to another is reminiscent of the policies conducted on behalf of Ukraine by Pavlo Skoropadsky during the country's brief independence following the collapse of the tsarist empire, a policy that discredited the reliability of Ukraine and hastened its demise as an independent state.⁴⁰

The demise of independent Ukraine is highly unlikely this time around, but Prizel is right about the reliability of Ukraine on the international scene. He could have added that Skoropadskyi's swing was not peculiar to him. Hrushevskyi, in the end, broke decisively with Russia, only to seek Germany's help against Russia. (Then Germany removed Hrushevskyi and put Skoropadskyi in power.) In the seventeenth century, Hetman Khmelnytskyi, like many others, manipulated the surrounding powers (Muscovy, Ottoman Turkey, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) to survive. In other words, the geopolitical constraints on Ukraine's leaders are alive and well.

It is true that Ukraine could easily do away with these constraints, as many commentators urge, by making an existential decision to turn decisively to the West. Whatever turning West may mean, Russia's allure will not disappear, just as for Canada, which may feel more affinity with Europe than with the United States, the allure of the United States is irresistible and, in many respects, economically rational. Ukraine's dilemma, however, may become moot if Russia becomes part of the West. In this sense, Ukraine's future may still depend to some extent (though it need not) on Russia's future.

Notes

1. "Dve besedy s L.M. Kaganovichem" (Two Conversations with L.M. Kaganovich), *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 2 (1999): 120–21. Kaganovich fondly shared this critical episode in his life with his interviewer—seventy years after the fact!

2. According to Khrushchev, Kaganovich "was fond of saying that every Ukrainian is potentially a nationalist" (*Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. and ed. Strobe Talbott, introduction, commentary, and notes by Edward Crankshaw [Boston: Little, Brown, 1970], p. 172).

3. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromadskykh obiednan Ukrainy (Cen-

tral State Archives of the Public Organizations of Ukraine) [hereinafter, TsDAHO] (Kyiv, Ukraine), collection [hereafter, f.] 1, catalogue [hereafter, op.] 13, inquiry [hereafter, spr.] 17, archive [hereafter, ark.] 11–12.

4. Khrushchev is also known to have often visited Taras Shevchenko's grave and praised this "great Ukrainian poet, revolutionary, and democrat." See Borys Lewytzkyj, *Politics and Society in Soviet Ukraine, 1953–1980* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984), p. 50.

5. TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, spr. 780, ark. 122 and 136.

6. Ibid., f. 1, op. 23, spr. 4472, ark. 28.

7. Ibid., f. 1, op. 25, spr. 1447, ark. 32.

8. Ibid., ark. 83.

9. Ibid., ark. 37 and 39.

10. For Kyrychenko, see Iu. I. Shapoval, *Liudyna i systema* (People and Systems) (Kyiv: Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Institute for International Relations and Politics, 1994), pp. 241–54.

11. TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, spr. 4265, ark. 12.

12. Ibid., f. 1, op. 24, spr. 5991, ark. 81–82.

13. His son believes that Shelest considered the Sich the ideal social system. See Iurii Shapoval, ed., *Petro Shelest: "Spravzhnii sud istorii shche poperedu"* (Petro Shelest: "The True Judgment of History Awaits Us") (Kyiv: Heneza, 2003), p. 750.

14. Ibid., pp. 221, 310, 651.

15. Ibid., pp. 15, 310, 714.

16. Ibid., p. 744.

17. Ibid., pp. 216 and 657. At least initially, when his power in the Kremlin was relatively strong, Shelest's predecessor M.V. Pidhornyi supported him on these issues regarding Ukraine.

18. Shapoval, *Petro Shelest*, pp. 423 and 652.

19. In his subsequent writings, and especially in *Da ne sudimy budete. Dnevnikove zapisi, vospominaniia chlena Politbiuro TsK KPSS* (That Ye Be not Judged: Diary, Notes, and Recollections of a member of the CPSU Politburo) (Moscow: Edition Q, March 1998) (Moscow: Kramer, 1995), Shelest proved less than honest. For this point and excerpts from his original diary entries, see Mark Kramer, "Ukraine and the Soviet-Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968," *Cold War International History Bulletin*, no. 10: 234–47. More complete records of Shelest's diary, which is the source of Kramer's important essay, have now been published in Ukrainian translation in Shapoval, *Petro Shelest*.

20. Shelest's interview in *Komsomolskaia pravda* (Shapoval, *Petro Shelest*, p. 698).

21. Ibid., p. 754.

22. Iu. I. Shapoval, *Nevyhadani istorii* (Unimagined Histories) (Kyiv: Dovira, 2004), p. 278.

23. V.I. Kyiashko, ed., *Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi: Spohady suchasnykyv* (Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi: Recollections of His Contemporaries) (Kyiv: In Iure, 2003), p. 300.

24. Shapoval, *Nevyhadani istorii*, p. 262.

25. Knowledge of the Ukrainian language was, with some exceptions, a requirement for officials of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. See Vitalii Vrublevskii, *Vladimir Shcherbitskii: pravda i vymysly. Zapiski pomoshchnika: vospominaniia, dokumenty, slukhi, legendy, fakty* (Vladimir Shcherbytskyi: Truth and Fiction, Notes of His Aide. recollections, Documents, Rumors, Legends, Facts) (Kyiv: Dovira, 1993), p. 128. This is a valuable book by Shcherbytskyi's assistant.

26. Ibid., p. 129.

27. Ibid., p. 112.

28. Ibid., pp. 36 and 40; *Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi*, p. 42.

29. Vrublevskii, *Vladimir Shcherbitskii*, pp. 204–206.

30. See *ibid.*, pp. 212 and 215.

31. Note the special issue of *Zarkhiviv VUCHK-HPU-NKVD-KHB*, no. 1 (2001): 65–71.

32. See May 4, 1986, report in TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, spr. 2994, ark. 31.

33. Vrublevskii, *Vladimir Shcherbitskii*, p. 211; *Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi*, p. 37.

34. Vrublevskii, *Vladimir Shcherbitskii*, p. 216.

35. See " 'Chtoby pokoleniia ne zabyli ob etom fakte.' Pervye dni posle chernobylskoi avarii" (So That [Future] Generations Will Not Forget About This Fact: The First Few Days After the Chernobyl Incident), *Istochnik*, no. 5 (1996): 93–103.

36. *Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi*, p. 221.

37. TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, spr. 2995, ark. 8–11.

38. For the last few years of his life, see Vrublevskii, *Vladimir Shcherbitskii*, pp. 243–53.

39. Madeleine K. Albright noted that this latter assertion "cannot be true, but the perception discourages opponents" ("How to Help Ukraine Vote," *New York Times* [March 8, 2004]: A19).

40. Ilya Prizel, "Ukraine's Hollow Decade," *East European Politics and Societies* 16, no. 2 (2002), p. 384.

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