

**SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF SOVIET
REPRESSIONS IN THE 1930s:
THE HOUSE OF WRITERS (KHARKIV, UKRAINE)**

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Abstract

This study examines spatial dimensions of state violence against the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the 1930s, and the creation of a place of surveillance, the famous House of Writers (*Budynok Slovo*), an apartment building that was conceived by an association of writers “Slovo” in Kharkiv. This building fashioned an important identity for Ukrainian intellectuals, which was altered under state pressure and the fear of being exterminated. Their creative art was gradually transformed into the art of living and surviving under the terror, a feature of a regimented society. The study explores the writers’ behavior during arrests and interrogation, and examines the Soviet secret police’s tactics employed in interrogation rooms.

The narrative considers the space of politics that brought the perpetrators of terror and their victims closer to each other, eventually forcing them to share the same place. Within this space and place they became interchangeable and interchanged, and ultimately were physically eliminated. Importantly, the research illuminates the multiethnic composition of the building’s residents: among them were cultural figures of Ukrainian, Russian and Jewish origins. Their individual histories and contributions to Ukrainian culture demonstrate the vector of Stalin’s terror which targeted not Ukrainian ethnicity as such but instead was directed against the development of Ukrainian national identity and Ukrainian statehood that were perceived as a challenge to the center’s control and as harbingers of separatism.

The study also reveals that the state launched the course of counter-Ukrainization in 1926 and disintegrated the Ukrainian intellectual community through mass repressive operations which the secret police began to apply from 1929. The study also demonstrates that, together with people, the state purposefully exterminated national cultural artifacts—journals, books, art and sculpture, burying human ideas which have never been and will never be consummated. The purpose was to explain how the elimination of most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals was organized, rationalized and politicized. During the period of one decade, the terror tore a hole in the fabric of Ukrainian culture that may never be mended.

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Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	1
<i>The Subject of the Study and Historiography</i>	1
<i>Conceptual Framework</i>	15
<i>Sources and Methods</i>	27
Chapter One	39
From Culture to Politics: The House of Writers— Conceived, Lived, Perceived	
<i>Kharkiv of the 1920s—“the Capital of Arts”</i>	39
<i>Conceiving Byt: Collective Search for Solitude and Isolation</i>	45
<i>Building Budynok Slovo: Organizational Difficulties</i>	55
<i>Slov’iany and the Communal 1930</i>	67
Chapter Two	77
Material Culture and Surveillance of <i>Budynok Slovo</i>	
<i>Budynok Slovo as an Architectural Innovation</i>	77
<i>Fashion in Budynok Slovo</i>	92
<i>Elegance as a Business Style: Writers’ Tools</i>	97
<i>Furniture: Luxury, Convenience, and its Absence</i>	99
<i>Changing Self-Identities of the Slov’iany</i>	102
<i>Surveillance of Budynok Slovo: Vanishing Public Space</i>	106
<i>The Role of Janitors and Administrators</i>	111
<i>Deterioration of the Community and Art</i>	114
Chapter Three	121
Police Spatial Practices and the Galician Trace	
<i>Historical Context</i>	123
<i>The Early Thirties: Vanquished Slov’iany</i>	132
<i>The Kharkiv GPU Prison and Staff: Practices and Traditions</i>	140
<i>The First Slov’iany Arrested</i>	148
<i>Galicians (Halychany): Proponents of Ukrainian Culture</i>	153

<i>Independentist Pavlo Khrystiuk</i>	156
<i>Words, Deeds, Fear and Confusion</i>	161
Chapter Four	165
Ialovyi's Case: The Power of Interrogation Rooms	
<i>Combating Ukrainian Nationalism</i>	165
<i>The Uniqueness of Mykhailo Ialovyi's Criminal File</i>	170
<i>Obliterating Human Bonds and Friendships</i>	183
<i>Love and Fear: Lidiia Vovchyk-Blakytina</i>	189
<i>The Ukrainian Scenario of Conversion</i>	194
Chapter Five	207
Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: Suicide or Murder?	
<i>Khvyl'ovyi in Scholarly Discourse</i>	210
<i>Khvyl'ovyi's Views and the Literary Landscape of the 1920s</i>	218
<i>The State's Attitudes toward Khvyl'ovyi</i>	224
<i>The Noose Tightened: The Late 1920s</i>	228
<i>Potential Reasons for Khvyl'ovyi's Suicide</i>	231
<i>The Controversy over Khvyl'ovyi's Suicide</i>	239
<i>Free in the Space of Art</i>	244
Chapter Six	251
The UVO Case and the Repressions of 1933	
<i>A Scapegoat: Andrii Richyts'kyi</i>	254
<i>Serhii Pylypenko</i>	263
<i>The "Decemberists" of 1933</i>	267
<i>Oles' Dosvitnii</i>	275
<i>Ostap Vyshnia and Les' Kurbas</i>	282
Chapter Seven	295
Unnecessary Bloodstained Confessions: The Repressions of 1934	
<i>The Spatiality of the Terror</i>	295
<i>Oleksa Slisarenko: Temporary Surrender</i>	299
<i>The Krushel'nytskyi Family: The Fatal Misstep</i>	304
<i>Valerian Polishchuk: "An Artist with Nerves Stretched like Strings"</i>	313
<i>Hryhorii Epik: A Return to Roots</i>	326

<i>Displacement, “Prisonization,” and Social Exclusion</i>	337
Chapter Eight	341
Repressions of 1935-1936: “Wrong” Places for Tea Ceremonies	
<i>Counter-Ukrainization in Progress</i>	341
<i>The Russian Tolmachiov as a Ukrainian Nationalist</i>	349
<i>The Head of the Cooperative “Slovo” Petro Lisovyi</i>	360
<i>The Boichukists Vasyl’ Sedliar and Ivan Padalka</i>	370
<i>Ethnically Diverse Ukrainian Nationalists</i>	380
Chapter Nine	399
The Great Terror: Reshaping Social and Cultural Space	
<i>No Victors</i>	399
<i>Mykhail’ Semenko and Ivan Kulyk: Semantics Stripped of Meaning</i>	402
<i>“It Is Better to Hit Harder:” The NKVD’s 1937 Crop of the Privileged</i>	422
<i>1938: The Remaining Slov’iany Were Swept Away</i>	453
Conclusion	475
Selected Bibliography	500
<i>Archival Sources</i>	500
<i>Soviet and Ukrainian Periodicals</i>	502
<i>Published Scholarly Works</i>	503
<i>Reference Works</i>	522
<i>Published Collections of Documents</i>	523
<i>Literary Works</i>	524
<i>Memoirs, Diaries, Biographies and Correspondence</i>	525

Introduction

The Subject of the Study and Historiography

The Soviet Ukrainian intelligentsia's experience in the 1920s and 1930s is tragically unique, because most of them perished in Stalin's camps or were executed in the cellars of the GPU.¹ Long suppressed by Tsarist Russia, Ukrainian culture experienced a renaissance in the 1920s known as the Cultural Renaissance or Red Renaissance. But this resurgence was short-lived—this cultural revival was increasingly characterized by the center as nationalist rather than national. In the late 1920s, when Stalin consolidated his power, mass arrests of the Ukrainian intelligentsia began, and the rebirth of Ukrainian culture soon became known as the Executed Renaissance.²

The number of Ukrainians incarcerated in the Gulag increased steadily from the late 1920s. By late September 1929, the number of prisoners in the

¹ On the number of Ukrainian writers who were victims of Stalin's regime, see Tanya Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 27; Semen Pidhainyi, *Ukrains'ka inteligentsiia na Solovkakh: nedostriliani* (Kyiv: Vudavnychiy dim "Kyievo-Mogylians'ka akademiia, 2008); Mykola Zhulyns'kyi et al., eds., *Nashi vtraty: Materialy do bihrografichnoho slovnyka represovanykh u 1930-ykh rokakh diiachiv v URSR, zibrani Iuriiem Lavrinienkom* (Kyiv/New York: Ukrains'ka Vil'na Akademiia Nauk u SSHA, "Tvim Inter," 2005); Natalia Yakovenko, "On Historical Memory and the Traditions of the Ukrainian People," *Independent Cultural Magazine 'Ii'* 22 (2001): 19; George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 257-58. On the ethnic composition of prisoners in the GULAG system, see Anne Applebaum, *GULAG: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 495. On the 1937-38 NKVD arrest quotas of the Ukrainians, see Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans. V. Stalko (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), 162 and Paul R. Gregory, *Terror by Quota: State Security from Lenin to Stalin (An Archival Study)* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 72, 192, 233, 236, 265-6. GPU refers to Soviet secret police—the State Political Administration (Gosudarstvennoie politicheskoe upravleniie). On 15 October 1923, the GPU was transformed into the OGPU, the United State Political Administration, which was changed to the NKVD—the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del SSSR*) in 1934. Because the Russian acronyms GPU and NKVD are more recognizable for scholars, they are used throughout the narrative instead of their analogies in Ukrainian—DPU and NKVS.

² The term "Executed Renaissance" was offered by Jerzy Giedroyc, the Polish journalist, activist and the editor of the journal *Kultura* (Paris) who suggested this term as a title for the Diaspora literary critic Jurij Lawrynenko's anthology of 1917-33 works by Ukrainian writers that was published in Paris in 1959 (Instytut Literacki). The fifth edition of this collection was published in Kyiv in 2007 by the Smoloskyp Publishing House.

Solovets'ki Islands (Solovky) grew dramatically: the majority of contingents were Ukrainian peasants, priests and the intelligentsia, primarily teachers.³ By 1931, the Ukrainian prisoners constituted the “lion’s share of the Northern exiles.”⁴ In his pioneering study, Jurij Lawrynenko revealed that throughout 1931-34, besides Ukrainian scholars in the humanities from VUAN (the Ukrainian Academy of Science), representatives of the technical intelligentsia were swept up in the arrests, as well as people from various cultural institutions such as theatre, museums, archives, and libraries, and professionals from the military, industry, agriculture, education, and medicine. The Soviet terror also took the lives of 259 Ukrainian writers; only 36 survived Stalin’s purges.⁵ Between January 1933 and January 1934, the Communist party of Ukraine was purged. Most of those who were dismissed were arrested: the Ukrainian Communist party lost about 100,000 people, many of whom were representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Individuals “with a measure of independent thought” were removed and sent to labor camps not as Ukrainians but as “nationalist deviationists,” as Stalin’s protégé in Ukraine Pavel Postyshev emphasized.⁶ Considering the Great

³ Pidhainyi, 17-9; Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains'ki Solovky* (Kyiv: “EksOb,” 2001), 79. The political prisoner of Solovky Ivan Tuz wrote in October 1937 that in Solovky, the majority of inmates were Ukrainians.

⁴ Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 71, 195-97.

⁵ Larysa Lawrynenko, “Slovo do chytacha” in Zhulyns’kyi, 5. I. Lawrynenko’s research studied the fates of all those writers who published their works before 1930. See also David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 58. Marples noted that in 1932-33, 1,649 Ukrainian scholars were purged. See also Pavel Monakov’s memoirs about the Solovky, available at http://www.solovki.ca/camp_20/kurbas_solovki.php (accessed 26 January 2012). Monakov who shared his prison cell with Les’ Kurbas and 5 other inmates noted that the Solovky were almost exclusively Ukrainian.

⁶ Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (Edmonton, Canada: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies; University of Toronto Press, 1985), 146. See also George O. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992),

Terror, Hiroaki Kuromiya has noted that despite the relative inaccuracy of statistical data and the imprecision of data concerning ethnic identity in localities, the numbers for 1937-38 provide us with at least some approximate ethnic dimensions of Stalin's terror in Ukraine: "ethnic Ukrainians accounted for the majority of those arrested (and almost certainly executed as well): 53.2 percent. Russians were the second largest ethnic group among those arrested: 7.7 percent."⁷ On the basis of the French scholars France Meslé's and Jacques Vallin's calculations, "in total, the 1939 Ukrainian population deficit due to forced migration departures from Ukraine can thus be established at 400,000 who were forcibly exiled and 530,000 deported to the gulag, i.e. 930,000, of whom 563,000 were males and 367,000 females."⁸

Colonial Russification policies and the Soviet treatment of Ukraine as a borderland region constrained the development of Ukrainian culture, and as Tanya Richardson has noted, although it did develop, it was "positioned in quasi-colonial ways in relation to Russian culture in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union."⁹ The complexity of Ukraine as a geographical and, most importantly, a borderland region, has been emphasized in studies by Catherine Wanner, Andrew Wilson, Kate Brown, Tanya Richardson and Timothy Snyder, and is typical for places with a "legacy of statelessness" and "shifting

169. Liber noted that among party-members and candidate-members purged in 1932-3 most were Ukrainians.

⁷ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 218-19. Kuromiya provides the ethnicity distribution in the Ukrainian population as 78.2 % Ukrainian and 11.3% Russian. See also Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 85-87, 89, 329, and Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010). Snyder posited that in Soviet Ukraine, besides class enemies, the Soviet Union "was also killing ethnic enemies:" a third of the arrests were part of national operations.

⁸ See France Meslé's and Jacques Vallin's detailed explanations in *Mortality and Causes of Death in 20th-Century Ukraine*, in the series of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, trans. Karen George (Paris, France: Springer, 2012), 27.

⁹ Richardson, 175.

state regimes.”¹⁰ It suggests that the struggle of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the 1920-30s might be profitably explained through a spatial lens.

In essence, Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s constituted a broad battleground, geographically and intellectually, where the fate of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and Ukrainian identity were ultimately forged for years to come. There were, however, places where the struggle might be closely and carefully observed. One of these places was *Budynok Slovo* (the House of Writers), an apartment building that was conceived by the cooperative “Slovo” (Word), a professional association of writers in Kharkiv, the Ukrainian capital until 1934. This building as a geographical place and intellectual space reveals the patterns of human behavior that emerged during the cultural struggle of the 1920s and 1930s, and through the analysis of this contested place and space, a clearer view of this period in Ukrainian history emerges.

This research marks the first attempt in Western scholarship to write the history of *Budynok Slovo* and contributes to our understanding of its role in the development of Ukrainian culture and the fate of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. This building has a special meaning in any discussion about ties between a writer’s national identity, art, emotions and the landscape that shapes this identity,¹¹ and social and political behavior. Space and place are concepts that reveal the interplay of the Ukrainian writers’ borderland

¹⁰ Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), xviii; Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Kate Brown, *A Biography of no Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa*, 212; Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

¹¹ On relations between human emotions, the geographical landscape (a place) and identity, see Yi Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

experience, their creative manner of expression and the state's perspective and vision of their role in socialist construction.

Budynok Slovo as a place is also significant in the history of individuals who lived there in the 1930s. Despite the fact that most residents of the building (writers, theatre directors, artists and state officials) were ethnic Ukrainians, the composition of the building remained multiethnic. Among the residents of *Budynok Slovo*, known as *slov'iany*, were writers of Jewish and Russian origins, whose everyday experiences, as well as their contributions to the dynamics of events in the building and to Ukrainian culture, were valuable and have been examined in this study.¹² The importance of utilizing ethnically diverse human experiences in historical narratives about Ukraine has been emphasized by Mark von Hagen, Andreas Kappeler, Serhii Plokhy and other historians, and such an approach is conditioned by the rich multiethnic history of Ukraine, its geographical positioning and cross-cultural borderland experience.¹³

One key agency is also of great importance to this study, an agency that contributed significantly to the history of *Budynok Slovo* and changed the

¹² The cooperative members called themselves *slov'iany*, a term that illuminated an interplay between these two words, "slovo" (word), the name of a writers' cooperative, and *slov'iany* (Slavic people).

¹³ See Mark von Hagen, "Empires, Borderlands, and Diasporas: Eurasia as Anti-Paradigm for the Post-Soviet Era," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 2 (2004): 445–68; Andreas Kappeler, "From an Ethnonational to a Multiethnic to a Transnational Ukrainian History," *Ukraine as a Laboratory of Transnational History*, eds. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest: CEU P), 2009. 51–80; Andreas Kappeler, "'Great Russians' and 'Little Russians': Russian–Ukrainian Relations and Perceptions in Historical Perspective," *The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies*, no. 39 (Seattle: 2003); Serhii Plokhy, "Between History and Nation: Paul Robert Magocsi and the Rewriting of Ukrainian History," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 1 (2011): 117–24. On Ukrainian-Jewish cultural interactions and representation in literature, see works by Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), and Gennady Estraiikh, "The Yiddish Kultur-Lige," in *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation*, ed. Irena R. Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2010).

cultural and political landscape in Ukraine—the Soviet secret police. Many scholarly studies clarified the origins, goals, functions, methods and practices of this powerful agency. These valuable works introduced several aspects of power struggles among leading figures, the relationship of the agency with the center, and the basic principles and methods of the agency’s work during Stalin’s era.¹⁴ In addition, works by the Ukrainian historians Iurii Shapoval, Vadym Zolotar’ov, Volodymyr Prystaiko, Volodymyr Okipniuk and Oleksandr Rubl’ov enriched the analysis of practices employed by the secret organs and added important depth to the social portraits of *chekists* who worked with the *slov’iany*.¹⁵

¹⁴ Simon Wolin and Robert M. Slusser, eds., *The Soviet Secret Police* (New York: Frederic A. Praeger Publisher, 1957); Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963); Boris Levytsky, *The Uses of Terror: The Soviet Secret Service 1917-1970*, trans. H.A. Piehler (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971); Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin’s First Lieutenant* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993); J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, trans. Benjamin Sher (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999); William J. Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934-1939*, in series of the Annals of Communism, trans. Vadim A. Staklo (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001); Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin’s Loyal Executioner: People’s Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Institution Press, 2002); Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*; J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin’s “Iron Fist”* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin’s Police: Public Order and Mass Repressions in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010); Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939-1957,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 5-45.

¹⁵ Iurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko and Vadym Zolotar’ov, *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abris, 1997); V.T. Okipniuk, *Derzhavne Politychne Upravlinnia UkrSRR (1922-1934): Istoryko-Iurydychnyi Analiz* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Natsional’noi Akademii SB Ukrainy, 2002); Yuri Shapoval, “GPU-NKVD as an Instrument of Counter-Ukrainization in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600-1945*, ed. Andreas Kappeler, et al. (Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003); Vadym Zolotar’ov, *ChK-DPU-NKVS na Kharkivshchyni: Liudy ta Doli. 1919-1941* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2003); Oleksandr Rubl’ov, *Zakhidnoukrains’ka intelihentsia u zahal’nonatsional’nykh politychnykh ta kul’turnykh protestakh (1914-1939)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy, NANU, 2004); Vadym Zolotar’ov, *Sekretno-politychnyi viddil [SPV] DPU USSR: Spravy ta liudy* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007); Iurii Shapoval, *Poliuvannia na Val’dshnepa: Rozsekrencheni Mykola Khvyl’ovyi* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009).

Although the issue of subjectivity is not the main focus of this study, the *slov'iany*'s feelings, emotions and self-perceptions have been discussed in several contexts on the basis of their own testimonies and behavior. Subjectivity was a point of departure for existentialists, and to some degree, an analysis of the writers' behavior, feelings and perceptions benefited from Sartre's perspective. He believed that people's subjectivity could be analyzed in the context of choices they made and the behavior they exhibited.¹⁶ Some of his explanations are problematic, but Sartre accurately grasped one aspect—people discover their subjectivity and inner “I” only through their contacts with other people and through the cultural space that surrounds them, a phenomenon that he calls “inter-subjectivity.”¹⁷ Within a social vacuum, humans are often unable to understand either themselves or the realities around them.¹⁸ The selection of this premise of Sartre combined with the spatial perspective as a framework for examining the lives of the *slov'iany* is not accidental. An analysis of people's behavior and the choices they made in different settings help us better understand both—they as human beings and the space in which they functioned. Isolated from the external world, the writers could not make sense of the realities which drove many insane. The notions of space and place invite us to consider their specificity. In this case study, the specificity of power politics in Ukraine evoked certain popular feelings, emotions and attitudes, which in turn dictated specific human adaptations and behavior.

¹⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1957), 15-16.

¹⁷ Sartre, *Existentialism*, 38.

¹⁸ Sartre, *Existentialism*, 39.

In contrast to several recent studies on subjectivities, this study argues precisely against the idea that the dominant trend during Stalinism was the internalization and inner acceptance of Stalinist values.¹⁹ The evidence shows that in the Ukrainian context this was not the case. The subject of this research, the Ukrainian intelligentsia, although having faith in Communism in the early twenties, ceased being happy Stalinists by the early thirties. Because of their fear of physical extermination, feelings of despair and doom overwhelmed them. Hopes for building a new Ukrainian culture were abandoned; they were marginalized as “nationalists,” and were quietly arrested. They became disillusioned, and even their quest for privacy and comfort was denied.

George O. Liber aptly noted that “unlike Russian writers, who were committed to Bolshevik state-building in the 1920s, Ukrainian writers were involved in nation-building.”²⁰ The lives of Ukrainian intellectuals are considered therefore in the context of historical realities and politics in Ukraine, which allows a nuanced view of national/regional human experiences under Stalinism. For most Ukrainian literati, the meaning of their lives was derived not from the state as a vehicle of the revolutionary project, but from the regional/national cultural landscape which conditioned their feelings and behavior. They were more nationally oriented than revolutionary, although they all emerged from the Revolution. However, understandings of the

¹⁹ Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006); Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); and *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds., *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s*, trans. Carol A. Flath (New York: The New Press, 1995) and others.

²⁰ Liber, 123.

Revolution were very different in Russia and Ukraine. The “revolutionary project” for them was to de-russify Ukraine, and in this sense, they derived the meaning of their lives from the state at the moment it supported Ukrainization. When they realized that Ukrainization was simply a “chess move” and a temporary concession to a nationally conscious Communist party elite in Ukraine, most of them were disenchanted; some committed suicide.²¹

The present study of *Budynok Slovo* is focused on repression, terror and human deaths in one place, and, more specifically, on the manner and methods of killing. The purpose of such a focus is to illuminate its vector and, most significantly, its reasons, and to examine the state’s involvement in mass killings and its legitimization of deaths. This study not only locates the place of violent deaths geographically, but it also views historical events and human experiences through personal biographies that have been placed in a larger political context. It is written in the belief that behind theoretical generalizations, human beings should always be seen—whether for a better understanding of their integrity, or for their irrationality, confusion, and moral deterioration. Isaiah Berlin believed that “what we are seeking to understand is men—human beings endowed, as we are, with minds and purposes and inner lives.”²² The examination of human experiences in one place provides us with this opportunity, and an analysis of the social fabric of this place reveals patterns of human behavior, their motivations and the relationships among people that are interdependent with and contingent upon external forces.

²¹ This expression is borrowed from the work by Myroslav Shkandrij, “Ukrainianization, Terror and Famine: Coverage in Lviv’s *Dilo* and the Nationalist Press of the 1930s,” *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 3 (2012).

²² Isaiah Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 353.

This examination became possible due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the gradual opening of the archives over the following two decades, the events that dramatically changed Soviet studies, yielding new approaches to Soviet history. In the post-Soviet period, hostile attitudes toward the USSR and historical interpretations of the most critical events of Stalin's era were replaced by newer ones that preferred to avoid ideology or large overviews, and instead focused on the experience of the ordinary citizen, on micro-histories or the study of daily life. Sometimes these approaches were influenced by discussions of postmodernism and sometimes by a desire to overturn the ideologization that was a legacy of "Cold War thinking." These studies often avoided the most appalling aspects of the Soviet experience, and by doing so frequently flirted with various forms of apologism. They were manifested in concepts such as vacillation, infighting, confusion, indecisiveness and ad-hoc measures of central power.²³ As Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi has noted, the goal was "to free the history of the USSR from the critical assessments characteristic of the Cold War era."²⁴ Some contended that the repression and violence was a response to insistent pressure from regional authorities.²⁵ However, these approaches, now well-represented in Western scholarship, have not generated a consensus among historians. They

²³ J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, eds., *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Workers against Bosses: The Impact of the Great Purges on Labor-Management Relations," in *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity*, eds. Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 311-40; Peter H. Solomon Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*; Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates?* and others.

²⁴ Stanislav V. Kulchytskyi, "Holodomor in Ukraine 1932-1933: An Interpretation of Facts" in *Holodomor and Gorta Mór: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen and Vincent Comerford (New York: Anthem Press, 2012), 21.

²⁵ David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); J. Arch Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," *Russian Review* 61 (2001): 113-38.

have, in turn, been challenged by scholars who have reaffirmed the significance of mass terror, the gulag, the famine of 1932-33, and the role of the secret police as crucial, defining moments.²⁶

The discovery of a wealth of archival information dealing with Stalin and the interwar period, and the participation of East European scholars in wider historical discussions have forced a reappraisal of the twenties and the thirties, and a construction of a more nuanced narrative about state violence.²⁷ In Ukraine, hundreds of operational files and thousands of individual and collective criminal files fabricated by the secret police became available to scholars. These documents have fundamentally challenged the historical narrative about Soviet nationality policies in Ukraine presented by many Russian and Western historians. Paul V. Gregory has stated that “as a vast borderland subject to forces of nationalism, it would seem that Stalin would especially have singled out the Ukraine for repression.”²⁸ The archival evidence discovered in Ukraine supports this claim, yet the on-going discussion of the questions “why terror?” and “why Ukraine?” have produced heated scholarly debates. In particular, the issues of the intentionality of state violence (including ethnic cleansing operations and the extermination of millions of people during the famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine) and its specific national vector remains largely unsettled.

²⁶ See studies by Oleg V. Khlevniuk, Steven Barnes, Iurii Shapoval, Andrea Graziosi, Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, Vadym Zolotar'ov and others.

²⁷ See works by Applebaum, *GULAG*, Snyder, *Bloodlands*, Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*; Khlevniuk, *GULAG*, and *Master of the House*; Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor 1932-1933 rr. iak henotsyd: Trudnoshchi usvidomlennia* (Kyiv: “Nash chas,” 2008); Weiner and Rahi-Tamm, “Getting to Know You;” McDermott and Stibbe, *Stalinist Terror*; Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and others.

²⁸ Gregory, 265.

Western scholars explored the multi-faceted dimensions of national cleansing operations in the 1930s. Terry Martin formulated the idea of an “affirmative action empire,” Yuri Slezkine spoke of “ethnophilia,” and Ronald Grigor Suny of a “state of nations.”²⁹ The present study challenges their supposition that Ukrainization and other nationality campaigns were aimed at the promotion of national identity and self-consciousness of non-Russian populations of the Soviet Union, and at the development of their own political and cultural institutions, a supposition which is inconsistent with new archival evidence. The evidence presented in this study illuminates the state’s fear of losing control over Ukraine because of potential cooperation between the intelligentsia and the peasantry, a fear that had been instigated by a widespread hatred of the Soviets and rebellions in the Ukrainian countryside.³⁰

Moreover, in contrast to the ideas that the shift in Soviet nationalities policies occurred in 1932-33, this study shows that the perceptions of where Ukrainization would lead (according to the center—to Ukrainian separatism) arose earlier. The evidence suggests that the center’s decision to keep Ukrainization activists under surveillance was adopted in the mid-twenties. The study demonstrates that the anti-Ukrainian course was designed in detail by the center and the secret police in 1926. Its purpose was to limit and then to reverse Ukrainization. This course was in progress until 1929 when it was

²⁹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414-52; Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁰ See a more detailed discussion about peasant rebellions in Chapter Three, and operational documents about the peasants’ moods and resistance in the Ukrainian countryside in HDA SBU, f.16, op.25, spr.3, ark.3; HDA SBU, f.16, op.25, spr.2, ark.1-13 zv., 73; see also Oleksandr Dovzhenko’s attitudes toward collectivization in HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-836, t.1, ark.59.

fully applied though mass repressions of tens of thousands of people. The study also examines the rhetoric by which the top party leadership operated to curtail Ukrainization, and the real power politics that operated beneath the surface.

Although several authors have provided readers with their reflections on the atmosphere of the House of Writers, its residents and traditions, information about the legendary building is scattered and has never been properly organized or investigated by historians. Among those who have written about *Budynok Slovo* were several of its residents who survived Stalin's purges.³¹ Their main emphasis has been the cruel and horrifying history of the building during Stalin's repressions.

Budynok Slovo became decisive and significant for both the state and its residents. Many different agencies and figures expressed some interest in working and living there. The site became a place of conflicts and painful negotiations. For its residents, *Budynok Slovo* was fundamental not only for their everyday activities but also for their personal identities, collective dreams and political aspirations. The building became a cultural marker of their existence. The place reinforced their optimistic expectations about Ukraine's future and the inspiration and passionate dedication (*oderzhymist'*) to the development of Ukrainian culture, trends that were very pronounced in the

³¹ Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmarska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004); Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers' Home 'Slovo: Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: "Homin Ukrainy," 1966); Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vydannia zhurnalu "Berezil'," 2002); Arkadii Liubchenko, *Vertep (Povist')*. *Opovidannia. Shchodennyk* (Kharkiv: "Osnova," 2005); Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid' pro nespokii: deshcho z knyhy pro dvadtsiati i trydtsiati roky v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti*, ch. 1 (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1968); Vasyl' Sokil, *Zdaleka do blyz'koho (spohady, rozdumy)* (Edmonton: Kanads'kyi instytut ukrains'kykh studii, Al'berts'kyi universytet, 1987); Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008).

1920s.³² For the state, the building became a place of surveillance and terror that conveniently gathered the writers under one roof.

Yet, the politics of place in the 1930s made the writers realize that their “nation, patriotism, native tongue, motherland all fell into the category of fiction,” as Valentyn Moroz noted.³³ Their humanity, enthusiasm and inspiration were replaced with fear and depression—in some cases, with moral decline. Gone were their resilience and the inspiration that, as Moroz posited, was something more than a gift of artists but “a component which is indispensable, along with others, for a fully-rounded spiritual life.”³⁴ Moroz wrote:

We had Pavlo Tychyna [*slov’ianyn*—a resident of *Budynok Slovo*] with his poems of genius, but with these treasures he did not possess the power to make Ukrainians of even those closest to him, to raise them to speak the Ukrainian language. What was lacking? There was not one spark of inspiration left of those which had fallen in golden cascades and set aflame the conflagration of the Ukrainian renaissance of the twenties. Although at liberty, he no longer possessed the spark of inspiration because freedom had been buried by Siberian snows.³⁵

The memory of *Budynok Slovo* also has been buried by Siberian snows, and those bits and pieces that miraculously survived have been investigated in this study.

In this historical analysis, *Budynok Slovo* emerges as a laboratory, an experimental space where nascent Stalinism encountered, marginalized and, ultimately, overpowered Ukrainian nationalism. This unique vantage point provides a detailed exploration of the Soviet secret police’s role in the cultural disruption and intellectual paralysis of the residents that to this day haunts the

³² Valentyn Moroz, *Report from the Beria Reserve*, ed. and trans. John Kolasky (Toronto, Canada: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1974), 89. *Oderzhymist’* is a term coined by the Ukrainian writer Lesia Ukrainka, and as Moroz’s translator Kolasky stated, there is no equivalent to this term in English. “Conviction,” “dedication,” a “sense of mission and absolute faith in and commitment to a cause” convey the closest meaning of *oderzhymist’*.

³³ Moroz, 88.

³⁴ Moroz, 89.

³⁵ Moroz, 90.

Ukrainian intellectual elite, their creative art, political activism and human behavior.

Conceptual Framework

A recent body of scholarship has emerged that emphasizes the influence of physical or geographical space on human behavior and culture, reintroducing concepts of space and place to many disciplines in the humanities. As David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor M. Harris have noted, the notion of space has been transformed from a “dormant interest” to an actively applied theoretical category.³⁶ The most appealing results of such application came out of scholarship on the states of the former Soviet bloc, including the former Soviet Union.³⁷ Human experience under authoritarian rule is dramatic, traumatic and tragic, and geography as well as the history of a place, play an enormous role in subsequent cultural development and in the formation of distinct post-traumatic behavioral trends.

Although the events of the 1920s and 1930s are considered here in spatial terms, the theoretical discussion and analysis relate and refer to people. Theorizing makes little sense without this focal point. The notion of space and place is associatively and naturally connected with the history of people and society, and provokes unexpected allusions and interesting hypotheses. The

³⁶ David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor M. Harris, eds., *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), vii.

³⁷ See Nick Baron's two works, “New Spatial Histories of Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Surveying the Landscape,” *Jahrbucher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no. 3 (2007): 374-401, and *Soviet Karelia: Politics, Planning and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920-39* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa*; Mark Bassin, Christopher Ely and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); William Jay Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011) and others.

investigation of human behavior in various physical places and social settings is an exciting and often rewarding endeavor when events and behavioral patterns are structured and clarified through the text (a historical narrative), which gradually reveals the significance of the spatial realm. Thinking about people and society, and their relationships with the state within a spatial framework, enriches our understanding of the cultural roots of the event which are inevitably embedded in a given geographic place and social space.

In other words, when narrating history of people and their deeds, we depict space and time, operating with terms which are spatial and temporal by nature. The German historian Reinhart Koselleck has emphasized that “all historical categories, including progress, which is the first specifically modern category of historical time, are spatial expressions by origin ...[and] ‘history’ [itself] originally also contained a spatial meaning...”³⁸ The history of a social space, a place or a building is a relatively new concept for historians, but spatial history has been readily accepted by the historical community as a promising branch of conceptual history. Why? Because the history of a place is a history of people’s ideas, deeds and their consequences, and precisely this notion makes spatial history so exciting.³⁹

There is also another reason for advocating history expressed in spatial terms. The material culture of place helps us better understand the social and cultural landscape in which this place existed. Therefore, analyzing space and

³⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner and others (Stanford, CA: Stanford California Press, 2002), 6-7.

³⁹ For a discussion about the interrelations among places, people and their behavior, see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) and J. E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

place, it is important to present a description of their material culture, the physical evidence of the past—one that might be confirmed and verified through a reader's personal knowledge and experience, as it relates to these objects or space. For instance, a linguistic description of a building may trigger the historical imagination about its creators, their desires, convictions and even their emotions. In order to verify the truthfulness of a written text, visual images of places are of great importance.⁴⁰

For this study, the politics of space and place that involves the relationships between society and state seems to be most relevant. Pressure, coercion and violence and the corresponding conformism, obedience and submission are examined through a spatial lens that allows us to observe transformations of human behavior in different settings. However, the main focus is the House of Writers, and although this research is related to one building, it is a place that embodies countless generalizable precedents which will inevitably enhance our understanding of human experience under Stalinism.

The politics of place, as experienced by Ukrainian writers, influenced their feelings and shaped their perceptions and judgments, but at the same time space and place were also subject to changes humans imposed on them. Space changes in tune with human actions which in turn are influenced by societal factors. Buildings are conceived and erected under complex social circumstances, and equally complex political, economic and cultural conditions in society. The utility and function of architectural structures, as

⁴⁰ See, for instance, studies by Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (New York: Berg, Oxford International Publishers Ltd., 2000), and by Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), in which images of places are a significant part of their narratives.

well as their symbolic significance and artistic meaning, shed some light on the internal composition of society, or at least, on some social stratum of the society, and most importantly, on the boundaries of the permissible at the state level, including state and popular visions, aspirations and dreams.

In other words, space and place are fascinating cognitive categories in an anthropological sense, categories that help study and analyze human experiences and behavior in society. Through space and physical objects, we are able to perceive human emotions, hopes, sufferings and doubts. Through their symbolic meanings for a given society, places make it possible to realize the scope of human intellectual and moral progress or regression. A mythical representation of space or place might perpetuate good or evil, and knowledge about the historical context of this representation might change the conceptions of space and place, and its representation, sometimes generating completely opposite perceptions.⁴¹

Furthermore, the discourse about spatial concepts abounds with ideas about the essential difference between space and place. For instance, American philosopher Edward Casey ascribed some finite qualities to place (the material); space for him is associated with the infinite.⁴² This research about intellectuals' lives under Stalinism does not consider differences between these two notions, although they are significant in the philosophical, historical, and metaphorical sense. Instead, the focus is on a dialectic and

⁴¹ Eve Richardson, "Space, projection and the Banal in the Works of Jeane-Phillippe Toussaint and Nicholson Baker," in *Space: New Dimensions in French Studies*, Series in Modern French Identities, ed. Emma Gilby and Katja Haustein (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 150-51; Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essay*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

⁴² Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 294.

temporal relationship between them, the fluid transformation of the material (which indeed is finite) to the metaphysical, the space of human memories, customs, traditions and practices that were conditioned by a place that has survived to the present day or once existed in the past. In this sense, place is infinite historically (in time) because it continues to exist in people's imaginations, being recreated in different forms in their literature and art.

Moreover, those who reproduce a place through their creative activity are themselves to a certain degree a product of this place, and its embodiment, continuance and extension. This study reveals that the place itself, as well as state pressure, led to the cultivation among writers of new skills, dispositions and habits—in other words, a new *habitus*, using Pierre Bourdieu's term—to a degree that it became their second nature. Understanding Ukrainian writers' perceptions and visions about *Budynok Slovo*, its meaning to them in the past and the present, and their *habitus* will advance our knowledge about the thirties and Stalin's terror in Ukraine.⁴³

Importantly, the geographical, social and political landscape in which buildings exist is not static. Everything changes. The historical fluidity and the functional adaptability of buildings which reveal the imprint of society and state are remarkably instructive for historians, and encourage deeper understandings of the sources of societal aggravation with the state, or of public enthusiasm about measures undertaken by the state in the sphere of human affairs. This particular feature of historical fluidity and flexibility of a place (not only as a philosophical concept but even more so as a practical

⁴³ On *habitus*, see Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, Habitus, Practices," in *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52-79 and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 194, 239-41, 244-6, 258-9, 377.

perceptible object) allows us to recreate a moment in history or patterns of human behavior. In other words, an analysis of a physical place that constantly changes over time under the influence of external forces helps us recreate its history and the history of its inhabitants. Stones talk, the ancients taught us, but it would be fair to add that buildings talk even more after surviving the cataclysms of war and nature. They constitute and embody human spirit and meanings people attribute to them throughout history.

Importantly, the spatial analysis of writers' lives also guides us to the concept of regionalism.⁴⁴ This research marks an attempt to examine the worldviews of those representatives of the intelligentsia who were born and grew up in Ukraine, a region with unstable borders and boundaries, changeable capitals and frontiers, centers and peripheries. Instability is not only geographical but political, and, what is more important for the main characters of this narrative, cultural. The changeability of space made them naively seek a more stable and secure place, and thus, a more stable and protected existence, and they created such a place for themselves—*Budynok Slovo*, the meaning of which began to change as soon as its construction was completed.

In a dictatorial society such as the Soviet Union, apartment buildings were the spaces which served as the last retreat for many Soviet citizens who craved privacy, and gravitated toward individual rather than collective values. “Given up, but not completely abandoned” (*broshennyi, no ne vpolne otpushchennyi*), the old style of life and old values, or at least their unconscious shadow and memories, inspired people to erect buildings with

⁴⁴ Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 150-53.

private apartments which would adhere to Soviet ideas about communal life while simultaneously providing for them some semblance of a private existence as individuals.⁴⁵ Paradoxically, despite sincerely supporting Soviet ideology in rejecting private property and privacy, the Ukrainian writers, the subject of this research, still desired property and privacy for themselves, and overcame tremendous organizational and financial difficulties to build an exemplary apartment compound, innovative and progressive for the 1930s.⁴⁶ In contrast to many Kharkivites, the intelligentsia perceived urban space not as communal but as private space, subsequently discovering how misplaced this perception was.

In the 1920s, the Soviet state itself was involved in constructing comfortable apartment buildings. Soviet citizens, especially party officials and cultural figures, often received a private apartment as a reward for their loyalty to the new socialist state, or as an inducement to solicit that loyalty. Beyond improved living conditions, such an exchange provided an additional perk for individuals, namely new status and prestige that were associated with their apartment. In return, they were expected to exhibit political loyalty and stability. However, as Lewis H. Siegelbaum suggested, it would be superficial to “treat relations between the state and the intelligentsia in simple bipolar terms. The boundaries between the two were too fluid and divisions within each too severe to sustain such a framework.”⁴⁷ Moreover, there were other

⁴⁵ “*Broshennyi, no ne vpolne otpushchennyi*” is one of the famous lines from Mikhail Kozakov’s cult film *U Pokrovskikh vorot* (Moscow: Mosfilm, 1982) which romanticizes the life of Soviet citizens in communal apartments in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Moscow.

⁴⁶ For a discussion about individualism and individualist ideals in Soviet society, see Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

⁴⁷ Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society: Between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 115.

factors and indicators that must be included in the analysis of these relations, temporal and spatial. In Ukraine in the 1930s, cultural space was a site where the struggle for control was waged. The politics of space played out in *Budynok Slovo*, where aesthetic creativity and intellectual freedom clashed with the hegemony of the Soviet state, transforming the inner essence of both the intellectuals and the state.⁴⁸ This study examines how they were affected by one another and to what end.

The writers produced literature and shaped culture but the place and the environment had a symbiotic influence on them, imposing certain modes of social and political behavior and structuring their minds. The themes of their conformism, ambivalence, and naiveté of their everyday behavior are particularly strong in this narrative and might be explained by the atmosphere of violence and brutality produced by the new regime, and also by the national and ideological divisions among the newly born intelligentsia in a provincial and backward Ukraine.⁴⁹ The responses of the more adamant and stoic writers to state pressure in turn exacerbated repressive state policies. Moreover, through their everyday experiences in *Budynok Slovo* which had been reflected in their art, the writers reveal to us mysteries, coincidences and motivations for their actions, and certainly help us understand the logic of subsequent historical changes. The House of Writers, as a contested place in the past and as a material object and a geographical place that exists today, serves as a methodological (and at the same time a metaphorical) tool to narrow the area

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and trans. Colin Gordon et al. (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980).

⁴⁹ These themes were reflected in many works, including Gramsci's prison notes. On the nature of intellectuals, see Joseph Buttigieg, ed., *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) and vol.2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); on an analysis of Gramsci's thought, see Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

of this investigation. Viewed on a smaller field, players are positioned closer to each other, and thus their interactions are magnified for analysis.

As this study will demonstrate, the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the 1920s lived in a very uncomfortable space (*Budynok Slovo*) in a political sense. Although many of them were apolitical and impractical, the political climate of the 1920s and early 1930s politicized their interactions with each other. Because they did their most significant thinking through the various modes of art and literature, they cherished art as their private space, one which was radically violated by the party establishment. The aggressive penetration of the political into their space of art, into the process of their thinking and writing, made them carefully measure whether their art adhered to the party line, thus provoking their moral and intellectual suffering. What is worse, they had to cultivate the ability of predicting “new currents among the party leadership, to sense which way the wind [was] blowing.”⁵⁰ The moment of insight usually became the moment of their internal crisis. As Czeslaw Milosz noted, once artists had succumbed to political pressures, they questioned themselves about the “lasting value” of their art.⁵¹

In the middle of the twenties, many Ukrainian writers began to recognize their dependency on party directives and their lack of artistic freedom. The idea of socialist realism emanating from the top was already in the air, and they embraced it. However, as Robert Conquest noted, with those who conformed, there was only one problem—“they couldn’t write.”⁵² They

⁵⁰ Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 51-2.

⁵¹ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 14.

⁵² Robert Conquest, “Introduction,” in Vitaly Shentalinsky, *The KGB’s Literary Archive*, trans. John Crowfoot (London: The Harvill Press, 1993), ix.

tortuously searched for an answer to whether their own art had lasting value, and would be remembered by future generations. Some writers “rejected the idea of a controlled literature, of a superiority of the Party over the unprogrammable individual sources of creativity.”⁵³ Their oppression by the state and vicious attacks on them by official “courtier” writers, as well as their subsequent rebellion, played a tragic role in their lives. Through the analysis of personal changes in *slov’iany*, the research exposes the scale of violence with which the Bolshevik regime created a new society and illuminates human limitations under authoritarian rule.

The study demonstrates the gradual disappearance of their inspiration (*oderzhymist’*) to build a new Ukrainian culture, and the consequences of their political and ideological maneuverability. The study also reveals the transformation of the meaning of the building for the writers—from a joyful place that was at the root of the formation of their individual and group identity, and which symbolized their dream and hope for freedom, to a site of cultural struggle and danger: in the 1930s, *slov’iany* began to spend nights at hotels and at friends’ places because of the fear of being arrested.⁵⁴ The transformation and destruction of their hopes was followed by a similar change or loss of people’s sense of personal, cultural, and national identity.⁵⁵ Changing themselves, they changed the place where they lived. They developed claustrophobia in a place that was previously desirable and

⁵³ Conquest in Shentalinsky, ix.

⁵⁴ Oleksandr and Leonid Ushkalovy, eds., *Arkhiv rozstrilianoho vidrodzhennia: materialy arkhivno-slidchykh sprav pys’mennykh 1920-30 rokiv* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 142.

⁵⁵ On the relationship between space/place and cultural/national identity, see studies by Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 150-52; Wanner, *Burden of Dreams*; Andreas Kappeler et al., eds., *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600-1945* (Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003); Zenon E. Kohut, *Roots of Identity: Studies on Early Modern and Modern Ukraine* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2004); Simon Gunn, “Identity” in *History and Cultural History* by Simon Gunn (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 131-42.

comfortable for them. The uniformity of political space and the loss of home further transformed them to the point where suicides and betrayals became commonplace.⁵⁶

The task here was to differentiate between patterns and events, and being aware of this, ultimately to search for changes in human behavior provoked by spatial factors (i.e., home, travel abroad, prison). Describing these patterns that had been changing through time promised some fusion of place and time, what Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin called the “chronotope” in the narrative that should provide readers with a clear sense of the spatial and temporal auras of the 1930s.⁵⁷ The contingency of various social domains (private, public, political) and their description and analysis help this fusion to occur. Such an analysis of patterns of human behavior in different social settings in the past facilitates the discovery of emerging nuances and the deep interconnectedness of power and social responses, of the close bonds between ideology and personal and group identity. American anthropologist Clifford Geertz offered a method of “thick description” of culture which might be useful in attaining Bakhtin’s magic chronotope in a historical narrative.⁵⁸ This is no easy task. Nevertheless, through a thorough analysis of details from the past (the time before the arrest of these individuals and after), of the material (place and texts) and of the metaphysical

⁵⁶ Peter Brown and Michael Irwin, eds., *Literature and Place: 1800-2000* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 22. In his introduction, Peter Brown noted that “the individual’s process of self-discovery is often enacted in relation to place, and through the attempts of an individual to understand it. Place influences the development of character just as much as places are given character by the people who inhabit them...Also at issue here is the problem of striking a balance between person and place, between having roots, and being rootless. Too close an identification with a particular place can produce an aggressive and defiant parochialism, complete deracination a loss of identity.”

⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 250.

⁵⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

(perceptions, emotions and feelings), patterns of human behavior should become more pronounced and concrete.⁵⁹

Significantly, the study invites readers to revisit the consequences of Stalin's repressions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the resilience of imperial imagination and practices that shaped the thinking of subsequent generations of Ukrainian writers even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tanya Richardson noted that "empires and states do not simply cease to exist when formally declared defunct, but rather persist in changed, often diffuse, forms and have various contradictory effects in the present."⁶⁰ This concerns not only institutions and political practices within the state that "persist in peculiar forms in Post-Soviet and postcolonial contexts,"⁶¹ but also the psyche of the modern Ukrainian intelligentsia, traumatized by the memory of the writers purged one by one, and millions of Ukrainian peasants who perished in labor camps, a psyche formed by the deprivation of a natural cultural continuity. Scholars characterized the period of the 1930s as a "chain of demoralizing atrocities and a propagation of ignorance and prejudice that in the cultural respect had turned Soviet society back by decades," and a time of "complete subjugation of Soviet Ukraine" by the Kremlin.⁶² The intellectual and political gap in the leadership of Ukraine as a state, created because of Stalin's terror in the 1930s, cannot be bridged, a fact that is being observed by

⁵⁹ Edward L. Ayers, "Turning toward Place, Space, and Time," in Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris, 11. However, Edward L. Ayers noted that "we are limited in what we can describe," for instance, we are simply unable to describe verbally the shape of some geographic place or continent (Donna Peuquet).

⁶⁰ Richardson, 14-15; on the subtle and "liquid" forms of imperialism, see Ann Laura Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006):125-146.

⁶¹ Richardson, 14-15.

⁶² Groys, 75; George S.N. Luckyj, *Keeping a Record: Literary Purges in Soviet Ukraine (1930s): A Bio-Bibliography* (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, The University of Alberta, 1987), ix.

specialists in history and political science who analyze the political and cultural climate in Ukraine today.⁶³

Sources and Methods

For this study, a variety of sources were consulted, including: memoirs and diaries written by those who lived in this building or those who were a part of the literary and artistic discourse in the 1920-30s; major works by poets and writers of the Red renaissance; personal archives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia from the State Archives of Literature and Art and the Kharkiv Literary Museum; operational documents, and individual and group criminal files of the Soviet secret police located in SBU archives in Kyiv and Kharkiv; stenographic reports of the Kharkiv Writers' Association "Slovo" from the State Archives of Kharkiv Oblast'; party documents and documents of the Union of Writers from the former party archive; Ukrainian periodicals and private archives.

Memoirs appear problematic because they often overlook experiences that are painful or shameful for the narrator, and are usually constrained by official discourse or the fear of punishment for the truth as the narrator sees it, which is common in socialist societies.⁶⁴ To mitigate these negative aspects of memoirs as sources, they are analyzed here in combination with an appraisal of the conditions and circumstances under which they were produced.⁶⁵

⁶³ See works by Ivan Dziuba, Taras Kuzio, Alexander J. Motyl.

⁶⁴ Ruby Watson, "Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism: An Introduction," in *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, ed. Ruby Watson (Santa-Fé: School of American Research Press, 1994); Bruce Grant, "New Moscow Monuments, or States of Innocence," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 2 (2001): 332-62; David J. Bodenhamer, "The Potential of Spatial Humanities," in Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris, 26.

⁶⁵ Similar attempts were undertaken by Richardson (2008), Hellbeck (2000), Oushakine (2000), Yurchak (2005). Their narratives shed some new light on people's subjectivities and constraints.

Although nostalgia is present in some memoirs, a distinct feature of the memoirs about *Budynok Slovo* is a feeling of shame, fear and horror which depicts *Budynok Slovo* as a place of suffering.

Diaries are often influenced by political and ideological discourses at the time of their creation, but they have to be considered and analyzed, with caution and at the same time with great appreciation of their authors' views. Tragically, the residents of the building burned their diaries, anticipating arrest, and this study benefited only from Arkadii Liubchenko's diary that miraculously survived the German occupation. This text is extraordinarily valuable because it provides us with understandings of the political and social atmosphere in Kharkiv before the war, as well as the writers' relationships with the state and each other.

GPU-NKVD criminal files on Ukrainian intellectuals are compromised by forgery and fabrication. Despite concerns about the reliability of these documents, they do reveal a timeframe of events and the Soviet agenda on Ukrainization policies. Police records, including operational and rehabilitation materials, constitute a rich source of supplementary material for studying the mechanism of repressions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the ideological motivations of their tormentors and their collaborators in implementing them. Methodologically, beyond a comparative analysis of the information found in GPU-NKVD documents and the extant data from other sources (e.g. first-person testimonies, émigré accounts) about Soviet repressions of Ukrainian intellectuals, careful scrutiny of the logistics of events, critical attention to the language of GPU-NKVD officials, and a constant alertness for underlying motives are necessary to appreciate the documents of the Soviet secret police.

A critical stance is important when working with these kinds of sources. For instance, meticulous readings of criminal files may disclose half-truths that at first glance were taken as the truth, revealing the state's skill of deception to impose "part-truths." Robert Conquest stressed this point in his introduction to Vitaly Shentalinsky's book *The KGB's Literary Archive*. When many writers were

rehabilitated on the criminal charges for which they had died, false death dates were given. These emerged because when rehabilitation started, it was impossible to reconcile the true execution dates with the fact that relatives had been informed that the sentence was to "10 years without the right of correspondence;" so random dates of death at supposed "places of imprisonment" were given on the rehabilitation certificates. That is, even when the truths began to come out, they were for years only part-truths.⁶⁶

However, any sources or documents of the past are valuable if approached critically. According to American historian David J. Bodenhamer,

a deep map of heritage and culture, centered on memory and place, ideally would [operate as a series of layers]. Each artifact—a letter, memoir, photograph, painting, oral account, video...would constitute a separate record anchored in time and space, thus allowing us to keep them in relationship, and each layer would contain the unique view over time—the dynamic memory—of an individual or a social unit.⁶⁷

The accessibility of new archival sources in Ukraine without doubt have facilitated understanding of the Bolsheviks' treatment of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, adding depth to it and creating layers of unique views in our imagination. Recent historians' analyses of memoirs and diaries have proved to be innovative and fruitful.⁶⁸ Russian writer and poet, and editor of *Novyi Mir*, Aleksandr Tvardovskii once told Iurii Trifonov: "The memoirs of eyewitnesses are extremely important, even in manuscripts and drafts, even when written without any hope to publish them: this is the truth of the past

⁶⁶ Conquest in Shentalinsky, vii-viii.

⁶⁷ Bodenhamer, "The Potential," 27-8.

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s," *The Russian Review* 59 (July 2000): 327-52; Garros et al., *Intimacy and Terror*.

which must not disappear.”⁶⁹ What has helped in the present research in filtering “half-truths,” “part-truths” and lies is what might be called “cross-reading.” The same factual detail was checked in a range of sources, and texts composed by the GPU were analyzed and compared in hundreds of criminal cases. Despite efforts to maintain academic distance and a degree of objectivity, the research will nevertheless echo personal perceptions, based on knowledge, experience and moral dispositions. The narrative still remains only a point of view and an interpretation.

Chapter One discusses the social and political atmosphere of the 1920s, in which Ukrainian writers lived, worked and conceived an apartment building for the members of the cooperative “Slovo” in Kharkiv. Soviet cultural construction is examined in the context of Ukrainization policies and illustrated through the creation of professional unions, literary groups and associations in Ukraine in the 1920s.⁷⁰ The narrative also contains a detailed description of the building project of *Budynok Slovo* at the various stages of its conception and development, as well as the material and social status of the Ukrainian intelligentsia before 1930. An analysis of the first “communal” year in the building lays the foundation for our understanding of Stalin’s subsequent repression of the residents.

Chapter Two considers the material culture of the building, and the ways it shaped the residents’ lifestyles and self-identities. This chapter also demonstrates how the surveillance of the building by the secret police

⁶⁹ Olga Trifonova and Iurii Trifonov, *Iurii i Olga Trifonovy vspominaiut*, in series “Sovershenno Secretno” (Moskva: OOO “Kolektsiia-- Sovershenno Secretno,” 2003), 218.

⁷⁰ See Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*. Ukrainization was a part of the *korenizatsiia*/indigenization campaign that was announced at the XII Congress of VKP(b) in April 1923, and meant a broad national reform that promoted national cultures and the representatives of national minorities into leading positions of local Soviet and party organs.

intimidated the community of *Budynok Slovo*, facilitated the deterioration of its public space, and contributed to the development of artistic conformism among the writers.

Chapter Three provides the historical context of the twenties and the early thirties, discusses the role of the center in arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals, and analyzes the changing atmosphere in the building where fear and despair dominated. It also examines the traditions and methods practiced by the Soviet secret police in the Kharkiv prison, and the move by the state and the GPU to eliminate the Galician Ukrainian intelligentsia in Ukraine.

Chapter Four analyzes the methods of fabrication of criminal cases against Ukrainian “nationalists,” using Mykhailo Ialovyi’s case as an example of forgery. It also provides an insight into human behavior under torture, and illustrates the purposes and the methods of obliterating human bonds and friendships among people by the secret police. The narrative provides evidence of the state’s intentions to erase Ukrainian national consciousness and to physically exterminate its proponents.

Chapter Five, through Mykola Khvyl’ovyi’s individual history, illustrates the enthusiasm and *oderzhymist’* of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in building a new national culture, and reflects on the problems of the Literary Discussion launched in 1925. The chapter provides an explanation of why Khvyl’ovyi attracted the state’s attention to the cultural and political life of Ukraine, and investigates the controversy about the circumstances of his alleged suicide. The party and the GPU reserved a special place for Khvyl’ovyi: for Stalin, he stood apart as the most dangerous element among the Ukrainian intelligentsia who propagated separatist ideas and perpetuated

nationalistic tendencies. The chapter examines the detrimental effect of the suffocating political atmosphere in Ukraine in the early thirties on Khvyl'ovyi's spirit, and reveals Stalin's militant position toward him and his friends, similar-minded writers and poets.

Chapter Six investigates the secret police's fabrication of criminal cases against the most prominent cultural figures in Ukraine within the 1933 mass repressive operation code-named "the UVO"—the anti-Soviet nationalist Ukrainian Military Organization. It also considers the Soviet regime's vision of culture, its ideology, objectives, goals and priorities in Ukraine. The discussion addresses the moral transformation of writers under the pressure of the secret police, and reveals that their art, social connections, family ties and professional affiliation became crucial factors in fabricating criminal cases against them.

Chapter Seven discusses the 1934 repression in *Budynok Slovo*, and analyzes behaviors of the writers not only during interrogation, but also in labor camps. It also reveals the state's aggressive and violent tactics that had been employed to criminalize the community of Ukrainian writers. The chapter provides evidence of the state's preconceived plans to marginalize and isolate the nationally conscious elite.

Chapter Eight offers an analysis of the ethnic composition of the arrested in 1935-36, and reveals multiple identities of Ukrainian writers, the residents of *Budynok Slovo*, who were ethnic Ukrainians, Russians and Jews. The discussion illuminates the full force of counter-Ukrainization and investigates the individual histories of faithful Communists whose use of Ukrainian as an everyday language became a problem for the state.

Chapter Nine discusses the writers' literary conformism and their psychological condition under state pressure. It closely examines the patterns of arrests during the Great Terror, and the secret police's priorities, objectives and the array of interrogation methods and fabrication tactics used against Ukrainian "nationalists." It accentuates specific procedural features of criminal files in 1937-38, and offers an overview of repression within the secret organs. It reflects on the general deterioration of the community in *Budynok Slovo* and the personal survival strategies of intellectuals under Stalin's regime.

To summarize, the proposition of this study is rather simple. Instead of examining the subjectivities and thoughts of the "masters" of death and of their victims, it offers an analysis of their deeds, actions and behavior. A single act and its motivations may be interpreted in dozens of possible ways. Repeated acts and persistence in exterminating people observed in one place within a decade allow us to see patterns. The repetition of events in *Budynok Slovo* suggests a political agenda rather than *ad hoc* repressive measures, and this particular factor offers us an interpretive aid and demonstrates the continuity of actions and motivations exhibited by the state.

In other words, this study suggests considering the intentionality of the state's actions toward the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the context of "spatial orientation and causal involvement," using J.E. Malpas's terminology. Malpas proposed understanding human actions as an engagement in activities that are dictated not only by certain understandings and perceptions of those people toward whom these actions are directed, but also by the objects and places in

which these people are situated.⁷¹ Precisely the persistence of spatial orientation and causal involvement exhibited by the state and the secret police reveals the intentionality of their actions. Accordingly, Ukrainian intellectuals had their distinct beliefs, desires and attitudes, which resulted in their spatial orientation and causal involvement in their surroundings, including cultural and political space. Moreover, they were an integral part of *Budynok Slovo*, a place that triggered certain associations among secret agents, and an environment that facilitated the process of mythmaking about its residents. The state attributed a separatist collective mentality to the *slov'iany* who were allegedly engaged in a nationalist conspiracy aimed at dethroning Soviet power in Ukraine. The identification of *Budynok Slovo* (a “nest of nationalists”) created by the secret police ultimately made all Ukrainian intelligentsia vulnerable. Their real or imaginary links to the place shaped the patterns of repressive policies and attitudes toward the intelligentsia. Interestingly, the state constructed an illusion of unity in a place of disunity and fragmentation, envisioned a plan that allegedly had been hatched in a space of irrationality and complete disorganization, and imagined strength in a space of collective weakness and confusion provoked by state violence.

Importantly, this study does not subscribe events in Ukraine to a monolithic state system but instead illuminates a number of key factors that played a central role in the tragedy of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the 1930s. Spatial factors prevail in an analysis of Soviet nationality policies and the center’s attitudes toward Ukrainian intellectuals that were closely linked to Ukraine, a place of “nationalism,” perceived as “the elevation of the interests

⁷¹ Malpas, 95-98, 136.

of the unity and self-determination of the nation to the status of the supreme value,” up to the point of political separatism.⁷²

Significantly, the study provides no grounds for considering the fate of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the context of the continuing discourse about “monolithic Stalinism.”⁷³ “Monolithicism” presumes homogeneity which is an unimaginable physical, social or political phenomenon. It is virtually impossible to encounter it in nature or in social settings. Juan J. Linz noted that “an image of an all-powerful leader [with monolithic powers] making all the decisions is empirically false,” although Stalin’s regime was a centralized system, in which decisions were made in a monocentric fashion.⁷⁴ From a philosophical perspective, the term “monolithicism” is also doubtful because an empirical analysis will not yield a single example, in which this definition would sufficiently describe or reflect the essence of tangible or non-tangible objects. Clearly, one can only talk about the relative homogeneity of a material or non-material object. Why is this notion still a centrepiece of any discussion on Stalinism?

The term “monolithic power or state” (which is relatively close to the term “binary opposition of the state and ordinary people”) seems to be an artificial creation that emerged in the process of debates between scholars of the totalitarian school and those of the revisionist school. To problematize the “perspective from above” that allegedly suggests the homogeneity of one

⁷² This definition of nationalism is borrowed from Isaiah Berlin’s essay “Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power” in Isaiah Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, eds. Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 587.

⁷³ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imaginations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 12. Yekelchuk identified a group of extant historical narratives on Stalinism as “the traditional narratives of monolithic Stalinism.”

⁷⁴ Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000), 97.

group—the state (or the homogeneity of power and its complete consolidation in one institution), social historians often employ these notions as semantic tools for argumentation, tools that neither clarify, nor strengthen their position. Importantly, both sides, rejecting the arguments of their opponents, employ similar tools that tend to obscure notions such as state violence, human behaviour and state actions. Graeme Gill aptly noted that “totalitarian” historians, rejecting the “perspective from below,” “are being unreasonable,” and “revisionist” historians, underestimating the rigid centralization of the Soviet state, “are being unrealistic.”⁷⁵

In the context of this study, the cooperation and collaboration of the populace with the regime, in this case—of Ukrainian intellectuals who to some extent helped perpetuate the status quo, reveals the limitations and inappropriateness of the notion of “monolithic power.” However, it should be emphasized that the leading figures who fought for power and who were chosen by Stalin and tolerated by him acted in a manner expected and required of them, and their behavioral unison led to mass killings for which they, together with their leader Stalin, bear full responsibility.⁷⁶

To be sure, a general discussion about these constructs—“binary opposition of the populace and the state in Soviet Ukraine,” and a “monolithic state”—should not obscure the overall historical picture and the aftermath of a concerted and massive attack on Ukrainian nationalism and Ukrainian cultural activists. The disintegration of the Ukrainian intellectual community in the thirties because of Stalin’s repression is not something that can be denied or

⁷⁵ Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

⁷⁶ On “monistic” nature of power, rather than “monolithic,” in totalitarian states, see Linz, 70, 96-97.

diminished, nor can the cultural disruption in contemporary Ukraine, a ramification of Stalin's terror in the UkrSSR in the 1930s.

One of the purposes of this study is to explain how this happened, and how the elimination of the most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals was organized, rationalized and politicized. No matter how one characterizes Stalin's power—"monolithic," "chaotic," or based on *ad hoc* measures—these definitions do not change the violent essence of Stalinism, do not reduce the number of its victims and do not mend the social and cultural fabric of contemporary Ukrainian society that suffers from what has been described as a post-genocidal syndrome.

Furthermore, as far as spatial histories are concerned, events are intertwined and interdependent with places, and certain events have their special locations that intrinsically represent the specificity of these events.⁷⁷ Similar to places that represent a larger geographical landscape, events are imbedded in a larger political, social and cultural historical context, and precisely from this "positional" (spatial) perspective, the interdependence and specificity of events and places have been analyzed in this narrative. The notions of time (events), space and place are akin to nested dolls that can be deconstructed and reconstructed, and their features, special characters and colors can be closely examined as elements of the whole.⁷⁸ The cultural space of *Budynok Slovo* and the mélange of individuals who were linked to this space and place became those elements necessary for a reconstruction of events that allows a close analysis of the history of repression of the

⁷⁷ On the spatiality of events, see Ulric Neisser, "Nested Structure in Autobiographical Memory," in *Autobiographical Memory*, ed. David C. Rubin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 73.

⁷⁸ For a discussion about the multifaceted nature of space and place, their interdependence and subordination, see also Malpas, 104-05.

intelligentsia in Ukraine in the 1930s.⁷⁹ A decade of terror wiped out fifty-nine residents of the House of Writers. Seven individuals miraculously survived the gulag.

Special attention is paid to the GPU/NKVD strategies in persecuting *slov'iany*, to an analysis of several agents' personalities who worked with the residents of *Budynok Slovo*, and to the role of the *slov'iany*'s families in rehabilitation processes in the 1950s, late 1980s and early 1990s. The history of *Budynok Slovo* reveals the gradual appropriation of the building by the punitive organs, and the aesthetic change of its environment.

The narrative is organized both thematically and chronologically. All terms and names are provided in Ukrainian in its English transliteration (according to the Library of Congress system), except the names of Russian geographic places and the last names of party and secret police officials, commonly used in scholarly literature. It is important to remember that “God is in the details,” as Flaubert (or Goethe) reportedly proclaimed, so let us pay attention to the details.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Thomas Carlyle believed that individual histories played a significant role in our understanding and reconstruction of the historical process. To Carlyle, history was “the essence of innumerable biographies.” For an interpretation of Carlyle’s writings, see Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 191.

⁸⁰ For the empirical significance of detailed representation, see Derek Gregory, “Edward Said’s Imaginative Geographies,” in Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, *Thinking Space* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 315-16, 319. The English idiom “The devil is in the details” derives from the earlier phrase “God is in the details,” which is more frequently attributed to Gustave Flaubert, and less frequently—to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Chapter One

From Culture to Politics: The House of Writers— Conceived, Lived, Perceived¹

Little imagination is needed to see space-time as potential tools of regimentation and discipline: The “right place” and “right time” function ideologically to keep order within society.

Raymie E. McKerrow²

Kharkiv of the 1920s—“The Capital of Arts”

As Moscow and Petrograd became artistic and literary meccas in Russia, Kharkiv became “the capital of arts” in Ukraine in the early 1920s.³ Hryhorii Kostiuk characterized the emergence of a vibrant Ukrainian intellectual community in Kharkiv as sudden and “unexpected.”⁴ The Ukrainization campaign generated an emotional and creative upheaval among the intelligentsia. The most active were Ellan Blakytnyi who became the editor of the government newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* (*The News of VUTsVK*), and Serhii Pylypenko, the editor of *Selians'ka hazeta* (*The Peasant News*), two faithful Bolsheviks.⁵ Many intellectuals, from Ukraine and from abroad,

¹ On the “conceptual triad” (representations of space—conceived, representational spaces—lived, and spatial practice—perceived) and the production of space, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 38-42.

² Raymie E. McKerrow, “Space and Time in the Postmodern Polity,” *Western Journal of Communication* 63, no. 3 (1999): 273. On the “right place” and “right time,” see P.M. Rosenau, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Transitions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 67-69.

³ Ihor Bondar-Tereshchenko, *U zadzerkalli 1910-30-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 386. In 1919, Kharkiv became *de facto* the capital of Ukraine and remained the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic until 1934. In late 1934-early 1935, the capital of the UkrSSR was moved to Kyiv.

⁴ Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:400.

⁵ George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 39. VUTsVK refers to *Vseukrains'kyi Tsentral'nyi Vykonavchyi Komitet* (All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee). **Vasyl' Ellan-Blakytnyi** (1894-1925) was a Ukrainian poet, journalist and one of the leaders of the Borot'bist party who advocated an independent Ukraine. When he joined the Bolshevik party, he became one of the most prominent Ukrainian party leaders in Ukraine; **Serhii Pylypenko** (1891-1934) was the founder and head of the literary association “Pluh,” the director of the Taras Shevchenko

enthusiastically supported Ukrainization, and moved to Kharkiv with new expectations and hopes. The future resident of the House of Writers Leonid Chernov wrote in 1925: “It became fashionable to speak Ukrainian in Kharkiv. And those who do not master the language look like white crows in our streets.”⁶

Cultural life in Kharkiv experienced a rapid awakening: dozens of Ukrainian literary associations and journals emerged and became popular among literary figures and ordinary Ukrainians. *Sliakhy mystetstva* (*The Paths of Art*), *Zhovten'* (*October*), *Chervonyi shliakh* (*The Red Path*), *Pluh* (*Plough*), *Hart* (*Tempering*) and others invited poets, writers, literary critics and historians to publish their works, and provided jobs for hundreds of people exhausted by hunger, and the hardships of civil war. In contrast to tsarist times, in the Kharkiv Pedagogical Institute of Professional Education (KhPIPO), formerly Kharkiv University—the first university in Ukraine, students could attend courses of lectures on Ukrainian history and the history of Ukrainian literature. Archival research in Kharkiv was rejuvenated and allowed scholars to recover forgotten names and the works of Ukrainian poets and prose writers who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century. Many in the Kyiv intelligentsia moved to Kharkiv, where they joined various literary organizations and found jobs in various literary journals and government newspapers.⁷

Scientific Research Institute, and also organizer and chief editor of the State Publishing House of Ukraine (DVU). A main contributor, organizer and enthusiastic supporter of literary and social activities, he was also a spiritual adviser, literary teacher and kind friend for many writers and poets.

⁶ Hryhorii Huseinov, “Iak na kolhospnomu poli...,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 29 December 2011, p. 4.

⁷ See accounts by Stepan Kryzhanivskyi, *My piznavaly nepovtornyi chas: Portrety, ece, spohady* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1986), and Kostyuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia*.

The state expected a significant contribution from intellectuals to the new society, one which was to transform an uneducated and illiterate population into a disciplined, educated and industrious society. A mass organization of proletarian literati would exemplify the idea of a new socialist collective, purified from individualistic, bourgeois, and therefore harmful influences, and thus would help administer and consolidate the social basis of the Soviet dictatorship. *Proletcult* became an attempt to create a mass Soviet literary movement employing the state scheme.⁸

In Kharkiv many literary and artistic associations emerged in the early 1920s. The most popular were the Soviet Ukrainian Peasant Writers' association "Pluh" (Plow) and "VAPLITE" (*Vil'na Akademia Proletars'koi Literatury*/the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature).

The tireless organizer of "Pluh" was Serhii Pylypenko who created a mass literary organization of peasant writers, an alternative to the dying *Proletcult*. Pylypenko was later accused by Mykola Khvyli'ovyi and other writers of lowering literary standards, allowing anyone "who showed the slightest interest in literature to join the organization."⁹ However, in hindsight, considering the number of truly talented writers who sharpened their literary skills in "Pluh," encouraged by the warm and welcoming atmosphere Pylypenko created, one can see the fruitfulness of the seed planted by his "cultural mission."

⁸ On *Proletcult*, and other unions and literary organizations in Russia, see V.L. Soskin, *Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia kul'tura (1917-1927): Ocherki sotsial'noi istorii*, ed. I.S. Kuznetsov (Novosibirsk, Russia: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, Izdatel'stvo SO RAN, 2004), 333-45, 347-58, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 156-64. On a history of *Proletcult*, see Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

⁹ Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmarska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004), 112.



“Pluh” in 1923. Serhii Pylypenko—seated second from the right.¹⁰

The goal of VAPLITE was to create a new Ukrainian literature, embracing the best achievements of Western European culture. Mykola Khvyi’ovyi became a driving force and an inspiration for this association.¹¹ However, identities and personal literary affinities were not fixed. People changed their memberships, searching for new ideals in art and literature, experimenting with new literary forms and genres. They wrote and painted, contributing to the Red Renaissance of Ukrainian culture, as contemporary literary critics described the phenomenon that occurred in Ukraine in the 1920s.¹²

A number of major Ukrainian cultural institutions were founded in Kharkiv in 1926, a period associated with the peak of the Soviet Ukrainization campaign. The Taras Shevchenko Scientific Research Institute of Literature

¹⁰ The photograph was published in *Pluzhanyn*, no. 8 (1927): 11.

¹¹ For details, see Luckyj, *Literary Politics*; Halyna Hryn “Executed Renaissance Paradigm Revisited,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 27, no. 1-4 (2004-2005), 67-96; L.I. Kavun “Literaturne ob’iednannia VAPLITE i khudozhnio-estetychne shukannia v ukrains’kii prozi 20-kh rokiv XX stolittia (Kyiv: 2007).

¹² A.M. Lejtes and M.F. Jasek, *Desiat’ Rokiv Ukrajins’koi Literatury (1917-1927)*, *Bio-Bibliohrafičnyj Charkiv. 1928* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1986), 1:432. See also Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 43.

was established in Kharkiv under the leadership of the Ukrainian historian Dmytro Bagalii.¹³ The Ellan-Blakytnyi House of Literature became a cultural center and a place for social gatherings for the intelligentsia, and major literary figures such as Vladimir Maiakovskii, Henri Barbusse, Maxim Gorky, Ianka Kupala visited this Ukrainian literary “Parnassus” to lecture.¹⁴ The State Ukrainian Drama Theatre “Berezil,” established in 1922 in Kyiv and led by the progressive Ukrainian director Les’ Kurbas, began its work in Kharkiv.¹⁵ The State Publishing House of Ukraine (DVU) published works by Ukrainian classic writers of the nineteenth century, contemporary Ukrainian writers, as well as translations of world classic prose and poetry into Ukrainian, including works by British, German, American, Polish, Russian and other authors.

Numerous Ukrainian literary associations attracted a constellation of talented Ukrainian youth who created their own journals, in which they expressed their beliefs concerning the path of Ukrainian culture. These beliefs varied, and often were diametrically opposed. Although the primary focus of Ukrainian literary organizations was literature and art, their activities were politicized through the party’s efforts. The focal point of the rivalry between, for instance, “Pluh” and “Hart” shifted toward ideological and political questions, concerning Soviet literary and cultural politics. Their debates and polemical clashes identified very different political views uttered by their most prominent members.¹⁶ “Pluh” followed Moscow’s prescriptions about the

¹³ Kostiuk, 1:395-99.

¹⁴ For details about the House, see Kostiuk, 1:267-68; *Pluzhanyin*, no. 2 (1927): 24.

¹⁵ For details about “Berezil” and Les’ Kurbas, see TsDAMLIMU, f.302, op.1, spr.3, ark.4-5; Nelli Korniienko, *Rezhysiorskoie iskusstvo Lesia Kurbasa. Rekonstruktsiia (1887-1937)* (Kiev: Gosudarstvennyi tsentr teatral’nogo iskusstva imeni Lesia Kurbas, 2005).

¹⁶ For details about the Literary Discussion of 1925-28, see Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992).

creation of all-Union proletarian art, and “Hart” advocated a path independent from Moscow for the development of Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian National-Communism.¹⁷ “Hart” rejected any cooperation with organizations that exhibited russophile tendencies, such as the All-Ukrainian Association of Proletarian Writers (VUAPP).¹⁸ “Pluh” was more agreeable and remained loyal to the VUAPP, emphasizing its democratic and all-inclusive nature. Its members had not limited their membership and affiliation to one organization, and cooperation with pro-Soviet organizations was encouraged. While “Hart” was establishing connections in the West (Canada, the United States, Europe and Western Ukraine), “Pluh” asserted its role as a trade union for Ukrainian writers.¹⁹

It has been argued by many scholars that the overall cultural atmosphere in Kharkiv in the 1920s was optimistic and promising despite the party’s attempts to condemn “nationalist” groups and despite rigorous debates among writers and bitter personal clashes over cultural and political issues. However, some authors caution against such a view of the turbulent twenties. During the 1920s, many writers in Ukraine had already buried their enthusiasm and hopes for the free development of Ukrainian culture. Although the first unified literary organization under full party control was founded only in the late 1920s, party censorship control was established through the formation of *Holovlit* in the early 1920s, the chief party censorship institution.²⁰ Preliminary repression of the creative intelligentsia in Ukraine

¹⁷ Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 54-55.

¹⁸ Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 55. The VUAPP was founded in 1924 by Russian writers who lived in Ukraine and was a pro-Muscovite literary organization, sponsored by Moscow.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ On the emergence and functions of cultural, literary, and other societies in Petrograd and Moscow in the early 1920s, see Stuart Finkel, *On the Ideological Front: The Russian*

had been implemented by the Bolsheviks after the Civil War when they extirpated politically suspicious bourgeois associations that were composed of literati, philosophers, artists and spiritual leaders. The fear of repression forced Ukrainian writers to self-censor their views. Increasing state pressure on intellectuals created the “foundation for [their] pessimism, alienation, [and] the deterioration of personality.”²¹ The disillusioned artists craved spatial isolation, trying to avoid the sensational cacophony of artistic and political debates.

Conceiving *Byt*: Collective Search for Solitude and Isolation

In the 1920s, the Soviet state rhetoric of collective socialist values and the importance of belonging to a collective club or professional association became quite popular. Various organizations, clubs and unions mushroomed in the Soviet Union, including Soviet Ukraine, although their emergence and registration were carefully monitored and supervised by the Soviets through the MEKOSO and the GPU.²² The GPU made sure that the ideological make-up of newly created associations coincided with Bolshevik ideals and understandings of what popular socialist culture should be.

Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 90, 98, 116. On *Holovlit* (*Glavlit* in Russian), see Michael S. Fox, “Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural Affairs, 1922-28,” *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 6 (1992): 1045-1068. *Holovlit* (*Holovne upravlinnia u spravakh literatury ta vydavnytstv*) is the acronym for the Main Administration of Affairs in Literature and Publishing Houses.

²¹ Solomiia Pavlychko, *Teoriia literatury* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomii Pavlychko “Osnovy,” 2009), 179.

²² DAKhO, f.R845, op.2, spr.813, ark.31-32zv. The MEKOSO (*Mezhvedomstvennaia kommissia po delam ob obshestvakh i soiuzakh*) refers to a commission that functioned in conjunction with the GPU/NKVD and registered newly organized associations, unions and groups, and was indispensable for preventing the emergence of counter-revolutionary organizations that could undermine the regime. The MEKOSO was founded in November 1922 by VUTsIK. For a discussion of GPU/NKVD commissions on registration, see Finkel, 112-14.

The creation of communes and clubs promoted by the state was designed to stimulate popular enthusiasm and the joyfulness so desperately needed during the first years of socialist construction, and was broadly propagandized and institutionalized by the state within each Soviet republic. In the Bolsheviks' view, individual identity was to be erased, and a new collective socialist identity should emerge, one associated with the progressive deep inner transformation of the individual who belonged to the club. Czeslaw Milosz emphasized the significance of professional clubs for the Soviets that existed in every Soviet enterprise, every factory and every school in the 1920s. Milosz's explanation of communal "joy" and individual transformation has transparently negative connotations:

People who attend a 'club' submit to a collective rhythm, and so come to feel that it is absurd to think differently from the collective. The collective is composed of units that doubt; but as these individuals pronounce the ritual phrases and sing the ritual songs, they created a collective aura to which they in turn surrender. Despite its apparent appeal to reason, the "club's" activity comes under the heading of collective magic. The rationalism of the doctrine is fused with sorcery, and the two strengthen each other. Free discussion is, of course, eliminated.²³

People moved by the collective values of the new socialist state, often initiated the creation of professional organizations themselves. If a popular civic organization was successful and recruited many followers, the members tried to find funds to build an elaborate infrastructure to support its functioning. Although many literary clubs focused on the material needs of writers and artists, and nourished the idea of building their own living quarters for intellectuals, the Kharkiv literary organization "Pluh" with its leaders Pylypenko, Vyshnia and others managed to realize this dream first. In 1930, they built a one-of-a-kind, exclusive home for Ukrainian intellectuals—the

²³ For the notion of "club" in a Communist society, see Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 197-99.

first apartment compound for writers and journalists in the Soviet Union (*Budynok Slovo*).

Because of collectivization and industrialization, the competition for working and living space in Kharkiv became fierce during the postwar era. By 1924, the housing fund in Kharkiv showed a decrease of 28 percent as compared with the prerevolutionary period.²⁴ During the postwar years, the population in Kharkiv increased from 155,000 to 409,000 people in 1927. According to Kharkiv statisticians' calculations, the average living space was 5.7 square meters per person which constituted approximately two-thirds of the sanitary norm.²⁵ Most people shared communal flats which were overpopulated beyond belief. Sheds, summer houses, cellars and attics were inhabited by several families.²⁶

Many of the writers and artists shared tiny rooms with their friends or strangers, suffering greatly during the first years of the revolution and in the early 1920s.²⁷ For instance, Iurii Smolych recalled that in the early 1920s, before he became a professional writer, he was an actor in the Ivan Franko Drama Theatre in Kharkiv and lived in a dormitory. His room which held his bed, a little table and a chair was three meters long and two meters wide. There were no windows that faced the yard, and above his door was a narrow transom open to the common corridor. In the past, this room served as a storage room for a cafeteria. Here Smolych wrote at night after rehearsals or

²⁴ Timothy Sosnovy, *The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1954), 41.

²⁵ DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.33, ark.93; Sosnovy, 47.

²⁶ Living conditions in Kharkiv were similar to those of Magnitogorsk described by Stephen Kotkin in "Shelter and Subjectivity in the Stalin period: a case study of Magnitogorsk," in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, ed. William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171-210.

²⁷ DAKhO, f.R845, op.8sch, spr.69, ark.86-86zv.

performances in the theatre.²⁸ Similarly, Mykhailo Bykovets' and Vasyl' Sokil lived in extremely poor conditions, sharing a tiny guard room in a secondary school.²⁹ Already famous by 1923, the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tychyna resided in a little room in the editorial headquarters of the newspaper *Visti*. The room was near the public toilet and previously served as a shower room. There was space only for a table and a chair. Tychyna slept atop a pile of old issues of *Visti* which he covered with a blanket. To prevent the resident rats and mice from devouring his manuscripts that were piled on the table, the inventive Tychyna placed the table's legs in condensed milk cans filled with water. These mini-moats guarded his work as the rodents regularly drowned trying in vain to climb to their supper. Before he received a large three-room apartment in *Budynok Slovo*, Tychyna had moved to a bigger room which was in fact a kitchen. The stove served as his table and the oven as his book case. For his manuscripts, he found a safer place: he stored them in a large metal pot for bleaching linen that was embedded in the wall over the stove.³⁰ In the middle of the 1920s, the Ukrainian writer Teren' Masenko and his wife shared an apartment with its owners. The Masenkos rented a room through which the owners of the apartment regularly marched. Before the Masenkos received apartment 59 in *Budynok Slovo*, they shared a four room apartment with three other writers, Pavlo Tychyna, Leib Kvitko and Ezra Fininberg, but in contrast to the previous shelter, they enjoyed a separate room and shared only a

²⁸ Iurii Smolych, *Ia vybyraiu literaturu: Knyha pro sebe* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1970), 286, 296-97.

²⁹ Sokil, 84.

³⁰ Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid' pro nespokii tryvaie: deshcho z dvadtsiatykh, trydtsiatykh rokiv i doteper v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1969), 2:274-75.

communal kitchen and bathroom.³¹ Oles' Dosvitnii lived with his family (four people, including two little children) and a goat in one room.³² The House of Writers as conceived by the writers was clearly an improvement of their living conditions.

Interestingly, in the mid-twenties, the communal lifestyle, so favored by the state in the early 1920s, was now criticized for fostering potential anti-Soviet conspiracies, "petit-bourgeois self-absorption, anti-social-mindedness, vulgar egalitarianism, egotism and Trotskyism," and, therefore, lost its attractiveness to the populace.³³ Housing co-operatives and private apartments were seen as a progressive step forward in Soviet state schemes for arranging people's *byt*.³⁴ Self-sufficient private apartments and domestic services within an apartment building, such as a laundry, a cafeteria and childcare, contributed to the popularity of the housing cooperative movement which, according to Victor Buchli, survived longer than other state approaches to organizing *byt*.³⁵ Despite the fact that housing cooperatives existed in various forms before and after the revolution, an official resolution "On Housing Cooperatives" was issued by the VTsIK only on 19 August 1924. This resolution launched the popular cooperative movement which reduced the socialist value of communal

³¹ Teren' Masenko, *Roman pam'iaty* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk, 1970), 72-74.

³² TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.194.

³³ Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (New York: Berg, Oxford International Publishers Ltd., 2000), 29.

³⁴ The term *byt* means "daily life," "domesticity," "lifestyle," or "way of life." On the notion of *byt*, see Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 29-40; Irina Gutkin, *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic, 1890-1934* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 81-84; Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 23-39, and Iurii Trifonov, *Kak slovo nashe otzovietsia...*, ed. A.P. Shytov (Moskva: "Sovetskaia Rossiia," 1985), 102-05.

³⁵ Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 30, 79; DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.1-2. The housing co-operative movement was abolished in 1937 by the 17 October Law on the Preservation of the Housing Fund and the Improvement of Housing Cities.

life.³⁶ A December 1924 VTsIK decree reiterated the advantages of a new housing politics, and proclaimed the expediency and even the necessity of private investments to increase the Soviet housing fund.³⁷ The expediency of housing cooperatives for the state was quite obvious: instead of financing a cooperative initiative with the state's or the party's funds, the construction of an apartment building and its maintenance were fully supported by the cooperative.³⁸ By 1 October 1925, there were 15 housing co-operatives in Kharkiv, and people began to move from communal apartments to their own apartments. In 1926, 45 apartment buildings were built, and 441 people received new apartments in the city. By 1 April 1927, 114 housing co-operatives were created, and Kharkiv turned into a massive construction site.³⁹

Leasing or buying properties or pre-existing office or apartment buildings from a city council was a common practice for a housing cooperative. Its members usually invested their own funds at the initial stage of the project (leasing, buying or constructing properties), and later had to pay monthly fees to sustain the everyday life of the co-operative. The routine responsibilities for the maintenance of the apartment building were distributed among the cooperative's members. Specialists were also hired (plumbers, carpenters) when professional knowledge was in demand.⁴⁰ These services were funded by members' monthly fees.

³⁶ Sosnovy, 22; M.G. Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry, opredeliushchiie soznaniie: Gosudarstvennaia zhylischnaia politika v SSSR. 1921-1941*, ed. Andreas Umland (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2005), 117. VTsIK refers to *Vserossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Iсполnitel'nyi Komitet* (All-Russian Central Executive Committee).

³⁷ Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry*, 38-39. Moreover, the materials of the 1st All-Union Congress of Housing Cooperation in Moscow (December, 1924-25) revealed that the members of the co-operative had a right to pass their apartments to their heirs. See also DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.1zv.

³⁸ DAKhO, f.P 5, op.1, spr.36, ark.90.

³⁹ DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.33, ark.67.

⁴⁰ Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 30-31; DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.11.

Recent studies on the Soviet housing cooperative movement showed that the state never provided the freedom promised to Soviet citizens who were members of housing cooperatives.⁴¹ Just the opposite, the absence of freedom was stipulated by multiple regulations that constrained people's slightest collective or individual initiatives. The members had to report to the All-Union Organization Bureau on Housing Cooperation about their administrative and financial decisions and obtain official "blessings" for construction repairs that were paid from the members' monthly shares, and for any residential movements and exchanges that were additionally supervised by the chief of the building (usually a GPU associate).⁴² The cooperative was required to join the Central Union of Housing Cooperatives and to pay state fees.⁴³ The class approach was decisive. State decisions and approvals were based on the ideological evaluation of petitioners, and often depended on their party membership and connections. In addition, according to state injunctions, co-operatives were to hire only state construction companies, and to limit their business with private ones.⁴⁴

Beginning in the early twenties, literary associations made attempts to organize *byt* for the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Kharkiv. The association "Pluh" took the first steps, and reserved about twenty apartments in an area called Kholodna Hora (Cold Hill), on 118 Sverdlov Street for the creative intelligentsia who wished to reside and work in Kharkiv cultural institutions.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See Myroslav Borysenko, *Zhytlo i pobut mis'koho naselennia Ukrainy u 20-30 rokakh XX stolittia* (Kyiv: "Stylos," 2009); Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry*; M.G. Meerovich, *Kak vlast' narod k trudu priuchala: Zhylishche v SSSR—sredstvo upravleniia liud'mi. 1917-1941 gg*, ed. Andreas Umland (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2005).

⁴² DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.18-9.

⁴³ DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.26.

⁴⁴ DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.34.

⁴⁵ In 1930, many writers moved from this building to the newly built *Budynok Slovo*. See Ihor Iona Shevchenko, "Naperedodni lykholittia," *Suchasnist'*, ch. 9 (353) (1990): 118.

Usually these apartments were shared by two or more young writers, and this commune represented an institution conceived and designed by the state to wholly socialize the *byt* of like-minded individuals.⁴⁶ Among those who lived in these apartments and shared them with their friends and homeless writers, were Andrii Holovko, Ivan Mykytenko, Volodymyr Sosiura, Iurii Ianovs'kyi, Natalia Zabyla, Sava Bozhko and Hryhorii Kostiuk.⁴⁷ Pylypenko, the head of “Pluh,” had a hand in helping the Ukrainian intelligentsia survive professionally and physically in Kharkiv.

At the peak of the mass cooperative movement, in February 1927, a group of Kharkiv writers created a cooperative association, “Slovo,” with the purpose of building a five-story apartment compound for the writers—*Budynok Slovo*.⁴⁸ In the meantime, they continued to seek alternative solutions to their deplorable living conditions.

In 1928, many state and party organizations were moved to the thirteen-story Derzhprom,⁴⁹ the first Kharkiv “skyscraper” erected in the constructivist style, thus freeing a huge state reserve of office buildings. The Central Committee (TsK) of the Ukrainian Communist party (KP(b)U) decided to allocate the space in 82 K. Libknekht Street that previously belonged to the Narkozem, to the Ukrainian Writers club. The club immediately occupied it with the intention of expanding its living residences for writers. However, the decision was reversed after complaints were made by the rector of the Kharkiv Agricultural Institute about the unbearable living

⁴⁶ Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 29.

⁴⁷ Kostiuk, 1:260.

⁴⁸ *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 2 (1927): 247; *Pluzhany*, no. 2 (1927):31.

⁴⁹ Derzhprom refers to *Budynok derzhavnoi promyslovosti*, the Home of State Industry. On Derzhprom, see DAKhO, f.R845, op.2, spr.493, ark.372,394zv.; DAKhO, f.R845, op.2, spr.493v, ark.482.

conditions of the institute's faculty.⁵⁰ Following Pavel Postyshev's (member of the Bureau of the Kharkiv Okruha Party Committee) order to provide all Communists with apartments first, the building was taken away from the writers. Those who were non-party members had limited opportunities to receive a room in Kharkiv.⁵¹

The construction of the House of Writers "Slovo" ("Word"), conceived by the housing cooperative "Slovo" as a home for the most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals, became a precursor to a new fashionable approach to solving *byt* problems for Soviet citizens. Importantly, the 21 November 1927 Law that provided more favorable terms to cooperatives and private builders stated that "for ten years from the date of completion, new structures were exempt from assessment and taxation."⁵² Greater benefits to private builders granted by the state encouraged the writers to pursue their dream to build an apartment compound. They were attracted by the idea of unlimited housing space per person that was allowed to cooperatives by the state. The writers enthusiastically endorsed the building project that was to be built out of their personal savings.⁵³ Four years later, the 16 May 1930 directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party "On Work in Reorganizing Daily Life" rejected the communal *byt* scheme. Ideas concerning individual consumer choice and pluralism began to dominate the state discourse about *byt* in 1931.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.36, ark.40-40zv.

⁵¹ DAKhO, f.P 5, op.1, spr.36, ark.50.

⁵² Sosnovy, 48.

⁵³ Sosnovy, 48; Meerovich, *Kvadratnyie metry*, 38, 155. In the middle of the 1920s, in the Soviet Union the living space norm was 8.5 square meters per person. To stimulate the housing cooperative movement, the state increased this norm by 2 to 5 square meters per person. Some housing co-operatives were allowed to build with the understanding that living space per person would be unlimited.

⁵⁴ Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 64-66.

According to memoirs and personal correspondence, the idea of building a home for writers germinated among a group of writers in Kharkiv in late 1926, but the “prime mover” of the project was Pylypenko.⁵⁵ At this point in time, it is uncertain whether the idea to build a home exclusively for writers was initiated purposefully by some GPU official in a friendly conversation with his party colleague Pylypenko, or whether Pylypenko received an official blessing from the local authorities to launch the building project after he proposed a plan to the TsK KP(b)U to improve living conditions of the Ukrainian cultural elite.⁵⁶ Whatever the case may be, the beginning of the construction of the apartment building “Slovo” (*Budynok Slovo*) in 1927 coincided with the peak of the Ukrainization campaign, when the development of national culture was seemingly encouraged and promoted. “Slovo” became the first cooperative building not only in the republic but in the entire Soviet Union, a building belonging to a civic organization and specifically erected as a home for Ukrainian intellectuals.⁵⁷ A similar building was later reproduced in Kyiv, the famous “Rolit,” the residential apartment building for the Kyiv intelligentsia, although it was built using state funds.

Conceived by the Ukrainian writers, *Budynok Slovo* was designed to accommodate their bodies and improve their spirits, which had been distressed by the struggle with each other and the state. Conceptually and practically, the intelligentsia was to provide an example of the new daily life of Soviet people. The state very soon realized that private apartments, like communal flats,

⁵⁵ Pasicznyk, 143.

⁵⁶ Pylypenko was a party member and occupied leading positions in major Ukrainian cultural institutions. An important public figure, he had regular interactions with party officials in Ukraine and the GPU.

⁵⁷ See Stepan Kryzhanivskyi, “Shcho sam bachyv i chuv,” in *Pro Ostapa Vyshniui: Spohady*, ed. V.O. Hubenko-Masliuchenko and A.F. Zhuravskyi (Kyiv: Radianskyi pys'mennyk, 1989), 221-22.

might cultivate individual and group conspiracies and transgressions, and, thus, these sites required full supervision and surveillance. State interest in writers' bodies and their comfort was minimal in contrast to state interest in writers' minds and souls.⁵⁸ The desire of Ukrainian writers to create a new national culture strengthened the party's distrust of them. In the state's view, the national ferment among them proved to be so powerful that it could not be simply exorcized or banished by invoking the sacred ideals of the revolution or mitigated by concessions and incentives granted in the form of privacy and expanded personal space. From the state perspective, their souls were corrupt because they had been exposed for a decade to harmful nationalist deviationist thinking (*perehyby*; *perekruchennia*) that were produced by Ukrainization. This perception conditioned the Soviet police's fixation on *Budynok Slovo* which will be examined in later chapters.

Building *Budynok Slovo*: Organizational Difficulties

In late 1926, the cooperative "Slovo" raised funds from its members' personal savings⁵⁹ and ordered the design and drawings of their future home from the Kharkiv architect Mytrofan Dashkevych. Dashkevych was selected because of his innovative reputation. He was fond of mixing modern styles and neo-baroque motifs.⁶⁰ The original drawings of *Budynok Slovo* conceptually combined the two architectural styles of modernism and

⁵⁸ Cristina Vatulessu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 54.

⁵⁹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.17.

⁶⁰ For more details on Dashkevych, see A.V. Kudryts'kyi, ed., *Mytsi Ukrainy: entsyklopedychnyi dovidnyk* (Kyiv: Ukrains'ka entsyklopediia im. M.P. Bazhana, 1992), 204. **Mykhailo (Mytrofan) Daskevych** (1863-1930) was a Ukrainian engineer and architect who before the 1917 revolution owned a private construction business. During Soviet times, he worked in the architectural firm "Okrinzh," which also carried out functions of the Main Architectural Administration in Kharkiv.

constructivism.⁶¹ Dashkevych's architectural project was simple, progressive and bold because the building was designed according to the highest contemporary standards of comfort, and had amenities that were rare for the late twenties: facilities for leisure, a cafeteria, baths, a solarium, a kindergarten and other service rooms that were non-existent in other communal living quarters. Dashkevych considered the writers' wishes and even went beyond their expectations.

Originally, the cooperative "Slovo" asked Dashkevych to design a fifty apartment compound. Each apartment was supposed to have three or four rooms. The estimated cost of this project was approximately 570,000 *karbovantsi*.⁶² However, more than fifty writers applied to be residents in the future compound, and it became clear that the cooperative faced a dilemma: the administration of the cooperative would need to exclude some members from the list of potential shareholders or seek additional funds to finance a larger project in order to satisfy the needs of all those who applied.⁶³

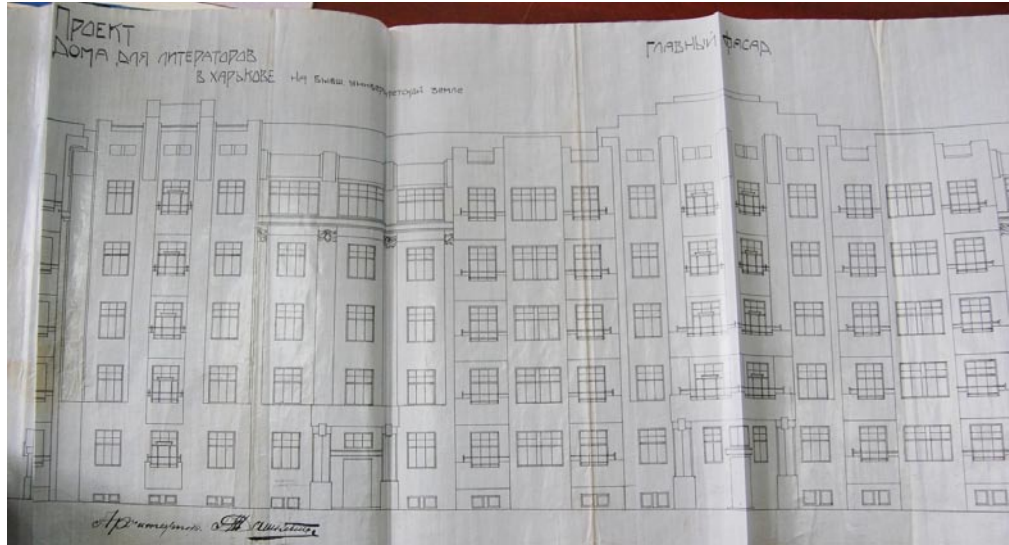
The cooperative decided to reconsider the original plan. The new architectural project had 66 private apartments, excluding space for communal services. In June-July 1927, the literary magazine *Hart* noted that in order to complete the project, the cooperative "Slovo" needed nearly 800,000 *karbovantsi*. Through the assistance of the Kharkiv Orgvykonkom, the

⁶¹ I.M. Shkodovskii et al., eds., *Khar'kov: vchera, segodnia, zavtra* (Khar'kov: Folio, 2002), 130.

⁶² Karbovanets' (singular) or karbovantsi (plural) was the basic unit of Soviet Ukrainian currency established after the 1924 Soviet currency reform. This currency was in use in Ukraine until 1996.

⁶³ *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 2 (1927): 247; *Pluzhanyn*, no. 2 (1927): 31.

cooperative received 150,000 *karbovantsi* from Ukrzhytlospilka and Tsekombank.⁶⁴ The Okruha Aid Committee also provided 50,000 *karbovantsi*



Dashkevych's drawings of *Budynok Slovo*.⁶⁵

but the project required regular, not sporadic investments, and the Okrvykonkom had to ask the Central Committee for help.⁶⁶ Because of the financial strain for each writer, and because it would take several years to complete the project, the administration of the cooperative may have used their party connections and asked the local party branch and the Okrvykonkom for individual support for the writers. Ultimately, the Okrvykonkom made a decision to support the Ukrainian writers with individual grants of 3,000 *karbovantsi* in total, and the Komunhosp administration agreed to allocate 45

⁶⁴ Okrvykonkom refers to *Okruzhnyi Vykonavchyi Komitet* (District Executive Committee)—a Soviet state institution responsible for Soviet power in the localities. Ukrzhytlospilka stands for *Ukrains'ka zhytlova spilka* (Ukrainian Residence Association), a state institution that supervised the residential fund in large cities, including the activities of cooperatives.

⁶⁵ TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7.

⁶⁶ *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 7-8 (1927).

apartments in newly built compounds for those writers who were not members of the cooperative “Slovo” which alleviated the writers’ hardships.⁶⁷

The logistics of the writers’ financial odyssey are not completely clear but the budget of 840,000 *karbovantsi* was approved by the All-Union Organization Bureau on Housing Cooperation and the Komunhosp, and on 8 August 1927 the state construction firm “Ukrpaistroi” began to create a working plan for *Budynok Slovo*.⁶⁸ On 10 September 1927, the cooperative “Slovo” signed an agreement with the Komunhosp, according to which the Komunhosp became a sub-contractor and was responsible for the legal and technical organization of the construction process.⁶⁹ This document described the building as a five-and-a-half story building, explaining that in its right wing, there would be two additional apartments below ground level.⁷⁰ It also specified that the conditions and the technical specifications for the building provided by the cooperative “Slovo” would be observed. According to this document, the cooperative remained in full control of the project and was to supervise any activities at the construction site, as well as to perform regular inspections of the quantity and quality of materials and services delivered by the Komunhosp.⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Hart*, no. 2-3 (1927):151. Komunhosp refers to *Kommunal'ne hospodarstvo* (Communal Utilities Administration), a state office that was responsible for residential utilities service in the cities.

⁶⁸ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.17zv. “Ukrpaistroi” was the name of the state construction firm, the All-Ukrainian Shareholding Construction Association.

⁶⁹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.17-18,21.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* The chapter will further clarify the meaning and the purpose of these two apartments.

⁷¹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.17zv. See also Milka Bliznakov, “Soviet Housing During the experimental years, 1918-1933,” in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, ed. William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble (New York; Cambridge University Press, 1993), 137. During the NEP period, it was a common practice for cooperatives to select their architect, and to be actively involved in the design and construction process.

Yet surprisingly, paragraph no. 12 of the document mentioned above denied the cooperative “Slovo” the right to be the sole supervisor and advisor of the project that was discussed in earlier paragraphs. It specified that the Komunhosp was ultimately subservient only to central and local authorities that might intercede in the project, and was to report on the quality of the service first of all to the Main District Engineer.⁷² As Timothy Sosnovy demonstrated in his pioneering study about the housing problem in the Soviet Union, the existence of the cooperative movement was inconceivable outside of state control.⁷³

Moreover, it is intriguing that the construction was handled by the All-Ukrainian Shareholding Construction Association “Ukrpaistroi” which was created and functioned under the NKVD umbrella. In the 1920s, there were a great number of construction companies in Kharkiv, state and private, but for some reason the “Ukrpaistroi” was assigned to build the apartment compound. Whether it was decided by the cooperative “Slovo,” the city authorities, the bank administration that loaned the initial funds for the project, or the Komunhosp remains unknown. Rumors about the GPU embedding special surveillance equipment (including special wiretapping and telephone circuits) within the walls of the building have been circulating for decades among writers. An expert evaluation of the building codes, of the materials that had been used during construction, and of the somewhat unusual architectural features has never been performed. Nevertheless, the fact that “Ukrpaistroi” was nursed at the bosom of the secret police raises doubts about the randomness and the accidental nature of such a choice.

⁷² DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.19.

⁷³ Sosnovy, 27.



News about the beginning of the construction in the newspaper *Visti VUTsVK*, 29 September 1927.

At the construction site, human labor was employed extensively.

Mechanized labor was almost non-existent. The foundation pit for the building which was 3 meters deep, 5 meters in some parts such as the area of the boiler room, was dug by hand. Heavy beams were carried to the required location and set in place by several people.⁷⁴

The technical description of construction work reveals that the characteristics of the building differed from those of a typical building: engineering specifications promised high quality materials and work which was ordered by the cooperative. The external walls had to be two to three bricks wide, and masons were advised to use a reliable “complex cement mixture 1:2:3” for the brick work and “1:4:6 for the concrete floors,” in which the proportion of cement should have been higher than that of sand.⁷⁵ The writers insisted that for the foundation only high quality bricks produced locally were to be used. Each delivery of bricks was to be examined by the

⁷⁴ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.1a, 3.

⁷⁵ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.2-3, 23-23zv.

cooperative, and only after inspection were the bricks ready for use.⁷⁶ The best quality cement was also requested—the writers called it “Portland cement.”⁷⁷ The final touch of the façade walls was a thick layer of plaster, decorated by a “crumbs” technique.⁷⁸ The floors in all entrances (*pid’izdy*) throughout the building were tiled: the tile, as well as the installation, was expensive which consumed a great deal of human and financial resources. The stairs on the first floor of all five entrances were embellished with a decorative mosaic tile which created a grandiose look and astonished visitors.⁷⁹ The writers were even concerned with things such as alabaster, glue, paint and the like.⁸⁰

The interior was no less extravagant than the exterior and public spaces in the building. The apartment floors had oak parquet, and carpentry work was of excellent quality. Kitchen cabinets, external, internal and pantry doors, and window frames and windowsills were made of fine quality pine.⁸¹ Only dry wood was employed; defective and deformed wooden details were not accepted in the construction.⁸² In the kitchens, pig-iron fireplaces were installed which could burn coal. They functioned as heaters and also as cooking stoves.⁸³ The kitchen and the bathroom were provided with both cold and hot water which was a rare feature in the 1920s.⁸⁴ A bathtub and shower that were installed in each bathroom by the contractor were considered a luxury.⁸⁵ The bathroom walls and floors were decorated with the best quality

⁷⁶ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.23.

⁷⁷ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.23zv.

⁷⁸ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.10.

⁷⁹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.5.

⁸⁰ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.28-28zv.

⁸¹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.8, 26-26zv.

⁸² DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.27.

⁸³ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.10.

⁸⁴ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.30.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

tile available at the time.⁸⁶ The apartment walls were painted in pastel colors with decorative neutral images (*al'freina robota*) which created a cozy comfortable environment within the apartments.⁸⁷ The door handles were made of stainless steel with a polished finish, and the locks were of high quality.⁸⁸

Many accounts state that the writers themselves, and the administration of the writers' cooperative "Slovo" in particular, were in charge of this construction and totally responsible for its outcome. They carefully planned organizational and financial matters, and involved various organizations in the republic and outside Ukraine as well to complete the construction of the apartment building. Writers Ostap Vyshnia was appointed head of the cooperative "Slovo," Serhii Pylypenko--Vyshnia's chief assistant, and Anatolii Richyts'kyi and Arkadii Liubchenko became the most active members of the cooperative administration.⁸⁹ The responsibilities regarding the project were equally distributed among its members. They had to deal with issues about the equipment for the construction site, including construction materials which were ordered not only from Kharkiv factories but also from outside the Ukrainian republic. This certainly required additional investments and individual commitment to the project.

In a letter to his brother, Ukrainian writer Arkadii Liubchenko wrote that in early October 1929 after he returned to Kharkiv from his vacation in the Crimea, he urgently had to go to the Gomel' mechanical factory (today in Belarus), where he had an assignment as a member of the "Slovo" cooperative

⁸⁶ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.25.

⁸⁷ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.12.

⁸⁸ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.27zv.

⁸⁹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.17.

administration to expedite the construction of the furnace (*kotiol*) for *Budynok Slovo*. Winter was coming, and the *slov'iany* looked forward to moving to their new apartments. The furnace had to be installed as soon as possible before the first frost, and Liubchenko lamented that going to Gomel' was both a great responsibility and troublesome.⁹⁰

Originally, the members of the cooperative "Slovo" expected to move to their new apartments on 15 November 1928. The Komunhosp and the "Ukrpaistroi" believed that it would take about a year to complete the construction of *Budynok Slovo*. However, it proved to be a longer process. There were several reasons for this.

First, communication between the cooperative "Slovo" and the contractor was difficult. For instance, in early November 1927 a disagreement about the structural strength of the future building emerged among the cooperative, the Komunhosp and the "Ukrpaistroi."⁹¹ Richyts'kyi and Liubchenko protested the decision of the Komunhosp which clearly violated the detailed preliminary agreement about materials and terms of the construction.⁹²

Second, constant difficulties in raising funds for the project prevented the cooperative from making regular payments to the Komunhosp and the "Ukrpaistroi" to sustain uninterrupted work at the construction site. In late November 1928, the "Slovo" informed the "Ukrpaistroi" that the cooperative had only 106,000 *karbovantsi* remaining: to finish the project, the "Slovo" had to raise an additional 300,000 *karbovantsi*.

⁹⁰ Vsevolod Liubchenko's afterword in Arkadii Liubchenko, *Vertep (Povist')*. *Opovidannia. Shchodennyk* (Kharkiv: "Osnova," 2005), 448.

⁹¹ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.34-37zv.

⁹² DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.39,40,57,59,60.

By January 1929, the cooperative faced unpleasant news: the writers' funds proved to be insufficient to complete the project. The cooperative also failed to receive state and bank relief aid. The process became costly and time-consuming, and a burden for every member of the cooperative. Their dreams of having their own spacious and technologically innovative apartments were crushed after 1.5 years of hope and hard work.

Financial problems persisted, and the construction of the building was halted. In late January 1929, a Ukrainian delegation, consisting of the most prominent Ukrainian writers, went to Moscow for "The Week of Ukrainian Literature."⁹³ During this week at a meeting in the Agitprom of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), party leaders, Ukrainian and Russian writers discussed ways to strengthen ties between Ukrainian and Russian literature. According to Vyshnia who attended this meeting, suddenly in the middle of it, Stalin entered through the side doors and sat down at the table. He was silent, and from time to time walked behind the table smoking his pipe. Vyshnia recalled that a thought crossed his mind: where else should I ask for money for the completion of *Budynok Slovo* if not from the government?⁹⁴

He wrote and passed a note to Stalin and watched him reading it. When Stalin finished reading the note, he affirmatively moved his hand with the pipe. After the meeting, Vyshnia returned to the hotel "Astoriia" to rest. An abrupt knock at the door interrupted Vyshnia's relaxation. Opening the door, Vyshnia found a man with a large valise carrying a revolver in his belt who said: "Are you Ostap Vyshnia?" "Yes," Vyshnia replied. "I was ordered to

⁹³ *Literatura i mystetstvo*, no. 6, February 9, 1929; L. Maximenkov, "Stalin's Meeting with a Delegation of Ukrainian Writers on February 12, 1929," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* XVI, no. 3-4 (1992): 361-69.

⁹⁴ Kryzhanivs'kyi in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs'kyi, 222.

convey the money to you,” said the stranger. “What money?” asked Vyshnia. “What you were asking for,” said the stranger, shaking the contents of the bag onto the table. In a moment, there were stacks of bills in front of him.⁹⁵

Later, Vyshnia remembered that the most striking fact was that the courier never asked him to count the money or to sign any receipts. It was a challenge to bring this cash to Kharkiv from Moscow safely, but the sheer number of Ukrainian writers who occupied almost the entire car on the train to Kharkiv secured the safe delivery of the cash to the treasury of the cooperative “Slovo.” These funds were sufficient to complete the construction of the Writers’ Home, and Vyshnia alone bore full responsibility for courageously approaching Stalin at the conference with a request for additional sums to finance the project.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, we cannot totally exclude the possibility of some initial state financial or ideological support for the project. Neither should we abandon the thought that the original idea for the creation of living quarters for the Ukrainian intelligentsia might have been born in the Soviet secret organs and was transmitted to the top leaders of literary circles in Kharkiv. This circumstance would fundamentally and philosophically alter our perception about the intentions of the state to deal with Ukrainian intellectuals whose behavior could be easily observed in one place, intentions that might have been at the root of transforming *Budynok Slovo* into one of the most agonizing sites in Kharkiv in the early 1930s.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Kryzhanivs’kyi in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs’kyi, 222-23. Such cash transactions were normal during Stalin’s reign. Individuals received cash from “the master” hand-to-hand, without signing any receipts or documents. See Vitalii Shentalinskii, *Raby svobody: v literaturnykh arkhivakh KGB* (Moskva: Parus, 1995), 340-41.



On 25 December 1929, the newspaper *Visti VUTSVK* announced the completion of *Budynok Slovo*.

It took the cooperative nearly two-and-one-half years to complete the project. In late December 1929, the first writers moved to the building to celebrate the New Year of 1930.⁹⁷ The idea of privacy and potential personal property that could be inherited by their children overwhelmed the writers with joy and pride. According to Tatiana Kardinalowska, it was planned that “each shareholder was to make annual payments for his apartment for some fifteen years, after which it would become his private property,” a presumption that appears today most unlikely if not impossible in an atmosphere of the total negation of private property as a manifestation of bourgeois decadence.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *Visti VUTSVK*, 25 December 1929; Sokil, 84.

⁹⁸ Pasicznyk, 143. On different forms of collective/communal housing, and specifically, on housing cooperation and the state's desire to be the sole possessor of housing property, see Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry*, 124-53. See also Meerovich, *Kak vlast'*, 21-22. The first decree that transferred all private property to the state was the decree “About cancelling property rights for city residences” which was issued on 20 August 1918 by the Sovnarkom. The second decree “About prohibiting any property transactions” (14 December 1917) made it impossible for people to sell or buy their property which reinforced the strength of the 20 August 1918 degree.

Slov'iany and the Communal 1930

The euphoria of 1930 that accompanied the move by residents into their new home was followed by new hopes for a better life which would be marked by new literary achievements, and the improvement of their financial status. The epoch of minimalism and modesty in private life began to fade away, and proletarian writers and artists felt entitled to some financial comfort for all their suffering during the First World War, the revolution, the Civil War and the first Soviet years of material deprivation and hunger.⁹⁹

The distribution of elite apartments had little to do with the socialist principles of equality. When the construction of the apartment building was completed, only those who conceived the project and took an active part in its completion had the right to choose their own apartment. Among them were Pylypenko and several active members of the cooperative's administration. Other members had to participate in a lottery, and to change their apartment later was problematic.¹⁰⁰ The first choice for the members of the administration, most of whom were members of the Communist party, followed the hierarchical party principle that was formed by the end of the 1920s and practiced among the highest echelons of party leaders.

Another confirmation of a rather commercial and anti-socialist approach in arranging the financing of living quarters for Ukrainian writers came from the memoirs of Natalka Dukyna and Vasyl' Sokil. The cooperative established rather high fees for the apartments, and monthly payments became

⁹⁹ Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 44. People craved privacy, and as Smith noted, "under Stalin as much as under Khrushchev, people wanted separate living quarters."

¹⁰⁰ Pasiecznyk, 143; Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers' Home 'Slovo:' Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: "Homin Ukrainy," 1966), 11.

unaffordable for most writers' families. Although high honorariums for the work of writers provoked the envy of many ordinary workers, they were insufficient to support a family and to pay the cooperative's fees. Dukyn noted that before they received spacious three-room apartment no. 57 in *Budynok Slovo*, her father worked in the cooperative, the Publishing Association "Pluzhanyn" and the journal *Pluh*, and that he with his wife and their small Natalka had to share apartment no. 14 in *Budynok Slovo* with Mykhailo Bykovets', Vasyl' Sokil and Esphir' Cherniak. To afford the fees for private apartment no.57, Dukyn had to give up his own creative work, and began to translate different authors into Ukrainian, an activity that brought a quick income into their family. Natalka's mother was a school teacher, and to help her husband pay fees, she worked two shifts at school which consumed all her time.¹⁰¹ In his memoirs, Sokil also confirmed that he and Bykovets' had to share apartment no. 14 to manage the burden of the communal fees together.¹⁰²

By 1930 many of those who moved to *Budynok Slovo* occupied two or three, and in Pylypenko's case, even four or five positions at once, working as editors of literary journals or newspapers, directors of Ukrainian publishing houses, directors of cultural institutions, and heads and managers of literary organizations and associations. For instance, Serhii Pylypenko had multiple commitments and responsibilities. He was the founder and manager of "Pluh," the chief editor of the newspaper *Selians'ka Pravda* (*Peasant Truth*), the executive director of the Taras Shevchenko Scientific Research Institute, the

¹⁰¹ Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vydannia zhurnalu "Berezil'," 2002), 68, 74.

¹⁰² Vasyl' Sokil, *Zdaleka do blyz'koho (spohady, rozdumy)* (Edmonton: Kanads'kyi instytut ukrains'kykh studii, Al'berts'kyi universytet, 1987), 84.

chief editor of the State Publishing House of Ukraine, the secretary of the Federation of Soviet Writers of Ukraine, chairman of the editorial board of the scholarly journal *Literaturnyi Arkhiv* (*Literary Archive*), and this was not the full list of his responsibilities.¹⁰³ Ostap Vyshnia worked as a secretary for the newspaper *Selians'ka Pravda*, and had a job as a journalist for the newspaper *Visti* (*News*).¹⁰⁴ Andrii Paniv was an executive secretary of the journal *Sil's'ko-Hospodars'kyi Proletar* (*Agricultural Proletarian*) and a secretary for the Central Committee in “Pluh.”¹⁰⁵ However, to cover the cooperative fees was a challenge for many families.

The original list of *Budynok Slovo*'s residents.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Pasicznyk, 105, 111-12, 114.

¹⁰⁴ Mariia Gubenko-Kuiukova, "Z liubov'iu..." in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs'kyi, 123.

¹⁰⁵ Lejtes and Jasek, 1:356.

Because *Budynok Slovo* was a product of the cooperative movement, the cooperative could not benefit from state subsidies of any kind. Understanding writers' financial difficulties, the cooperative's administration did not mind the communal scheme under which several families shared apartments in the building, as long as the residents paid their cooperative fees. At the same time, the administration neglected their responsibilities to report to the administrator of the building (*kerbud*) about the composition of the residents of the apartments, which frequently changed. Similarly, the residents never officially reported to the administration about their rental activities because most of their renters were not members of the cooperative. The secret police soon became aware of the cooperative's degree of autonomy, a factor that played an ominous role in its members' lives.

In 1930, although living in the apparent privacy of their apartments, many residents nevertheless lived in a big dormitory, and were involved in common activities connected with their profession and everyday life. This prevented their isolation or estrangement, or at least made it difficult to maintain. Greeting and talking to their neighbors several times a day, the *slov'iany* knew everyone's daily schedule, and generally were aware of local rumors, family scandals and the slightest changes in the private lives of all residents. Mark B. Smith posited that "demands of economy and cultural norms alike made domestic privacy a problematic concept and an uncertain reality: even the separate home was a relatively open space, with rooms having multiple functions, usually occupied by more than one family member,

and with substantial interaction between neighbors within the block.”¹⁰⁷ The *slov’iany* still represented a community of writers rather than separate individuals.

The cult of community promoted by the new socialist state in the 1920s pushed people toward each other, abolishing the notion of private space as a bourgeois vestige of the past. Life in a community that shared mutual professional interests helped the Ukrainian intelligentsia to cope with the arrhythmia and chaos of socialist construction, and uncertainties in human lives. However, as Czeslaw Milosz argued, “this cult of the community produce[d] something which poison[ed] the community itself.”¹⁰⁸ Exhausted by literary debates and personal clashes, and craving privacy, the Ukrainian writers continued to exist in a “literary ghetto,” and, as we will see in later chapters, their collective home became nothing more than a *Panopticon* for the state that was carefully scrutinized.¹⁰⁹

However, one should not get the impression that the residents of the building were martyrs, especially in the beginning of their communal life. The members of the cooperative had hobbies and shared common interests beyond literature. Some of them were fashion mavens, and many of them were hunters and experts in guns, hunting ammunition and dogs. Some *slov’iany* developed

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Property of Communists*, 45.

¹⁰⁸ See Milosz, 76. This idea was reiterated many times, including Mikhail Bulgakov’s famous framing through Woland, a character in *Master and Margarita*: “the housing shortage [zhylshchnyi vopros] has soured them [the people]...” See Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. Michael Glenny (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992), 147.

¹⁰⁹ For the notion of “literary ghetto,” see Milosz, 109. Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the *Panopticon* was rediscovered and illuminated by Michel Foucault, and echoed in James C. Scott’s discussion about the transparency of a society the state strives for to facilitate its regimentation. See the conversation between Michel Foucault, Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot, “The Eye of Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). For a discussion about the relationship between the state and society, and the legibility of society for the state, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

pernicious habits—smoking and drinking beyond moderation, and parties in *Budynok Slovo* often disturbed writers' wives.¹¹⁰

Importantly, the majority of male and female cultural figures who received apartments in *Budynok Slovo* were mature individuals, and accomplished actors and prolific authors. They were born in the last two decades of the 19th century, and by 1930, were in their late thirties and forties. They had survived the cataclysms of the first twenty years of a new century. Many were married, and their life experiences facilitated and assisted the blossoming of their talents. Despite the intense politicization and *partyization* of Ukrainian cultural circles in the 1920s, many writers and artists lived on the edge of the permissible, consciously balancing between being loyal Communists and romantic adventurers. They succumbed to the new Communist aesthetics neither at once, nor unanimously.

Regarding their educational background, the *slov'iany* did not constitute a homogenous community. They came from families whose social status varied, and received different educations. Most of them came from families of workers or peasants, some—from the intelligentsia. Some did not complete their higher education because of the civil war and the political turbulence of the first years of Soviet power in Ukraine. Others had received their higher education in institutions such as the Institute of People's Education in various Ukrainian cities, Kyiv Commercial Institute, Kharkiv Ukrainian Institute of Marxism, Kharkiv Agricultural Institute, Kharkiv Polytechnical Institute, Pedagogical Institutes in Kharkiv and Poltava, the Historical and Philological Institute in Nizhyn and elsewhere.

¹¹⁰ Oleksandr and Leonid Ushkalovy, eds., *Arkhiv rozstrilianoho vidrozhennia: materialy arkhivno-slidchykh sprav pys'mennykh 1920-30 rokiv* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 137.

Some writers held medical and natural science degrees. For instance, Ivan Mykytenko graduated from Kharkiv Medical Institute and the futurist Mykhailo Semenko studied in Leningrad's psycho-neurological institute.¹¹¹ Pavlo Hubenko (whose literary pseudonym was Ostap Vyshnia) received his nursing degree in the Kyiv military school.¹¹² Mykhailo Dolengo graduated from the botanical department of Kharkiv University, although he continued his education there as a graduate student first at the botanical department in 1922-26, and later at the philological department in 1926-30.¹¹³ For these "engineers of human souls" this scientific experience became beneficial in their mature writings.¹¹⁴ Some were self-educated, including Mykola Kulish, Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, and Iurii Smolych. The majority made their living as teachers, and during the 1920s, they obtained various positions in Kharkiv journals and magazines.

However, the writer Antin Dykyi was ignorant and uneducated, according to several accounts. He received no higher education, and did not seem to be interested in one. He learned grammar in a village church school, and had trouble expressing his thoughts on paper.¹¹⁵ Paradoxically, he was a marvelous story-teller, had a sharp sense of humor, and was entertaining in any company.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Lejtes and Jasek, 1:316, 431.

¹¹² See his siblings' memoirs, Kateryna Datsenko, "V roky dytiachi ta iunats'ki" and Kost' Hubenko, "Pro brata" in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs'kyi, 70-80.

¹¹³ "Antolohiia *Vitchyzny*: Mykhailo Dolengo (1896-1981)," *Vitchyzna* no. 3-4 (2004).

¹¹⁴ Routinely, this expression, *inzhenery chelovecheskikh dush*, is attributed to Stalin, an expression that he used at the meeting with Soviet writers at Maxim Gorky's home on October 26, 1932. However, these words belonged to I.K. Olesha, and Stalin occasionally acknowledged Olesha's authorship.

¹¹⁵ Smolych, 1:190.

¹¹⁶ On Dykyi, see Savva Holovaniv's'kyi, "Velikii odessit," available at <http://bibliotekar.ru/rus-Babel/25.htm> (accessed 9 November 2011). See also Pasicznyk, 147.

Most residents of *Budynok Slovo* embraced Ukrainian culture, and spoke Ukrainian. Yet several *slov'iany* spoke Russian. Among them were the Russian and Jewish writers Volodymyr Iurezans'kyi, Raisa Troianker, Leib Kvitko, and Dovid Fel'dman, who used the Russian language in their everyday lives.¹¹⁷ The *slov'ianyn* Smolych has testified that many Jewish writers in Kharkiv in the 1920s spoke Ukrainian.¹¹⁸ It might be fair to assume that their linguistic preferences depended on the situation and their conversational partners at the moment because, considering their literary legacy, some of them mastered three languages, Yiddish, Russian and Ukrainian.

For many *slov'iany*, perceptions of reality shifted dramatically between their immediate past and their *Budynok Slovo* present. The building gathered under its roof talented people of various social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Passing through its threshold, they became members of the middle-class elite who were involved in intellectual labor, and many led a privileged lifestyle. Many writers were office holders, and entitled to special food rations (*paiky*). The jobs of the *slov'iany* became an anchor that held them in one place, as did *Budynok Slovo*, which was itself an incentive and privilege permitted by the state. These conditions made the Ukrainian intelligentsia “immovable.”¹¹⁹ They were tied to their desks and salaries,¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ For more on Iurezans'kyi, see Kulish, *A Word*, 30; on Troianker, Kvitko and Fel'dman, see Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 100-01, 104, 123-24, 133; Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 86, 111-64, 121-22, 155, 179, 216; Gennady Estraiikh, “The Kharkiv Yiddish Literary World, 1920s-Mid-1930s,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2002): 70-88.

¹¹⁸ Shkandrij, *Jews*, 101.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion about *byt* in Soviet Russia, see Walter Benjamin, “Moscow,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz and trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1978), 108-09. Some *slov'iany* had more than thirteen square meters of living space per person in *Budynok Slovo*, more than they were entitled to by law.

and after 1930, they became hostages of a bigger burden, a luxurious apartment.

These assets transformed and tarnished many of them as artists. They lost the freedom they had enjoyed as impoverished artists, when they led an unsettled and pitiable existence. Edward W. Said maintained that the lonely condition of intellectuals, unburdened by material possessions and awards from the state, was always better for their mind, soul and art, than the conformism they developed in the process of turning into literary dignitaries.¹²¹ Their belonging to *Budynok Slovo* and the professional club “Slovo” codified their behavior and influenced many of their habits and tastes.

¹²⁰ Although the writers’ salaries were moderate, the honorariums for their publications were substantial. For instance, for his novel *V Stepakh*, Sava Bozhko received six-thousand *karbovantsi* which was a very big sum then. See Masenko, *Roman pam’iati*, 183.

¹²¹ Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectuals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xviii.

Chapter Two

Material Culture and Surveillance of *Budynok Slovo*

Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception.

Walter Benjamin¹

...the behavioral and material cultures of an organized group are partly integrated with its ideological culture, partly unintegrated, and partly contradictory.

Pitirim A. Sorokin²

Budynok Slovo as an Architectural Innovation

Although *Budynok Slovo* is interesting in purely geographical or historical terms, it was also significant as a social and cultural habitat that was systematically traumatized by state power, human irrationality and emotions. An examination of this habitat provides a better understanding of the irrational factors and emotions that shaped the intellectual elite's behavior, factors which continue to play a significant role in history.³ Their behavior was deeply imbedded in national culture, politics and the language they spoke, but also—in the place in which they lived, and its material culture. To some extent, the *slov'iany*'s material world influenced their behavior, values, habits and moral norms which in turn formed the state's perceptions about them. The exploration of these interrelations illuminates the subsequent transformations of the *slov'iany* as writers, and their behavioral changes in prison. The absence of ritualized practices and a habitual material world, combined with the

¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Marxism and Art: Writings in Aesthetics and Criticism*, eds. Berel Lang and Forrest Williams (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972), 298.

² Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), 333.

³ See the recent study by Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol, eds., *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011).

violence applied to them, confused people and destabilized them emotionally.

An analysis of the writers' social and material world will extend our understandings about the struggle between the intellectual and the state beyond the binary scheme "oppressors versus oppressed," and will demonstrate the residents' social adjustments to the changing political and cultural landscape, adjustments that shaped the *slov'iany*'s future in so many ways, mostly tragic and even catastrophic. In other words, material, spatial, and subjectivity factors form the center of this discussion.

In the early 1930s, because of the state crusade against Ukrainian nationalism, conformism became an overarching phenomenon among the literary bohemia. Ivan Maistrenko observed that Communist idealism of the early twenties was replaced by non-ideology, careerism and welfare concerns in the late twenties and early thirties.⁴ *Budynok Slovo* reflected the writers' tastes, practices and habits that became embedded in its material culture.⁵ To be sure, usually just by looking at buildings, sites of dwelling, we can tell who belongs where and why, who did what and how. Material culture can answer questions about the relationship between space and human behavior, tastes, priorities and functions.⁶ As we have learned, the writers assertively contributed to the final look of their home. Let us take a close look at *Budynok Slovo* as a material object and place in an attempt to understand the community of Ukrainian writers.

⁴ Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia moho pokolinnia: Spohady uchasnyka revoliutsiinykh podii v Ukraini* (Edmonton, Canada: Kanads'kyi Instytut Ukrains'kykh Studii, Al'berts'kyi Universytet, 1985), 207, 245.

⁵ On the interconnectedness between material objects and people's consciousness, desires, actions, and ideas, see Tim Cresswell, "Landscape and the Obliteration of Practice," in *Culture and Society: Critical Essays in Human Geography*, ed. Nuala C. Johnson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 12.

⁶ Cresswell, 13.

The aerial view of the building presented a square variant of the Russian letter “C” symbolizing the special designation of the home for the cooperative “Slovo,” a collective of the most progressive and popular Ukrainian writers and poets.⁷ Today *Budynok Slovo* is located on 9 Kul'tury Street in the very heart of Kharkiv. Despite some memoirs' claims that the building had a short life,⁸ *Budynok Slovo* survived the Second World War and the German occupation, and has preserved its original name even today.⁹



Budynok Slovo today. (Kharkiv, Ukraine). July 2004, March 2005.

In a sense, *Budynok Slovo* became a gated community. Later, the Soviet authorities became extremely sophisticated in creating gated communities for “higher dignitaries.”¹⁰ Institutional

⁷ The documentary film about Ukrainian intellectual Mykola Khvyl'ovyi *Hryf secretnosti zniato: Tsar i rab khytroshchiv* by Iryna Shatokhina (Kyiv: Natsional'na telekompaniia Ukrainy, 2009) that is based on the narrative by Ukrainian historian I. Shapoval provides an impressive view from above the building “Slovo” in Kharkiv.

⁸ See Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers' Home 'Slovo': Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: “Homin Ukrainy,” 1966).

⁹ Today *Budynok Slovo* is officially considered a cultural site and a monument of architectural art, and registered under no. 11719 in a national catalogue of Ukrainian monuments (in Kharkiv oblast' it is registered under no. 38). See I.M. Shkodovskii et al., eds., *Khar'kov: vchera, segodnia, zavtra* (Khar'kov: Folio, 2002), 180.

¹⁰ For a discussion about gated communities and theories on gating, see Sonia A. Hirt, *Iron Curtains: Gates, Suburbs and Privatization of Space in the Post-Socialist City* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 135-36, 146, 156, 163.

(*vidomchi/vedomstvennye*) apartment buildings¹¹ were created in the majority of the largest urban centers, including the cities of the Baltic states, incorporated into the Soviet Union before the Second World War, and after the war in the countries of the socialist camp. A simple mortal could not penetrate the bastilles, and telephone numbers of the chosen who resided in such compounds were not available in the directory. Agents of the secret police usually guarded the entrances, and one could not pass unnoticed by their vigilant eyes unless they had special oral (telephone) or written permission from the owner to visit.¹² The order in *Budynok Slovo* was more democratic. However, the gates were erected not by the writers but by the secret police that monitored any movement in and about the building. In the thirties, the Soviet secret police gained an opportunity to watch the intelligentsia as a community in one place, in action.

Geographically, one could not desire a better location for a home. Local authorities allocated a space for the building at quiet Barachna Street which was not far from the center of the city. The historical name of the street can be traced to the 1870s, when nine barracks were built in this area located near the University Garden. These barracks were used for wounded soldiers who were rehabilitated there after the battles of the Russian-Turkish War in 1877-78. Gradually, the territory around the barracks was improved, and during the 1930s several cooperative buildings were erected along Barachna

¹¹ The notion of *vidomchi* (in Ukrainian) or *vedomstvennye* (in Russian) buildings refers to apartment buildings that accommodated workers of the same institution, factory or union. As a matter of practice, only employees of the institution and their families, or members of the union could receive an apartment in such a building. On history of institutional buildings since late 1920, see M.G. Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry, opredelaiushchiie soznaniie: Gosudarstvennaia zhylischnaia politika v SSSR. 1921-1941*, ed. Andreas Umland (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2005), 67-69.

¹² See Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 150, 172-73.

Street, including *Budynok Slovo*.¹³ The buildings adjacent to *Budynok Slovo* that had been erected at approximately the same time were also institutional, living quarters for the South Railway and Aviation administration staff, but the House of Writers remains unique architecturally and structurally.¹⁴ Changed in 1930 from Barachna to Chervonykh Pys'mennykiv Street (Street of Red Writers), the name provokes dark associations of the profound disintegration of the writers' community in Kharkiv during Stalin's repressions.

Everything inside and outside the building promised comfort and luxury. Structurally, the Writers' home was conceived as a five-storey building that would go beyond the accepted construction norms and standards, despite party suggestions to economize on materials and construct no more than four-storey buildings.¹⁵ The rooms were three-and-one-half meters in height. To make the walls sound-proof, a thick layer of wool fabric was installed between the two constituent parts of the wall. The staircase was wide and not steep, and its handrails were made of oak which survives even today.¹⁶ Sufficient room was left to install the elevator, an idea that never materialized because of a lack of funds.¹⁷

¹³ Ielena Dovzhenko, *Slovar' ischeznuvshykh nazvanii: Khar'kov: Istoricheskii tsentr. Nagornaia chast'* (Khar'kov: Maidan, 2010), 1: 6.

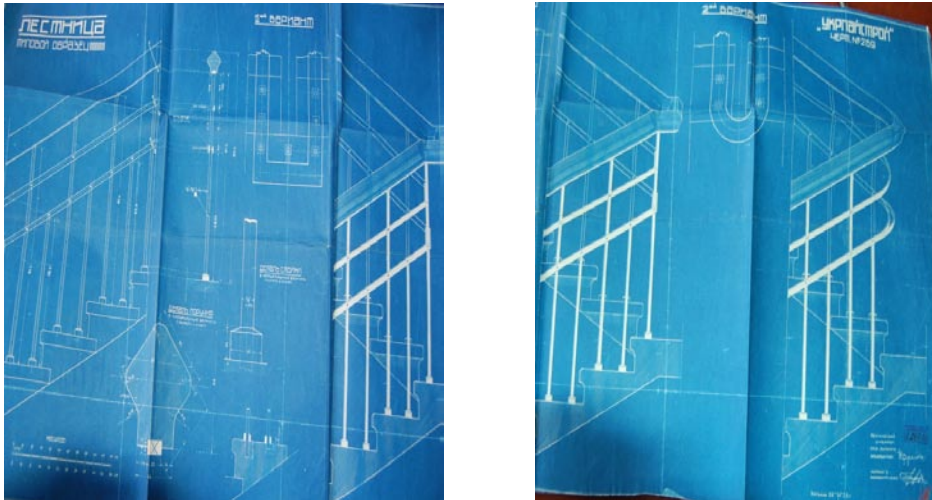
¹⁴ Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers' Home 'Slovo': Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: "Homin Ukrainy," 1966), 9. For details about other cooperative buildings at Barachna Street, see Visti VUTsVK, 29 September 1927; DAKhO, f.R1402, op.2, spr.61, ark.268.

¹⁵ See P.M. Kozhanyi's report at the 1st All-Union Congress on Housing Cooperation in DAKhO, f.R1401, op.1, spr.3, ark.5.

¹⁶ DAKhO, f.R 1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.25.

¹⁷ Vasyl' Sokil, *Zdaleka do blyz'koho (spohady, rozdumy)* (Edmonton: Kanads'kyi instytut ukrains'kykh studii, Al'berts'kyi universytet, 1987), 85.

The balconies were an innovation in contrast to the plain barrack-like buildings in the neighborhood. Balconies were multifunctional, and played a specific role in the lives of residents, depending on time of the day or season.¹⁸



Original blueprints of the staircase in *Budynok Slovo*.¹⁹



The staircase is preserved today. August 2009.

¹⁸ Kulish, *A Word*, 10-11. Also see Dashkevych's original drawings in TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7.

¹⁹ TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7, ark.16 (28 December 1928).

During warm months, they served as a storage place and a point from which mothers could observe their children playing outside. The balconies that faced the internal yard often turned into stadium seats when the internal yard was claimed for sports contests that were very popular among children and adults. The fame of these sports events reached other literary associations and theatres that performed in Kharkiv, and the scale of football competitions often reached the republic and even the state level. The collectives of artists or writers who came to Kharkiv for professional purposes usually attended sports tournaments conducted in *Budynok Slovo*. Writers' children were vigorous initiators and founders of sport traditions and activities in "Slovo," and gradually involved a good portion of the adults in sporting events and competitions, conducted in the internal yard of the building.²⁰



The profile of the building with balconies on both sides--the façade and the internal yard.²¹

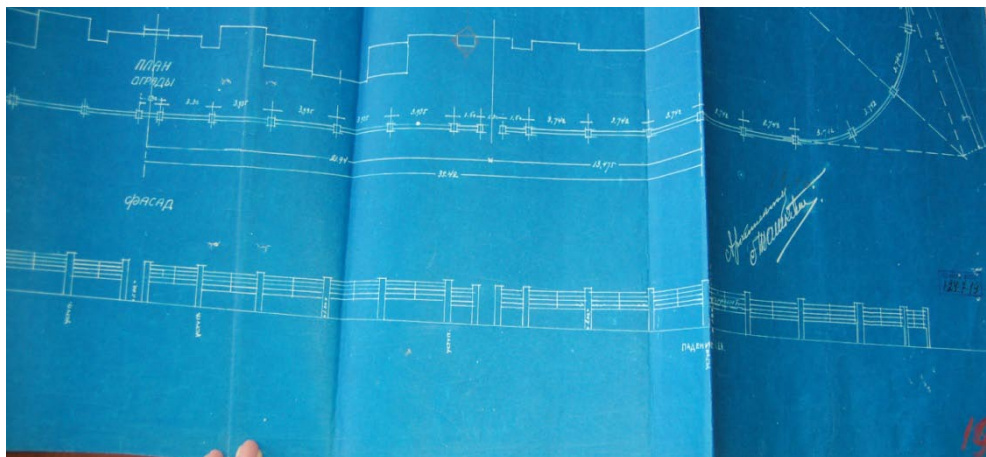
During winter time, the balconies served as refrigerators which attracted homeless hungry children (*besprizorniki*), "a legacy of war,

²⁰ Kulish, *A Word*, 61-62.

²¹ TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7.

revolution, and civil war,” who systematically stole the food stored there.²² For them, the upper floors were not a challenge, and their marvelous acrobatic skills, the flexibility of their young bodies and the sturdy rain downspouts helped them in obtaining desirable foodstuffs.²³ Importantly, balconies were a social meeting place, and a source of information for many residents. The *slov'iany* rested, wrote and read on the balconies.

During the nights when arrests were made, balconies were initially observation towers for the residents but very soon ceased to serve as such, because the residents developed a habit of hiding behind the thick walls of the building when their neighbors were taken by the GPU.



A little decorative stone fence in Dashkevych's original blueprints.²⁴

The building's façade was embellished by a little decorative stone fence that remains untouched to the present day. It was framed by flowerbeds,

²² Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society: Between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 112. On *besprizorniki* in Kharkiv, see the 12 May 1930 NKVD report in DAKhO f.R845, op.2, spr.582, ark.43; Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Heart is Hardened: Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

²³ Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmarska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004), 144.

²⁴ TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7, ark.19.

and a beautiful garden was planted near the building. The technical description of this fence leaves readers amazed at the quality of materials and the architectural fundamentality of this little detail.²⁵ It is a wonder that the fence survived frequent bombing attacks by the Germans and the Nazi occupation, and required only minor repairs over the years.



The façade of *Budynok Slovo* (with the little fence) in the 1930s.²⁶

Five entrances pierced the building, and from the street one could get to the internal yard and vice versa, although according to some accounts, the façade entrances were often locked, and the residents used only back entrances to enter their section.²⁷ The back entrances were accessed through the courtyard, and the façade entrances faced the street. The façade doors were massive and presentable, and made of oak.²⁸ Imitating the European tradition, an elegant board was installed downstairs near the façade doors with the

²⁵ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.25zv.

²⁶ See the photograph also in Dovzhenko, *Slovar' ischeznuvshykh nazvanii*.

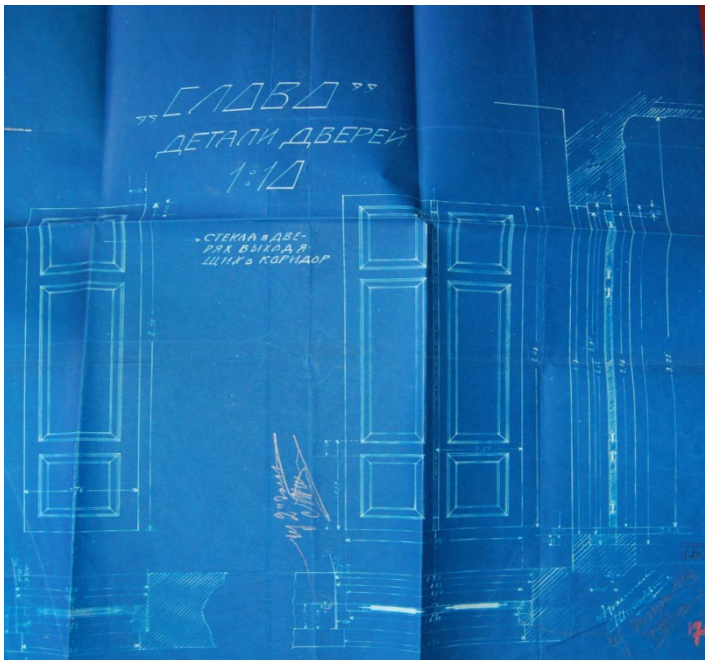
²⁷ Kulish, *A Word*, 10.

²⁸ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.27 zv. There were 5 sets of façade doors for each entrance. The high-quality doors cost 300 extra *karbovantsi* that the cooperative had to pay on top of the estimated budget price. See also Sokil, 85.

numbers of apartments and the doorbells, including the list of residents and the number of their apartment.²⁹



The façade of *Budynok Slovo*. Summer 2008.



Dashkevych's blueprints of *Budynok Slovo* are extremely detailed. One of many drawings of the doors.³⁰

²⁹ Kulish, *A Word*, 11.

³⁰ TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7, ark.19.

The two wings of the building created a cozy and safe internal yard which played a significant role in residents' lives. Wooden tables and benches were installed which were often the sites of chess competitions among the residents. They also served as social space for writers' relatives where the latest news and rumors were discussed. The tables and benches were hidden in the shadow of the trees that were planted in the internal yard, as well as along the façade of the building. A part of the internal yard was allocated to volleyball games. In winter time, a skating rink for the writers' children was set up within the internal yard.³¹ For some writers, the skating rink became a place for nocturnal wanderings which diverted the insomniacs from the activities at their desks. Many found the nights very productive because the building's quiet was not violated by noisy children outside or family adventures within their apartments. During their night writings, they took a break and went outside to smoke, to run and to slide on the ice.³²

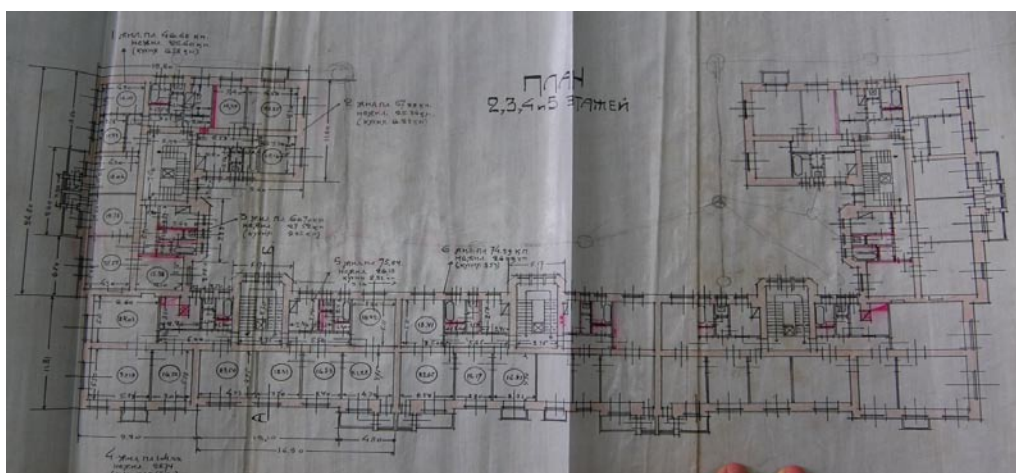
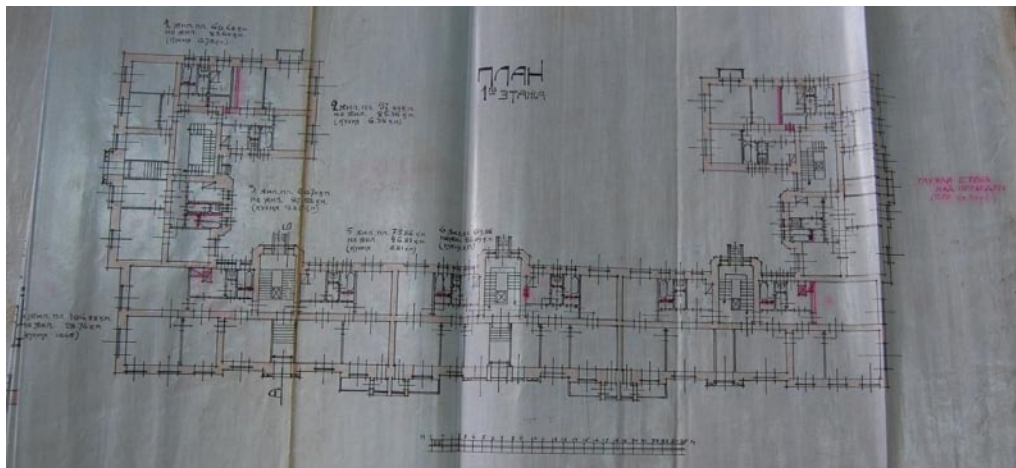


The internal yard of *Budynok Slovo*. Summer 2008.

³¹ Sokil, 85.

³² Kulish, *A Word*, 19.

There were 68 apartments, and they were bright because of the big windows in each room that faced both the street and the internal yard. The rooms were spacious, and the ceilings in the apartments were rather high (3.5 meters), which contributed to a grandiose look from outside.³³ There were five separate entrances in the building (*pid'izd*). The first and the fifth entrances had three apartments on each floor (they formed the wings of the letter C), and the second, third and fourth entrances in the middle had two flats across from each other on each floor. Each apartment contained a living room, a study, one or two bedrooms, a kitchen, a pantry, a separate bathroom and a long hallway.



Original drawings of the 1st floor plan, and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th floor plan.³⁴

³³ Sokil, 85. Despite the existing architectural norms for the height of the ceilings (2.7 meters), the cooperative “Slovo” was allowed to modify these norms.

³⁴ TsDNTAU, f.1-24, spr.7.

The heating system was centralized for the whole building, and ran on coal that was piled up in the basement for the entire winter. The cooperative decided that gas might be dangerous and stayed with the old method of heating, safe and inexpensive. Stoves in the kitchen also worked on coal, and because there was no elevator in the building the residents of the upper floors were at a disadvantage having to carry buckets of coal for cooking. Coal ashes were piled in the courtyard until taken for disposal by a communal truck.³⁵

The most luxurious and rare objects were the telephones in each apartment, and a solarium shared by all inhabitants of the building. Telephones in private apartments in 1930 were an unheard-of phenomenon.³⁶ This device played a crucial role in the subsequent repression of the *slov'iany*. The solarium with 10 showers and a locker room for 10-15 people on the top floor was extraordinarily popular mostly among children who suntanned and played with the water on the roof during summers. For them, the solarium was a special subject in conversations with their peers who could not believe that such a miracle existed in Kharkiv.³⁷

In addition, there were other remarkable amenities in *Budynok Slovo*. A kindergarten that was organized in the building enrolled many children of resident families. The kindergarten was situated in the fifth entrance in the basement (apartment no. 51), and its staff took excellent care of the writers' children.³⁸ They were regularly fed, and provided with a daily dosage of vitamin D (fish oil), a substance hated by all pupils collectively without

³⁵ DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.30zv-31.

³⁶ Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knykhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:310.

³⁷ Kulish, *A Word*, 11-12; DAKhO, f.R1777, op.2, spr.192, ark.30zv.

³⁸ Later the kindergarten was promoted to the first floor in the second entrance (apartment 40). See Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vydannia zhurnalu "Berezil'," 2002), 358-59.

exception.³⁹ The kindergarten was a form of life inconceivable for many Soviet children, especially in the historical context of 1930-31 when the Ukrainian countryside began to starve, and more and more hungry, begging peasants and children appeared in the streets of Kharkiv. Regular meals and proper hygiene were strongly promoted and maintained in the kindergarten. The every-day schedule was vigorously enforced, and after lunch, the children were buttoned in sleeping bags for an afternoon nap. This space cultivated in them a feeling of home, one that they owed to the privileged position of their parents.⁴⁰

Near the kindergarten, in apartment no. 50, the cooperative established and subsidized a cafeteria for the residents. According to the first resident of *Budynok Slovo* Vasyl' Sokil's memoirs, Raia Kotliar, wife of the Jewish poet Iosif Kotliar, was in charge of the cafeteria, and the meals it provided for the *slov'iany* were of excellent quality. Residents simultaneously enjoyed the atmosphere of the cafeteria and its affordable prices. Like the internal yard, the cafeteria was their favorite place because of its social and culinary attractions. The cafeteria reinforced the feeling of belonging to a club of intellectuals where people could casually chat without paying attention to the literary ranks or honored achievements of their colleagues.⁴¹

Other common facilities in *Budynok Slovo* included a beauty salon and a laundry room that shared apartment no. 38 in the basement. Few details are available about the specific features and patterns of work of these facilities but

³⁹ Dukyna, 83.

⁴⁰ Teren' Masenko, *Roman pam'iaty* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1970), 132.

⁴¹ Sokil, 172.

the services that the residents received were subsidized by the cooperative and their location saved a great deal of time for the residents.⁴²

There was another public place in the basement of *Budynok Slovo*—the bomb shelter. Designers of Soviet architectural standards for apartment buildings of the late 1920s and early 1930s took into consideration political warnings of the Soviet government about a potential invasion by capitalist countries. Spacious bomb shelters were constructed in the basements of all newly erected buildings that would serve not only as emergency shelters but also as study rooms for high school and university students where they learned practical skills necessary in case of military air attacks. *Budynok Slovo* was not an exception, and its bomb shelter was a large space equal to two four-room apartments, sharing a common wall with the apartment of Iakym Petymko, a janitor of *Budynok Slovo*, who resided in apartment no. 2 in the basement.⁴³

Despite the building's innovative architectural features that were unusual for the Communist reality, it would be fair to identify the house as only semi-luxurious.⁴⁴ In other words, *Budynok Slovo* placed its residents in the middle of a social continuum, where the top was occupied by high-ranking party, state and military officials who lived in completely isolated, exceptionally private, and well-guarded compounds,⁴⁵ and the bottom belonged to laborers who lived in communal flats and barracks.

⁴² Dukyna, 358-59.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See a collection of essays about design and the structure of houses in contemporary residential architecture in the Soviet Union in William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble, eds., *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁴⁵ There was, for instance, *Dom na Naberezhnoi* (House on the Embankment) in Moscow, a well-guarded building for party officials, whose façade faced the Kremlin. The description of this building and its history can be found in Mikhail Korshunov and Viktoriia Terekhova, *Tainy i legendy Doma na Naberezhnoi* (Moskva: "Slovo," 2002).

Fashion in *Budynok Slovo*

The spirit of revolutionary innovations in art infiltrated the private sphere, and the personal manner of dress played a part in artistic expression and individual identity. Costumes became an ideological statement for residents, although it is fair to say that for some individuals clothes were merely a matter of necessity and practical everyday activities. Nevertheless, fashion became a passion for the female inhabitants of the Writers' Home as well as a subject of conversation and competition for male writers.

The Ukrainian writer Mykola Khvyl'ovyi was one who was not driven by the desire to be presentable and fashionable. In fact, he was very undemanding, reserved and modest in his material needs.⁴⁶ Most of the time, he could be seen in his typical hunting outfit (his passion for hunting went beyond a mere hobby; his knowledge of guns and their history was encyclopedic, to say nothing about his research interest in hunting dogs, their breeds and proper training). There was nothing more constant in *Budynok Slovo* than Khvyl'ovyi's hunting outfit: an old rough hunting coat, pants of indistinguishable color, a pair of boots and a hunting hat.⁴⁷ According to Kostiuk, only during literary gatherings would the "severe polemicist" wear something more formal. Nevertheless, he routinely surprised his colleagues by his unassuming choice of shirts and pants, and the shabby summer shoes that he wore without socks.⁴⁸ His style was consistent with what Soviet professional clothing designers in the 1920s would call industrial or working

⁴⁶ Ivan Senchenko, "Notatky pro literaturne zhyttia 20—40 rokiv," in Ivan Senchenko, *Opovidannia. Povisti. Spohady* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1990), 544.

⁴⁷ See also Kulish, *A Word*, 16; Kostiuk, 1:265-66.

⁴⁸ Kostiuk, 1:264.

clothes style (*prozodezhda*).⁴⁹ However, most of the residents of the building enthusiastically adopted the standards and dress codes that were dictated by the atmosphere and the culture of the building— elegant and business-like.

The most extravagant and “foreign-looking” in their fashion were Valerian Polishchuk and Maik Iohansen. Polishchuk’s romantic and artistic nature and his long-lasting vacillation between two loves who happened to be sisters contributed to his visual image which at times was innovative and provocative.⁵⁰ His hat, made of two colors, white and black, surprised pedestrians by its purple “tongue,” hanging from the front, which, as Polishchuk confessed, he made and sewed himself. Like many intellectuals, he was influenced by futurism, and by the manner of dress of David Burliuk and Vladimir Maiakovskii which sometimes employed two or three contrasting colors in an outfit.⁵¹ This fashion style followed the futurists’ rejection of habitual harmony and their elevation of the ideas of cacophony and chaos “to the status of a poetic principle.”⁵²

In contrast to Polishchuk, Iohansen was more conservative, and employed a strange amalgam of sport style and classic British style which together with his elegant physique brought him fame as a “dandy” (*pizhon*). Iohansen looked like a “foreign tourist” to Hryhorii Kostiuk, who arrived in

⁴⁹ See David Elliot, ed., *Art into Production: Soviet Textiles, Fashion and Ceramics 1917-1935* (London: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, Crafts Council of England and Wales, 1984), 87.

⁵⁰ Pasicznyk, 86, 150; Senchenko, “Notatky,” 544.

⁵¹ Maiakovskii’s famous yellow shirt with bright green lace fastening the top became his trademark for some time. His shirt was honored with the title *iaishnitsa s lukom* (“fried eggs with onion”). On Maiakovskii’s yellow shirt, see Iuliia Demidenko, “Nadenu ia zheltuiu bluzu...” in *Avangardnoie povedenie* (Sankt-Peterburg: Kharmsisdat, 1997), 65-76; Viktor Shklovskii’s *O Maiakovskom* (Moskva: 1940); and Nikolai Aseev’s *O poetakh i poezii: stat’i i vosominaniia* (Moskva: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1985).

⁵² On the futurist aesthetic, see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 94-111; Irina Gutkin, *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic, 1890-1934* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 15, 19, 46, 109.

Kharkiv from Kyiv and first saw Iohansen at a meeting in the State Publishing House of Ukraine in 1929.⁵³ According to Stepan Kryzhanivs'kyi, in contrast to the routinely disorganized and messy look of his desk at *Budynok Slovo*, Iohansen looked like a gentleman from some European country, from top to bottom, and his elegant “picnic” style alternated with an official look marked by a hat and a bow-tie.⁵⁴

Some *slov'iany* preferred a classically elegant look. According to Teren' Masenko, Oleksa Vlyz'ko was often seen in fine and fashionable clothes, and his sophisticated elegant manner of carrying himself corresponded with his appearance.⁵⁵ Iurii Ianovs'kyi was also a fan of high-quality clothes. His beautiful shoes became a part of his image and the subject of many recollections about him.⁵⁶

Budynok Slovo and its residents' fashions were clearly influenced by the new Soviet culture emerging from ideological discourses, and from the social and economic realities of the 1920s and 1930s. This period was amazingly productive for painters, sculptors, architects and craftsmen who found employment in factories that specialized in the mass production of textiles. Perceptions of textile and clothing design were elevated from the level of crafts to that of original and creative proletarian arts. Textile “bourgeois” patterns were replaced by modern geometric patterns, *a la* Picasso, and contained asymmetrical and symmetrical images of tractors, screws, hammers and sickles.⁵⁷ Constructivist fashion of the 1920s was associated with

⁵³ Kostiuk, 1:264.

⁵⁴ Stepan Kryzhanivs'kyi, *My piznavaly nepovtornyi chas: Portrety, ece, spohady* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1986), 133-34.

⁵⁵ Masenko, *Roman pam'iaty*, 77.

⁵⁶ Senchenko, “Notatky,” 554.

⁵⁷ Elliot, 82.

democratic motifs which rejected the idea of fashion for the elites and mass eclectic trends which dominated the post-revolutionary era.⁵⁸

However, the Constructivist influence⁵⁹ was rather brief, and an aesthetic change in clothing design toward a more elaborate fashion style reflected public taste that was cultivated by the cultural shift in Soviet propaganda, one that promoted welfare and new material opportunities which emerged in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s.⁶⁰

The *slov'iany* became consumers of both styles of clothing, industrial and *haute couture*. The latter were quite expensive and difficult to find. The sources of unique textile pieces that were worn by residents came from their trips abroad (Vienna, Berlin, Paris and other European cities) during the 1920s and early 1930s.⁶¹ Liubochka, Khvyl'ovyi's step-daughter, invited attacks of jealousy from her peers in the conservatory where she advanced herself as a pianist: Khvyl'ovyi brought her a hand-knitted blouse from one of his international trips, a garment that would have cost an astronomical sum in the black market in the early 1930s. Ievhen Kas'ianenko, editor of the Kharkiv party newspaper *Visti*, spent more time abroad than in *Budynok Slovo*, and provided a lifestyle for his family that was well beyond that which ordinary

⁵⁸ John E. Bowl, "Constructivism and Early Soviet Fashion Design" in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, eds. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez and Richard Stites (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985), 206. On constructivism, see also Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 21-23.

⁵⁹ *Prozodezhda* (industrial clothing), *spetsodezhda* (special clothing) and *sportodezhda* (sports clothing) were made along the lines of Constructivist style. See Bowl, 213-15.

⁶⁰ Bowl, 218.

⁶¹ For more details about the *slov'iany*'s trips abroad, see TsDAMLIMU, f.464, op.1, spr.10579, ark.1; TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.9, ark.5; *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 9-10 (1927): 232, 235.

slov'iany could afford. A collection of goods that Kas'ianenko brought for his wife and his daughter, including clothes, astonished his neighbors.⁶²

The products of Moscow and Leningrad textile factories were also in favor in *Budynok Slovo*. Oleksa Slisarenko provoked a great deal of excitement among the residents when he brought from Leningrad a short winter jacket with a fur collar.⁶³ In a week, the entire building possessed similar coats. The source of their purchase remained unknown. Perhaps the *slov'iany* made special trips to Leningrad or obtained similar coats on the black market. Slisarenko also became the initiator of another fashion craze over a pair of white *valianky*, winter sheepwool boots made of felt, a craze that lasted for a long time. Mykola Kulish enjoyed wearing them, like many other *slov'iany*.⁶⁴ As a matter of fact, white *valianky* remained a luxury item throughout the Second World War. *Valianky* were provided for superior military commanders, and were considered an elegant accessory to an industrial look that signaled the important bureaucratic standing of the owners or their influential connections in the party.⁶⁵

⁶² Kulish, *A Word*, 17, 25-26.

⁶³ Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid'i pro nespokii nemaie kintsia: shche deshcho z dvadtsiatykh i trydtsiatykh rokiv v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk, 1972), 3:13. Smolych described Slisarenko as a sophisticated dresser who ordered his suits only from the best tailors. His was even wearing a bowtie, a "bourgeois feature," according to Smolych.

⁶⁴ Kulish, *A Word*, 58. See also Senchenko, "Notatky," 549.

⁶⁵ Bulat Okudzhava, *Uprazdnennyi teatr: semeinaia khronika* (Moskva: Izdatel'skii dom Rusanova, 1995), 192, 231-32. Okudzhava recalled that in the middle of the 1930s, his father, prominent Georgian party leader Shalva Okudzhava, was sent to the Urals to lead the local branch of the Central Committee there (as a *partorg*, *partiinyi organizator*). As a high-ranking party official, he was provided with a pair of white *valianky* and a sheepskin fur coat. Moscow writer Aleksandr Avdeenko arrived at the Vagonka settlement in the Urals wearing a similar pair of white *valianky* which signaled his privileged status as a writer. White *valianky* were also called *pimy*.

Borys Groys posits that during the Stalin era the party struggled against fashion.⁶⁶ Its aesthetics prescribed “strict enforcement of a clothes ordinance,”⁶⁷ and any deviations from prescribed norms were likely to be characterized as dissent. Obviously, *valianky* and Leningrad jackets were more than clothes for *slov’iany*. They were symbols of security and belonging to a common culture or a “club,” an elite group that celebrated life and power. On the other hand, for the state, the fashions of *slov’iany* and, more than anything, their ability to follow fashion innovations and be dressed according to the latest trends signaled freedom and, therefore, dangers of independence.⁶⁸

Elegance as a Business Style: Writers’ Tools

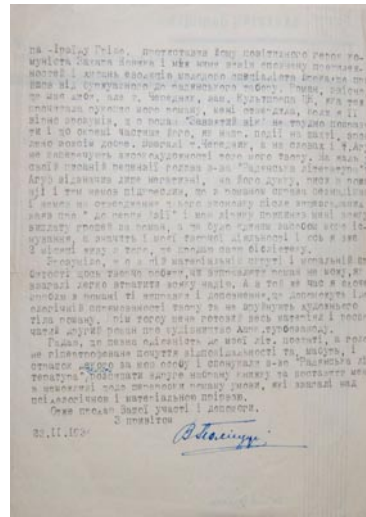
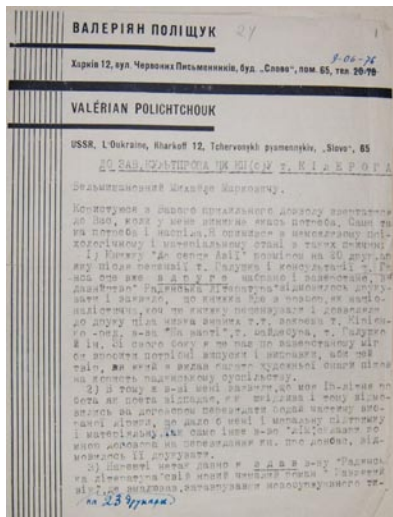
The *slov’iany* also developed a taste for high-quality writing accessories. Stationery products including personalized paper for private and official correspondence, as well as the basic tools—pens and pencils—began to play a significant role in the writers’ everyday lives. Although having proper writing accessories did not become a form of material object fetishism, most residents of *Budynok Slovo* considered personalized items for public writing an inseparable and prestigious part of their professional image. Through the DVU, *Derzhavne Vydavnytstvo Ukrainy* (the State Publisher of Ukraine), *slov’iany* could order special letterhead for correspondence, which included their first and last names or a literary pseudonym, their home address and home telephone number. This information usually was provided in the

⁶⁶ Boris Groys, “The Art of Totality,” trans. Mary A. Akatiff, in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 106-7.

⁶⁷ Groys in Dobrenko and Naiman, 107.

⁶⁸ On the state’s attitudes toward the Ukrainian intelligentsia’s material welfare, see DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.35, ark.192.

Ukrainian and English languages which were widely believed to inspire recipients' respect for the importance of the paper's owner.⁶⁹



Valerian Polishchuk's letter written on personalized letterhead.⁷⁰

Some writers grew fussy about the paper, and could write only on a certain type of white sheet. Iurii Ianovs'kyi was exceptionally selective about the paper and pens he used in his creative writing. He would wander from store to store, looking for the best quality paper. His handwriting was calligraphic, and his desk was always in perfect order. A perfectionist in everything, he strove for the best tools the socialist state could provide for a writer.⁷¹

Pens brought from abroad were especially cherished by the writers because their innovative features were unknown to Soviet consumers. Arkadii Liubchenko brought his father an automatic pen of foreign production that was called among *slov'iany* “vichne” (eternal). Khvyl'ovyi brought an automatic

⁶⁹ TsDAMLIMU, f.72. op.1, spr.12, ark.24-24 zv.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Senchenko, “Notatky,” 554.

pencil from abroad as a gift (whose happy recipient remains unknown). The pencil had automatically interchangeable parts that could write in four different colors.⁷²

Furthermore, typewriters that were brought from Germany served writers as a primary tool for their intellectual labor, and also often saved the lives of their wives and children after the GPU evicted them from *Budynok Slovo* as families of enemies of the people. Because of this precious possession, the wives of writers found jobs as typists and survived. The *slov'iany* truly appreciated the aesthetic beauty of foreign consumer goods, and this factor, including their easy access to European technology, contributed to their image as “bourgeois elements” which was ascribed to them after their arrests.

Furniture: Luxury, Convenience and its Absence

Generally, the material possessions of an average resident of *Budynok Slovo* were modest and were often limited to extensive personal libraries.⁷³ The furniture question was solved by the residents according to their financial abilities and practical skills. Many writers had no beds or desks, and floors and stoves served as their substitutes.⁷⁴

In contrast to its conceptual twin, *Dom na Naberezhnoi*, a home built specifically for governmental and political leaders in Moscow, *Budynok Slovo* was not decorated with state (*kazionnaia*) furniture which was typically added to an inventory list of state possessions that had to be signed for by residents

⁷² Kulish, *A Word*, 58.

⁷³ Dukyna, 81.

⁷⁴ Smolych, 3:129.

on arrival.⁷⁵ Instead, residents had to furnish their own homes. Furniture was an expensive commodity and few families could allow themselves brand new suites.⁷⁶ Usually only those who had professional ties or family connections with the party could afford new furniture. Among them were the Mykytenko, Bazhan and Panch families. Ivan Mykytenko, in addition to a comfortable home with luxurious furniture and other incentives provided by the party, was the only one who had his own secretary. Mykola Bazhan was famous for his four-room apartment in *Budynok Slovo*, fully decorated with expensive pieces of furniture made of some rare sort of red wood.⁷⁷ Although an average writer, “Panch knew how to sell himself,” a skill which apparently brought a certain prosperity to his family. Panch’s apartment was elaborately decorated with beautiful new furniture.⁷⁸

Ordinary *slov’iany* customarily purchased used and inexpensive pieces of furniture in the market. Some writers made book shelves and beds by themselves. For instance, Mykhailo Bykovets’, who had composed an extensive bibliographical and biographical catalogue of prominent Ukrainian political and cultural figures, invested days of intense labor to install built-in bookshelves in his apartment to store his unique catalogue. Vasyl’ Sokil remembered the moment when he finally saw the final product: the bookshelves held thousands of cards that Bykovets made throughout his life. From the floor to the ceiling, these shelves were the spellbinding creation of a poet, not a carpenter, and their content was a treasure for those who were interested in the history of Ukraine as well as a desirable object for the GPU.

⁷⁵ See Korshunov and Terekhova.

⁷⁶ Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (New York: Berg, Oxford International Publishers Ltd., 2000), 93.

⁷⁷ Kulish, *A Word*, 40, 42.

⁷⁸ Kulish, *A Word*, 35-37.

Bykovets' catalogue might have served GPU agents as a guideline for their activity, and may have saved the GPU many hours of investigative operational work on individuals who were repressed and shot in the 1930s.⁷⁹

Analyzing the material culture of *Budynok Slovo*, one might note that in general the mental needs of writers outweighed the needs of their bodies. Indeed, prosperous apartments like Mykytenko's, Bazhan's or the Panch's were aberrations. The other side of the spectrum also merits attention: Volodymyr Sosiura's poverty. His family experienced permanent material hardships. This factor contributed to regular scandals between Sosiura and his wife, which were often observed by the community of *Budynok Slovo*. A subtle lyric poet, Sosiura had virtually no furniture. He, his wife and several other relatives slept on the floor for years.⁸⁰ Neither his personal eccentricity, nor poverty should be completely blamed for this state of affairs. By 1930, he had become a well-known and accomplished poet, and his literary honorariums were generous and regular, the highest among *slov'iany*. What destabilized and undermined his comfortable everyday existence and family relationships were his lack of interest in material possessions in general and his passion for alcohol.⁸¹

However, most residents tried to find a reasonable balance between their intellectual and the bodily needs that would resuscitate their poetic souls, which had been disturbed by the hardships of the wars. In these quests, the culture and practices of the building prescribed the material norms that

⁷⁹ Sokil, 88-89.

⁸⁰ Kostiuk, 1:301. Kostiuk who lived with Sosiura in the same entrance remembered that eventually a table appeared in Sosiura's apartment that served the poet as a writing desk, and at the same time as a kitchen table for his family. There were no beds. However, there were mattresses on the floor without linen.

⁸¹ Kulish, *A Word*, 45-46.

became desirable for its residents, although the residents themselves created these norms. The necessity and pressure to acquiesce to these norms made *slov'iany* internalize them and conform to them. The place, more imagined than perceived realistically, influenced their lives. For some writers, the “myth” and prestige of the building, and therefore of their social status, became more important than its “reality.” Sleepless and exhausted, the *slov'iany* worked at night, creating, writing and translating in order to pay for their lifestyles, which were barely affordable for many.⁸² In maintaining their special social status, they were covertly compromised by the culture of the building, unconsciously mimicked their neighbors’ habits and adopted their colleagues’ literary approaches and findings.

Changing Self-Identities of the *Slov'iany*

Paradoxically, in a socialist society where material considerations should have been secondary, the self-identities of residents were also shaped through the ownership of goods that constituted the material culture of *Budynok Slovo*. Their lifestyles were defined by fashionable clothes and expensive habits that many *slov'iany* could afford. They developed a taste for them, although most *slov'iany* were “ascetically modest,” according to the writer Teren’ Masenko. For the majority, the desire for intellectual freedom and creativity was more powerful and unwavering than the need for material wealth. They believed that the right to individual freedom and prosperity was

⁸² Kulish, *A Word*, 19; Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid’ pro nespokii tryvaie: deshcho z dvadtsiatykh, trydtsiatykh rokiv i doteper v ukrains’komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1969), 2: 86. On self-identity and home, space and social order, see Murray Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 79.

granted to them by the revolution.⁸³ Yet, the bohemian lifestyle and the ability to afford it shaped their habits and attitudes. The writers borrowed money from each other unconditionally, without any expectations to collect or to return debts in the future. Masenko characterized the writers' existence as "the happiness of joyful lightness."⁸⁴

"The happiness" however often alternated with sorrow—material life often became a pretext for criticism of literary opponents and the party. Depending on the situation, funding, honorariums, luxury items or trips abroad could be characteristic of both a hard-working successful proletarian writer and a bourgeois, counterrevolutionary, and even nationalist one.⁸⁵ Petit-bourgeois consciousness and the material life associated with it were condemned by the party, but for most *slov'iany*, the objects of material culture were manifestations of their individual freedom, and of the trust that was generously bestowed upon them by the government. They believed that their inner essence as true Bolsheviks defined them in the eyes of the state, not their material life. Yet Stalin's state attributed a specific meaning and logic to their lifestyles, which were associated with their reputations which the writers earned during the Literary Discussion in the 1920s.⁸⁶

The joy and happiness of the first year in *Budynok Slovo* was soon replaced by gloom and despair, as repression increased (see next chapter). The GPU's total surveillance produced a quite dismal atmosphere in the building.

⁸³ See Arkadii Liubchenko, *Ioho taiemnytsia (His Secret)* in Mykola Khvyli'ovyi, *Arabesky Mykoly Khvyli'ovoho: opovidannia ta novely*, ed. Vira Aheeva (Kyiv: Hrani, 2010), 147.

⁸⁴ Masenko, *Roman pam'iaty*, 93, 168.

⁸⁵ Theorists of *byt* and socialist material culture argued that during this period the definition of material objects was easily manipulated and adjusted by demagogues to fit the profile of either a true Bolshevik, or an enemy of socialism. See Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 56-57, 59.

⁸⁶ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.35, ark.192. See also George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 66-68, 103-04.

The artists unmistakably sensed the changing political climate in Ukraine, and their rebellious and creative spirit now asserted itself only in *byt* and social space, distancing itself from art. The state campaign against nationalist “deviationists” (see Chapter Three) forced the *slov’iany* to compartmentalize art and everyday space. Many lost their aesthetic orientation; most changed their literary style.⁸⁷ This bifurcated personality was characteristic of the majority of the *slov’iany* which manifested itself on the pages of interrogation protocols and their letters of appeal to the highest GPU/NKVD authorities. Moreover, the discrepancy between their assumed privileged status and the humiliation they experienced in prison confused them and facilitated their eventual surrender to the state.

The *slov’iany*’s financial freedom and ideological incarceration shaped their art. Its aesthetics mirrored unbalanced quests for consolidation of the realities—their comfortable “club” existence, dubious politics and routine arrests of their colleagues. The writers constructed an artistic world in which the “I” was still alive but competed with the revolutionary “we,” conceptually foreign for many of them but generally accepted by most of them.⁸⁸ Ivan Dziuba characterized the literature of the 1930s even more severely: the writers produced a “poetics of un-freedom,” whose centerpiece was “fanaticism of self-denial.”⁸⁹ The Soviet punitive organs focused more on the individualism of the Ukrainian intelligentsia evident in their every-day lives in *Budynok Slovo* while overlooking the collective spirit that permeated, more than ever, the prose and poetry of the *slov’iany*. Writers consciously or unconsciously surrendered the manifold dimensions and complexities of their

⁸⁷ See the Chapter Five about Khvyl’ovyi.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Hryhorii Epik’s novel *Petro Romen*.

⁸⁹ Ivan Dziuba, *Z krynytsi lit* (Kyiv: KMA, 2006), 1:329.

art, but the sacrifice in the name of their families' safety was in vain. It was not their art but they, as physical objects, the residents of *Budynok Slovo*, and the "kings and slaves of their own artifice," that was of greatest interest to the GPU.⁹⁰

The *slov'iany*'s suffering was exacerbated by an increasing social chasm between them and the rest of society. Mykola Khvyl'ovyi became aware of social and material differences between writers and ordinary people before he moved to *Budynok Slovo*. In his novel *Val'dshnepy* (*The Woodsnipes*), the dialogue between Vovchyk and Karamazov reveals his, Khvyl'ovyi's, understanding about financial opportunities of the writers that set them apart from the rest of society.⁹¹ Khvyl'ovyi's life in the elite building became psychologically difficult for him: beyond the freedom that was buried in the 1920s, egalitarian ideals, the ultimate goal of Soviet society, had been vulgarized and forgotten. Forcible collectivization and mobs of hungry peasants, including children in the streets, accentuated the drastic contrast between the lives of writers and the Ukrainian peasantry.⁹² Scholars claim that some of the reasons for Khvyl'ovyi's suicide were his suffering and compassion toward the dying Ukrainian countryside in 1933, his realization of social and political impotence, and his recognition of the impossibility of questioning the authorities effectively.⁹³ Although material hardships of ordinary people provoked sympathy among *slov'iany*, they themselves were nevertheless on a distant orbit from them. Through inertia, they celebrated life

⁹⁰ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.51. The "kings and slaves of their own artifice" is "tzar[i] i rab[y] khytroshchiv" in Ukrainian.

⁹¹ Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, *Val'dshnepy* (Zal'tsburg: Vydavnytstvo "Novi Dni," 1946), 66-67.

⁹² Pasicznyk, *The Ever-Present Past*; Liubchenko in Aheeva, 147.

⁹³ Iurii Shapoval, "Zhyttia ta smert' Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho u svitli rozsekrechenykh dokumentiv GPU," *Z arkhiviv VUCHK, GPU, NKVD, KGB* 1/2 (30/31) (2008): 340.

in their new apartment building, arranged tea ceremonies and parties, read poems—lived their lives.

Surveillance of *Budynok Slovo*: Vanishing Public Space

Although the complex organism of *Budynok Slovo* was not as homogenous as the *slov'iany* wanted, its fragmentation into groups and subgroups became even more pronounced within a year after the writers inhabited the building. Some were united by their closeness to the party elite; others by their distance from it. For instance, Ivan Mykytenko, the leader of the pro-Soviet literary organization VUSPP, Ivan Kyrylenko, Ivan Kulyk and Ivan Le represented the group of official writers and party functionaries. Among *slov'iany*, they were called the “four Ivans,” emphasizing their ideological unity and equally distributed mediocrity. Mykola Kulish, Mykola Khvył'ovyi, Arkadii Liubchenko, Oles' Dosvitnii, Iurii Ianovs'kyi and others belonged to a group of writers who saw the development of Ukrainian culture along other than the prescribed party line.⁹⁴ A hierarchical society was emerging in front of residents' eyes, and they were active participants in the construction of this society. Cerebral and talented, they were losing their role as outsiders and independent thinkers. In Marshall Sahlins's terms, chained by material possessions and by a place that they could not abandon, they no longer could be free “hunters and gatherers,” for whom movement meant life.⁹⁵ They became settlers, and *Budynok Slovo* became for them a space from which they could not escape.

⁹⁴ Kostiuk, 1:250, 277, 284, 369; Kulish, *A Word*, 40-41.

⁹⁵ Marshall Sahlins, *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 108. In contrast to *slov'iany*, other Soviet citizens, following party orders, had few material possessions and were ready for mobilization any minute (to “decamp,” as Walter Benjamin

Social links in the building continued to deteriorate. The presence of literary hangers-on in the building, who began to obtain apartments through connections that were not totally clear and transparent for *slov'iany*, exacerbated their feelings of insecurity and fear. Typically, a great number of guests visited *Budynok Slovo* every day. Among them were book dealers, publishers, friends and relatives. In the early 1930s, the secret agency fully established its reputation as the party's watchdog over the intelligentsia, and many attributed the wanderings of strangers through the internal yard of *Budynok Slovo* and its entrances to the GPU's clandestine work.⁹⁶

By 1931, before the Central Committee's decision of 1932 on the restructuring of literary-artistic organizations which suggested a rigid centralization and administering of culture in the Soviet Union, the state had destroyed almost all free literary associations in Ukraine.⁹⁷ The *slov'iany* began to realize the danger of stubborn artistic and political principles and the benefits of ideological elasticity. Their professional integrity and personal dignity were undermined by fears of being eliminated as formalists and counterrevolutionaries. Repentant public letters published in the Soviet press and self-criticism in various literary forms became a common practice among writers. Observing a solitary individual standing and smoking under their balconies for days, some *slov'iany* decided to act before it was too late. Hryhorii Epik wrote his *Petro Romen* glorifying the new proletarian man.

phrased it.) See Walter Benjamin, "Moscow," in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1978), 106-07.

⁹⁶ Sokil, 100-03, 106, 116.

⁹⁷ Stephen White, "Stalinism and the Graphic Arts," in *Politics, Society and Stalinism in the USSR*, eds. John Channon (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998), 139. On the destruction of free literary and artistic organizations in Ukraine, see George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).

Maik Iohansen created a poem about Lenin, contributing significantly to literary Leniniana. Khvyl'ovyi publicly denounced his colleagues in newspaper essays as “bourgeois sponges,” and in 1932, in the foreword to his book he lamented that his perestroika occurred too late.⁹⁸

After May 1933, and the suicides of Khvyl'ovyi and Skrypnyk,⁹⁹ GPU activity ceased being clandestine. The militia closed the façade entrances of the building. The authorities announced that the façade doors would be locked “for safety reasons and in the interests of the residents—respected writers of Ukraine” to prevent robberies.¹⁰⁰ The residents could now enter the building only from the internal yard. On both sides of the building there were always at least two young individuals whose faces after some time became familiar to the residents.¹⁰¹ These additions to the building’s population occupied their places twenty-four hours a day.

Their behavior became rather assertive, and, according to the opinions of many *slov'iany*, increasingly aggressive. Two or three residents, while walking along the building or in the internal yard and conversing, were often joined by a follower behind them, who without any concealment tried to catch the content of the talk. The tactics of GPU agents began to irritate the

⁹⁸ Shapoval, “Zhyttia ta smert’,” 328-29.

⁹⁹ On Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, see Chapter Five. On Skrypnyk and Ukrainian Communism, see James Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 192-231. **Mykola Skrypnyk** (1872-1933) was a leader of Ukrainian Communists and a senior government official in Soviet Ukraine. Working for the Soviet government as the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs (1921-22), of Justice (1922-27), and at the end of his life, of Education (1927-33), Skrypnyk vigorously advocated Ukrainization. He was accused of Ukrainian nationalism and, according to the official version, on 7 July 1933, he committed suicide.

¹⁰⁰ Sokil, 110.

¹⁰¹ Senchenko, “Notatky,” 549.

residents, the most courageous of whom often stopped abruptly and asked whether the follower wanted a cigarette.¹⁰²

“Berezil” theater actor Iosyp Hirniak who survived Stalin’s purges and observed how the *slov’iany* were taken by the GPU one by one also testified that before the arrest the agents followed the victim for a week or two, with intentional conspicuousness, and in this way terrified the chosen victim before he or she was taken to a prison cell in Radnarkomivs’ka Street, the Kharkiv GPU headquarters.¹⁰³

Khvyl’ovyi’s suicide and GPU surveillance devastated the residents of *Budynok Slovo*, and the building became silent and seemingly uninhabited. The writers developed distrust toward their neighbors: almost all oral contacts and social activities were cut off. People stopped inviting their neighbors and colleagues for a cup of tea or for a game of chess. The volleyball and football competitions receded into the past, and people no longer sat at the tables in the garden playing chess. The janitor Iakym stopped preparing the skating rink for the children. People rushed into their apartments, avoiding conversations. The internal yard was abandoned by the *slov’iany*, and appropriated by GPU agents on duty.¹⁰⁴

Ostap Vyshnia stopped going out, and only publishing affairs forced him to leave the building. His wife Varvara always kept him company.¹⁰⁵ Mykola Bazhan, expecting visitors from the GPU every night, slept in his pants for a year, and his little suitcase was packed with things of first necessity

¹⁰² Sokil, 110-11.

¹⁰³ Iosyp Hirniak, *Spomyny*, ed. Bohdan Boichuk (New York: Vydavnytstvo “Suchasnist’,” 1982), 373-74.

¹⁰⁴ Sokil, 103, 111-12.

¹⁰⁵ Hirniak, 373.

in case of an emergency. He rejected the idea of standing naked in front of GPU agents.¹⁰⁶

In the morning, leaving for work, many *slov'iany* put in their bags a piece of soap, a towel and clean underwear. The daughter of the writer Mykola Dukyn, Natalka Dukyna, recalled that this was a common practice in *Budynok Slovo* after Khvyl'ovyi's suicide. The residents began to burn personal correspondence, manuscripts and books that could compromise them.¹⁰⁷ They could not and would not write. Mykola Kulish's wife Antonina Kulish confirmed that after Khvyl'ovyi's death, Kulish was so depressed that he wrote nothing for a year, and only in 1934 produced a play *Vichnyi Bunt* (*Eternal Uprising*) and the script for the cinema *Parizhkom* (*The Paris Commune*).¹⁰⁸

Budynok Slovo was transformed into a prison for its residents, and the *slov'iany* referred to it as "the building of preliminary imprisonment," BPU (*budynok poperednioho uv'iaznennia*).¹⁰⁹ An escape from there was virtually impossible. No one, with a suitcase or without, could leave the building unnoticed. Besides, an escape would only confirm their alleged guilt, and the desire to avoid punishment. The writers' family members were potential hostages for the GPU and also were under constant surveillance, which reminded the *slov'iany* about the temporary nature of their lives. In Walter

¹⁰⁶ Pylyp Selihei and Stanislav Tsalyk, "Bez kanoniv, abo pro shcho zmovchaly biohraphy Mykoly Bazhana," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia* 39 (514), 2-8 November 2004, available at <http://www.dt.ua/3000/3760/47915/> (accessed 31 October 2010). About the feeling of fear developed during Stalin's repression, see also Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 117-20.

¹⁰⁷ Dukyna, 86.

¹⁰⁸ Antonina Kulish, "Spohady pro Mykolu Kulisha" in Mykola Kulish, *Tvory*, ed. Hryhorii Kostiuk (New York: Ukrains'ka Vil'na Akademiia Nauk u SShA, 1955), 420.

¹⁰⁹ Sokil, 111.

Benjamin's terms, they began to expect a "very definite death...at a very definite place."¹¹⁰

It was much easier for the Ukrainian intelligentsia to disappear from Kharkiv if they lived elsewhere, not in *Budynok Slovo*. Some escaped to Asia, Russia, Siberia, the Caucasus and Crimea. For instance, historian and writer Mykola Horban' left Kharkiv just before the beginning of mass repressions in 1933, and fled to Tomsk, Russia. He found employment there as a university professor.¹¹¹ In contrast, the *slov'iany* were trapped in the building, and all their moves were carefully monitored. With the assistance of informers (*seksoty*) and GPU agents, the secret police manufactured files (*spravy-formuliary*) on all members of the cooperative "Slovo," in which the residents' regular contacts, habits and daily working schedules were described.¹¹²

The Role of Janitors and Administrators

Originally, *Budynok Slovo* was conceived as a 66 apartment building. However, according to a GPU injunction, two more apartments were added during the planning stage—one for a janitor, and another—for the administrator of the building. The secret police performed a search and appointed two reliable individuals for these two positions. The cooperative "Slovo" had nothing to do with the selection process but had to provide GPU

¹¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 101.

¹¹¹ Sokil, 11-12.

¹¹² See, for instance, HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C183 which contains reports of *seksoty* and GPU agents about the daily activity of *Khvyl'ovyi* from 1930 to May 1933; and Iurii Shapoval, *Poliuvannia na Val'dshnepa: Rozsekrenchenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009). *Seksoty* (plural) stands for *sekretnye sotrudniki* (secret agents) in Russian.

agents with two apartments free of charge. The janitor Iakym Petymko became a key figure in interactions between the secret service and the intelligentsia.¹¹³

Svetlana Boym noted that janitors, having moved to the cities, received resident privilege “in exchange for performing a number of services—least of which was any actual yard cleaning. They informed, supervised, drank with the members of the Housing Committees, and occasionally swept the staircases.”¹¹⁴ Petymko lived in the basement of the first entrance (apartment no. 2). He was married and had a daughter Alla who did not get along with other children in *Budynok Slovo*.¹¹⁵ Petymko’s wife was also a janitor in the building, and the sanitary conditions (as well as the ideological purity of the community, as we learn later) totally depended on this family.

Iakym appeared to be gloomy and taciturn, and his interest in the celebrity status of his neighbors, to say nothing about his interest in their literary work, was limited. However, he was not deprived of compassion or some other manifestations of humanity. For instance, writers who were penniless or destitute could borrow some insignificant sums from Iakym to survive until the next literary honorarium. Among residents frequently saved by Iakym was Volodymyr Sosiura who after routine scandals at home with his multiple relatives ran to Iakym to borrow money. On one occasion, Iakym, taking pity on Sosiura and his black eye, lent him some money, not expecting

¹¹³ On janitors as GPU/NKVD agents, see Timothy Sosnovy, *The Housing Problem in the Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1954), 29-30, and M.G. Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry, opredeliiaushchiie soznaniie: Gosudarstvennaia zhylishchnaia politika v SSSR. 1921-1941*, ed. Andreas Umland (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2005), 82-84. Janitors were hired and supervised by the militia and the GPU/NKVD. A housing cooperative must had to provide an apartment for a janitor free of charge. This perk made janitors faithful and obedient to the secret police.

¹¹⁴ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 129. For more on janitors and on Petymko, see also Serhii Bilokin’, *Masovyi teror iak zasib derzhavnoho upravlinnia v SRSR (1917-1941): Dzhereloznavche doslidzhennia* (Kyiv: Fundatsiia “Volia,” 1999), 212.

¹¹⁵ Dukyna, 82.

the debt to be repaid. Sosiura's payment was a copy of his book with a memorable inscription that he provided on the spot. After Sosiura, encouraged by Iakym's generosity, disappeared around the corner, Iakym openly burned the gift in front of many witnesses.¹¹⁶

Iakym's responsibility was constant and invariable. He had to inform the GPU about visitors to residents, the time of their arrival and departure, the frequency of the visits, and about the everyday activities of the residents.¹¹⁷ When mass arrests began in *Budynok Slovo* in 1933-34, Iakym's service to the secret police and his responsibilities were extended. Accompanied by a group of GPU agents, he rang the bell of a writer's apartment, and witnessed the necessary search and a preliminary interrogation. Petymko's neighbor was Anatolii Boldiner who lived in apartment no. 1, and who often served as Petymko's replacement during the arrests. Beyond his role as a witness and informer for the GPU, Boldiner represented the building's administration and was called *kerbud* or housing administrator.¹¹⁸ The names and signatures of Petymko and Boldiner appear in many GPU arrest protocols in the criminal files of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who once resided in *Budynok Slovo*.¹¹⁹

The fates of Petymko and Boldiner remain unknown but their names are engraved in the history of Stalin's repressions in Kharkiv during the 1930s. In a very practical sense, Petymko and Boldiner, as well as other janitors,

¹¹⁶ Kulish, *A Word*, 45-46.

¹¹⁷ On the responsibilities of janitors, and their incentives and rewards, see Sosnovy, 30-1.

¹¹⁸ Despite the fact that a *kerbud* (*keruiuchyi budynkom*) was on the payroll of the cooperative, the NKVD "recommended" or appointed a person for this position. This position was established in August 1921 by a SNK decree. See Meerovich, *Kvadratnyie metry*, 75-77; Dukyna, 128, 359; Katerina Gerasimova, "The Soviet Communal Apartment," in *Beyond The Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History And Culture*, ed. Jeremy Smith (Helsinki: Finish Historical Society, SHS, 1999), 122; Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, 79-80, 83; DAKhO, f.R1402, op.3, spr.6, ark.5.

¹¹⁹ The files are located in the archives of the Security Service of Ukraine in Kyiv and Kharkiv.

couriers and housing administrators, appointed by the GPU, actively facilitated the establishment of a new ideology and pure socialist society. The Petymkos were janitors and sanitizers of the society, and their contributions to the repression of professional communities should not be overlooked.¹²⁰ Reciprocal relations and fruitful exchanges existed between the lower chain of command (*dopomizhnyi sklad* of the GPU), in other words the populace, and professionals in the Soviet secret service, which was not necessarily expressed through material support of the former.¹²¹ Personal favors, including a major incentive from the GPU—the right to live—were factors governing the effective productivity of these relations.

Deterioration of the Community and Art

The *slov'iany* anticipated and expedited the emergence of what Vladimir Paperny has termed Culture Two, which “wanted to tie people to their spaces, to settle them down.”¹²² They conceived the place long before 1932, and to a certain degree, shaped new individualistic values of the future Stalinist era. Communists and enthusiastic builders of a new Communist era, *slov'iany* became confused by the assertive and forceful tactics of the GPU. They avoided spending nights at home. The Soviet secret police placed the whole building under surveillance so suddenly that *slov'iany*'s new

¹²⁰ On Petymko and Boldiner, see Senchenko, “Notatky,” 571.

¹²¹ Sarah Davies, “The Leader Cult: Propaganda and its Reception in Stalin’s Russia,” in John Channon, eds., *Politics, Society and Stalinism in the USSR* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998), 116.

¹²² See Vladimir Paperny, “Men, Women, and the Living Space,” in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, ed. William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 149, 154. According to Paperny, the term Culture One refers to cultural norms and values that were popular in the Soviet Union in 1917-1932. They were based on “instability, futurism, movement, change, equality, and collectivism.” Culture Two embraced the period between 1932 and 1954, and was characterized by “stability, history, immobility, durability, hierarchy, and individualism.”

perceptions and feelings about the changing climate in the building had little time to mature. This shocking experience and the first arrests in the building alienated them from one another and from the external world. The writers were horrified by the new emerging culture of denunciation in the building and their membership in it. *Budynok Slovo* was now a reservoir of dangerous energy, and the *slov'iany* perceived themselves as an unneeded commodity that had been used and disposed by the state.

They came to the realization that their status and privileges were provisional and meaningless before the threat of being arrested, deported, or shot. Sleepless productive nights and the pleasant experience of personal creativity were replaced by a torturous waiting for arrests. The habitual certainties and the comfort generated by their special status as celebrities and by the exclusivity of the place where they lived were undermined by a force they had no control over—the state. The meaning of *Budynok Slovo* was reformulated in their minds, and the associative links between the building, prestige and comfort were broken. The life of the mind was reduced to the elementary existence of physical bodies in a physical place, simple survival.

Some had nervous breakdowns; many could not write. For instance, in 1933, Sosiura was put in a mental institution in Kharkiv, and was later transferred to Moscow. In all, he spent about a year in mental clinics receiving professional help.¹²³ The cultural production and literary in-fighting with literary opponents no longer occupied the minds of *slov'iany*, or, rather, these pastimes became secondary considerations in their survival strategies. Despite a widespread culture of diary writing that was encouraged and inspired by the

¹²³ Kostiuk, 1:303-04.

Soviet regime,¹²⁴ the realities of *Budynok Slovo* prevented Ukrainian intellectuals from keeping records. Arkadii Liubchenko was the only one to write a diary which he began only in 1941 under the German occupation of Kharkiv.¹²⁵ Observing regular thorough searches of the apartments during the arrests of their neighbors, they learned that they could not leave any evidence of private thoughts on paper, which could be interpreted in any possible way by creative GPU associates.¹²⁶

After 1932, most *slov'iany* fell silent, or published one or two politically correct novels that glorified the successes of collectivization and industrialization. The tragedy of the writers who stopped writing becomes evident when one compares it to the productivity of the 1920s. Vasyl' Sokil has provided an impressive list of works by *slov'iany* that were written and published in the 1920s.¹²⁷ Socially and professionally active in the 1920s, Khvyl'ovyi wrote “nothing significant” after he moved to *Budynok Slovo*.¹²⁸ The free spirit of creativity of most writers melted in the grip of fears for their relatives and their physical survival.

The writers realized that for the state and the secret police, *Budynok Slovo* was nothing more than a “counterrevolutionary nest” and a place of “anti-Soviet conspiracy.” Certainly, the non-standard living spaces that belonged to the *slov'iany* shaped the secret police’s attitudes toward the

¹²⁴ On the culture of diaries, see Hellbeck’s *Revolution on My Mind*, and “Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts,” in *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities*, ed. Igal Halfin, in The Cummings Center Series (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 135-59.

¹²⁵ Liubchenko mentioned that in the early 1930s, *slov'iany*, anticipating their arrest, began to burn their personal papers. See Liubchenko in Aheeva, 148.

¹²⁶ Sokil, 103, 116.

¹²⁷ Sokil, 112-16.

¹²⁸ Shapoval, “Zhyttia ta smert’,” 336.

residents as a privileged community, but most importantly, the GPU perceived them as untrustworthy and politically unreliable.

In 1930 when writers moved into *Budynok Slovo*, they were involved in the production of a unique space for themselves and distinctive social practices. The distinctiveness of their social and material conditions encouraged the state to perceive the building as a place not for subordinates but for free co-producers of new socialist society. For the Soviet government the place became an extension of the free Ukrainian national spirit that blossomed among Ukrainian writers in the 1920s, and manifested itself in their creative art. The Literary Discussion among the literati had identified (for the authorities) the politically unreliable, and most of these were to be found in one place, conveniently for the state but fatally for the writers. The state's trust in writers was low; the danger of their ideas for the center was considered high.

By 1932, the GPU became the de-facto owner of the place. After the arrests of the Ukrainian intellectuals had been made, they ordered the wives and children to surrender their apartments, in which the GPU installed new residents.¹²⁹ Officially, it was only in 1937, when the Soviet government issued the 17 October 1937 Law "On the Preservation of the Housing Fund and the Improvement of Housing in Cities," that the house-building cooperative societies were dissolved.¹³⁰ Because of this law, the huge cooperative housing fund passed into the possession of the state in all Soviet republics.¹³¹ *Budynok Slovo* factually became state property in the early 1930s

¹²⁹ On the fate of Ostap Vyshnia's wife, actress V.O. Masliuchenko, see Leonid Lench, "Chotyry zustrichi," in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs'kyi, 210-11.

¹³⁰ Sosnovy, 20, 24.

¹³¹ Sosnovy, 20.

when displacements and apartment transactions were implemented at will by the GPU after massive arrests of the building's residents.

The new place and space legitimated the power of the regime, and the new composition of the building's inhabitants illuminated the vulnerability and helplessness of the *slov'iany* to resist state power.¹³² The administration of the cooperative "Slovo" was absolutely powerless to defend the property they had conceived and built for the writers. By late 1933, the place produced by the writers was illegally appropriated by the GPU.¹³³ Many newcomers simply seized the apartments. After the physical extermination and displacement of residents, the original meaning of the building's designation as the home of writers was erased. New residents created a new culture that resembled the culture of a military detachment rather than a space of art and intellectual life.¹³⁴

Moreover, artistic clashes and personal disagreements exacerbated the feeling of an "unnatural community" that strangled freedom of expression among writers, and eliminated vestiges of what was initially conceived as a civic professional association.¹³⁵ This was of great assistance to the secret organs, which were bent on demolishing the unique atmosphere of the

¹³² On space and social order, see Edelman, 73-90.

¹³³ On illegal appropriation of entire houses and apartments by higher Soviet organs, see Sosnovy, 60.

¹³⁴ The eviction of writers' families from *Budynok Slovo* was facilitated by a set of instructions "About evicting citizens from their residencies" within the 13 January 1924 decree, issued by VTsIK and SNK. These instructions were updated in June 1926. See M.G. Meerovich, *Kak vlast' narod k trudu priuchala: Zhylishche v SSSR—sredstvo upravleniia liud'mi. 1917-1941 gg*, ed. Andreas Umland (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2005), 60-61, 104-07. The state virtually dismantled the housing cooperative movement through the 17 October 1937 TsIK resolution. See Meerovich, *Kvadratnye metry*, 163-64, 168, 172, 174-75. On GPU decisions to appropriate apartment buildings, the displacement of their residents, and the GPU cooperation with the Kharkiv Housing Union (*Gorzhyloiuz*), see DAKhO, f.R1402, op.3, spr.6, ark.1,11,17,19,21,22.

¹³⁵ On "unnatural community," see Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz and trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1978), 75.

building along with physically removing its residents. Paraphrasing Lefebvre's terms, the culture of *Budynok Slovo* was murdered by the anti-culture of the GPU and new residents, some of whom now worked for the Soviet secret agency.¹³⁶

Interestingly enough, an association of writers that assumed common communal and professional interests initiated and produced a place that was supposed to physically separate its members, providing them with privacy and seclusion. The material logic of the intellectuals' existence and their needs for solitude and comfort (in order to be able to create) outweighed the writers' ideological upbringing and their faith in collective values. Within two to three years, the state completed their separation to the point of isolation.

The loss of their habitual material world and ritualized existence, amplified by their confused feelings about themselves and their sense of belonging, resulted in a loss of moral orientation and agonies of morbid conscience. Through torture and in the face of violent death, they compromised with interrogators, hoping to return to their families, to their happy bohemian lives and the opportunity for self-expression.

¹³⁶ Lefebvre wrote: "nature is being murdered by 'anti-nature'—by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse, as also by labor and its products." See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 71.

Chapter Three

Police Spatial Practices and the Galician Trace

The coldness and fixity of their gaze betrayed the nature of their occupation. Was it a reflection of their corrupt souls or a mark of the revolting work to which they devoted themselves day and night?

Michael Voslensky ¹

The habitual nocturnal existence of the writers matched the nocturnal schedule of GPU agents who established surveillance of *Budynok Slovo* immediately after the writers moved there in late December of 1929. The *slov'iany* were placed at the top of the surveillance list which grew rapidly. The secret police's presence permeated their daily life, and their cultural and professional practices. The GPU carefully monitored, and often manipulated and guided the writers' activities in the direction prescribed by the state.

The writers' vulnerability became clear to them long before the first arrests in the building occurred. Their feelings of uncertainty and fear, which emanated from the secret aura of the GPU and from the writers' lack of awareness of the scale of GPU repressive activities, generated a degree of popular conformity and compliance among the *slov'iany*. The first searches and arrests confirmed their high visibility for the state, and defined the boundaries of their behavior in the privileged space of *Budynok Slovo*, behavior which was later transplanted to interrogation rooms.

The literary and private lives of the residents were influenced by so many various social and cultural environments that a full rendition of the stories of more than sixty individuals seems a rather daunting task. However,

¹ Michael Voslensky's personal impressions about *chekists*, quoted in *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 280.

the common space they shared produced areas of overlapping experiences that provides some insight into the place of surveillance and regimentation, and into people's reactions to this place. From this description of the place and analysis of its inhabitants' behavior the cultural atmosphere of those days will emerge, and the demise of the Ukrainian intellectual community and the implications of its demise may be more fully understood. Readers might be able to see (in the words of the Ukrainian scholar Mykhailo Naienko) "not only the trees in the forest but the forest itself," a place of literary experimentation and nation-building that was regimented by the state.²

This generation of writers exhibited absolute faith and confidence in their own talent and energy that would enable them to transform Ukrainian literature and art from its provincial and backward status into a modern European art form. Their aspirations and freedom competed with the state's dictatorship which by definition did not embrace competition. Unbeknownst to them, the price to be paid for this competition was supreme—their lives.

Freedom has been traditionally associated with boundless space. Paradoxically, in Soviet Ukraine the writers erected walls to feel free, boundaries that separated them from the external world, and ultimately from the state. Using Hellberg-Hirn's terminology, they separated themselves from external chaos in the hope of building internal order.³ This was an ideological declaration in itself for the state, despite the fact that for the authorities the cooperative movement at least partially solved the housing question in Ukraine on its own, without additional state investments. But most

² Mykhailo Naienko, "Khudozhni styli, techii, napriamy—synonimy chy slovesni zaminnyky?," *Literaturna Ukraina*, 1 September 2011, p. 15.

³ Ellena Hellberg-Hirn, "Ambivalent Space: Expression of Russian Identity," in *Beyond the Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Jeremy Smith (Helsinki: Finish Historical Society, SHS, 1999), 69.

importantly, the internal dynamics of this place were too free and too vigorous which clashed with the idea of a centralized authority nurtured by the center.

This chapter investigates the early period of the repression of the *slov'iany* during 1930-1931, when the regime began to imprison and deport “nationalists,” especially those who had links with Galicia. The chapter demonstrates the anti-national and geopolitical vector of the repression, and analyzes the reasons for such spatial tactics employed by the GPU.

Historical Context

As archival documents recently declassified in Ukraine and scholarly works by the historians Norman Naimark, Iurii Shapoval, Vasyl' Marochko, Serhii Bilokin' and others demonstrated, repressions during the 1920s-50s had a pronounced anti-national vector in Ukraine.⁴ The Bolsheviks considered Ukrainians a potentially dangerous force: from the moment they took power in Ukraine in 1919, the Cheka/GPU/NKVD began to routinely collect data about the moods and “nationalist” tendencies among the Ukrainian population in the countryside and in the cities. In the early 1920s, the party through the secret police took complete control over publishing production in Ukraine and established a sophisticated multifaceted system of censorship. In 1924, the GPU fabricated a group criminal case under the code name *Kyivs'kyi oblastnyi tsentr dii* (the “Kyiv Regional Center of Actions”), and Mykola Vasylenko,

⁴ Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010); Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); Iurii Shapoval, “Politycheskii terror v Ukraine—20-50-e gody XX veka: Tiazhkii gruz totalitarizma—poiski istyny prodolzhaitsia,” in *Ukraina Incognita*, ed. Larisa Ivshyna (Kiev: Ukrainskaia press-gruppa, 2004), 309; Serhii Bilokin', *Masovyi teror iak zasib derzhavnoho upravlinnia v SRSR (1917-1941): Dzhereloznavche doslidzhennia* (Kyiv: Fundatsiia “Volia,” 1999), 345; Vasyl' Marochko and Götz Hillig, *Represovani pedahohy Ukrainy: zhertvy politychnoho teroru (1929-1941)* (Kyiv: Naukovyi svit, 2003), 52, 248.

Ukrainian historian and president of the Ukrainian Academy of science in 1921-22, was sentenced to 10 years in prison together with other scholars and teachers.⁵

To strengthen their grip on Ukraine, on 26 March 1925 the Central Committee of the RKP(b) sent Lazar Kaganovich, Stalin's faithful adherent and follower, to Ukraine as the general secretary of the KP(b)U.⁶ Kaganovich owed Stalin a favor for his rapid promotion from VTsRPS (*Vsesoiuzna Tsentral'na Rada Profesiinykh Spilok*/All-Union Central Council of Professional Associations) instructor in 1921 to secretary of the Central Committee of the RKP(b). He, therefore, was someone who would and could restrain ambitious Ukrainian party members' national zeal, and who could mobilize the republic to implement its significant social and economic transformation into a modern Soviet entity.⁷

Kaganovich replaced E.I. Kvirin who was forced to resign, and the configuration of Soviet policies in Ukraine began to enforce Stalin's views, a factor that played a significant role in the lives of many prominent, and ordinary political and cultural figures in Ukraine. Ukrainian party leaders' attempts to criticize Kaganovich for his authoritarian management or, worse, their requests to replace Kaganovich as the general secretary in the republic addressed to Stalin resulted in the methodical elimination of Ukrainian communists. By the late 1930s, literally within little more than a decade, there was no one left in the highest echelons of power who had been involved with

⁵ Roman Pidkur, "V pamiat' o 'politicheskoi tselesoobraznosti'," in *Ukraina Incognita*, ed. Larisa Ivshyna (Kiev: Ukrainskaia press-gruppa, 2004), 321.

⁶ On Kaganovich's actions in Ukraine in 1925-28, see E.A. Rees, *Iron Lazar: A Political Biography of Lazar Kaganovich* (New York: Anthem Press, 2012), 61-80.

⁷ Iurii Shapoval, *U ti trahichni roky: Stalinizm na Ukraini* (Kyiv: Polityvydav Ukrainy, 1990), 46-50.

the early implementation of Ukrainization, industrialization and collectivization policies in the 1920s and 1930s. They had been accused of “nationalist deviations” and were eliminated by the state.⁸

On 26 April 1926 Stalin wrote a secret letter to Kaganovich and other members of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the KP(b)U, in which he condemned Shums’kyi’s and Khvyl’ovyi’s ideas as manifestations of national separatism:

...in the Ukraine, where the Communist cadres are weak, such a movement [Ukrainization], led everywhere by the non-Communist intelligentsia, may assume in places the character of a struggle for the alienation of Ukrainian culture from All-Soviet culture, a struggle against “Moscow,” against the Russians, against the Russian culture and its greatest achievement, Leninism, altogether. I need not point out that such a danger grows more and more real in the Ukraine. I should only like to mention that even some Ukrainian Communists are not free from such defects. I have in mind that well known article by the noted Communist Khvyl’ovyi, in the Ukrainian press. Khvyl’ovyi demands that the proletariat in the Ukraine be immediately de-Russified...his ridiculous and non-Marxist attempt to divorce culture from politics—all this and much more in the mouth of this Ukrainian Communist sounds...more than strange...[he] has nothing to say in favor of Moscow except to call on Ukrainian leaders to run away from Moscow as fast as possible...the extreme views of Khvyl’ovyi within the Communist ranks must be combated; comrade Shums’kyi does not understand that only by combating such extremisms is it possible to transform the rising Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian social life into a Soviet culture and Soviet social life.⁹

The secret police reacted quickly, and at the peak of Ukrainization, on 4 September 1926, the GPU distributed a circular “On Ukrainian Separatism”

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ I.V. Stalin, “Tov. Kaganovichu i drugim chlenam PB TsK KP(b)U,” in *Sochineniia* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1954), 8:149-54; see Luckyj’s translation of Stalin’s letter in his *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 67-68. **Oleksandr Shums’kyi** was the People’s Commissar of Education in 1924-27 in Ukraine. In 1927, he was severely criticized by the party and the Komintern about his position on the national question in Ukraine and was transferred to Leningrad. On 13 May 1933 he was accused of being a member of the illegal UVO (the Ukrainian military organization) and was sentenced to 10 years in prison at Solovky. In September 1946, he was released, and on his way to Kyiv was murdered by NKVD associates. On Shums’kyi and his cultural policies in Ukraine, see James Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 86-119.

among a narrow circle of GPU agents.¹⁰ The secret agency explained in detail four main goals in combating Ukrainian nationalism. First, the GPU was to identify the networks among right-wing organizations and the broader strata of Ukrainian society. Second, this was to be implemented through total surveillance of the most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals. Third, the secret agency was to reveal the connections between the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the peasants. Fourth, an analysis of the moods and attitudes of the Ukrainians toward “our internal and international political life” was considered one of the most important tasks of the secret police.¹¹ The actions followed. Those Ukrainian party members who actively promoted Soviet national policies were reprimanded. Many were excluded from the party for nationalist deviations.

This message signaled to the Ukrainian intelligentsia that Ukrainization was a temporary measure. The instant re-orientation of some Ukrainian communists in tune with new political impulses emanating from Moscow manifested itself in their harassment of Shums’kyi, a defender of Ukrainization. Shums’kyi’s eventual resignation in February 1927 indicated that the Kremlin could withdraw their concessions to Ukrainian Communists at any moment, as James Mace and Mai Panchuk have suggested.¹²

Historians Marochko and Hillig argued that Ukrainization offered by the Bolsheviks had features of a distinctive national cleansing operation against proponents of Ukrainian culture, rather than an “ethnophilic”

¹⁰ Iurii Shapoval, “On Ukrainian Separatism: A GPU Circular of 1926,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (1994): 275-302. For details about Khvyl’ovyi’s role in shaping the image of the Ukrainian intelligentsia for the center, see Chapter Five.

¹¹ Yuri Shapoval, “GPU-NKVD as an Instrument of Counter-Ukrainization in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600-1945*, ed. Andreas Kappeler et al. (Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003), 330.

¹² J. Mace and M. Panchuk, *Ukrains’kyi natsional’nyi komunizm. Trahichni iluzii* (Kyiv: 1997), 63.

enhancement policy.¹³ Counter-Ukrainization was accelerated according to the scenario written in the Kremlin in the middle of the 1920s. Although de-russification of Ukrainian urban centers, an increased number of Ukrainian schools, books published in Ukrainian, and the development of national culture did take place, there was also a dark side that was characterized by the purposeful destruction of religious and socio-cultural traditions, which constituted the very fabric of Ukrainian culture.

Seduced by the opportunity to preserve and enhance Ukrainian national identity, many Ukrainians re-emigrated to Soviet Ukraine to participate in the Bolshevik project. The first president of Ukraine, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, returned to Soviet Ukraine in 1924, unaware that his books were quietly purged from the libraries during Ukrainization.¹⁴

The Bolsheviks' attempt to establish obligatory courses in the Ukrainian language for party and state officials who were mobilized from Russian provinces en masse to build a new socialist society in Soviet Ukraine "looked like a farce."¹⁵ Ethnic Russian bureaucrats refused to learn Ukrainian, and those who did learn spoke *surzhyk*, an uneducated mixture of Russian and Ukrainian. Behind the inspiring statistical data reflecting the successes of Ukrainization, one could observe an ideological nurturing of a new Soviet citizen that had little to do with cherishing Ukrainian national culture or

¹³ Marochko and Hillig, 26.

¹⁴ **Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi** was a historian, academic, and head of the Central Rada in 1917-18. On Hrushevs'kyi, see Serhii Plokhii, *Velykyi peredil: Nezvychna istoriia Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2011).

¹⁵ Marochko and Hillig, 27.

encouraging national pride among the Ukrainian population, to say nothing about popular intellectual involvement in learning culture.¹⁶

Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Head of the Directory (the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918), a writer and artist, was one of the few in 1926 who immediately recognized the transformation of the Bolshevik regime into a brutal authoritarian force. As a Marxist and a socialist, Vynnychenko criticized Lenin and his regime for Machiavellian tactics and dishonesty, suggesting that "from a red Bolshevik egg fascism is being hatched."¹⁷

Consequently, the emergence of the 28 August 1928 resolution of the Kharkiv okruha committee of the KP(b)U "About Work among the Intelligentsia" is not surprising: this document, as well as the GPU/NKVD circular "About Ukrainian Separatism," precipitated the subsequent course of repression of Ukrainian intellectuals in cultural institutions and their primary party cells. The 1928 Kharkiv party resolution was grounded in definitions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia provided by the XV Congress of the VKP(b) that emphasized its internal disintegration (*vnutrenneie rassloienie*), pernicious influences of the faculty on young students in universities and hostile attitudes of the Ukrainian intelligentsia toward socialist construction. The Kharkiv party committee suggested that these attitudes grew into open wrecking activities, although thusfar it involved narrow circles of the intelligentsia.¹⁸

¹⁶ Marochko and Hillig, 26-9. On Ukrainization, see also Ielena Borisionok, *Fenomen Sovetskoi ukrainizatsii* (Moskva: Ievropa, 2006), and L.D. Iakubova, *Etnichni menshosti USSR u pershii polovyni 20-kh rokiv XX st.* (Kyiv: NANU, Istytut istorii Ukrainy, 2002).

¹⁷ Vladimir Panchenko, "Marksist, kotoryi khotel ostat'sia ukraintsem," in *Ukraina Incognita*, ed. Larisa Ivshyna (Kiev: Ukrainskaia press-gruppa, 2004), 297.

¹⁸ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.35, ark.192.

Interestingly, Kharkiv party officials hastily mentioned Russian imperial chauvinism, antisemitism and Jewish Zionist chauvinism as equally widespread phenomena among the Ukrainian intelligentsia to divert public attention from its overwhelming fixation on Ukrainian nationalism, a trend that “disintegrated” the community of intelligentsia in Ukraine. The party also scolded the intelligentsia about their insincere bureaucratic approach to Ukrainization. Ironically, the document is written in Russian, and the representatives of the Ukrainian party apparatus (that had to be Ukrainized by 1928, or be at an advanced stage of de-russification) admonished the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Russian about their failures to properly implement Ukrainization policies in Ukraine.¹⁹

This document is also interesting in the context of subsequent repressions because it is one among a few found in the Ukrainian archives that rebukes the Ukrainian intelligentsia for their material corruption. Despite advocating common and individual socialist welfare, the state nevertheless accused Ukrainian intellectuals of moral deterioration and coalescence with the petty bourgeoisie (*meshchanstvo*, *obyvatel'shchina*, *pogonia za material'nyimi blagami*) and *nepmany*.

By the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the Ukrainization campaign, and everything that had been associated with it, free speech, creativity, independent thinking and national self-consciousness, had exceeded the limits of what the state could tolerate.²⁰ During this period, in the bowels of the Kharkiv Cheka, a group criminal case was fabricated against the pro-monarchical *Natsional'nyi tsentr* (the “National Center”) and prominent

¹⁹ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.35, ark.192 zv.

²⁰ See Andrii Khvyliia's report to the party (1931) in TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.4190, ark.1-49, and also TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.4189, ark.2-26.

representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, such as professors Mykola Sumstsov, Fedir Shmit and others, were repressed.²¹

In 1929 the Soviet government embarked on a massive campaign against “bourgeois and nationalist elements,” and set out to liquidate the *kurkuls* (*kulaks* in Russian) as a class within the framework of mass collectivization in Ukraine. The resistance of the peasantry to Soviet collectivization policies had been registered since 1927. In 1927 a League of the Peasants of Ukraine sent a letter of protest to the newspaper *Visti* to inform the party that the Ukrainian peasantry proclaimed war against Soviet policies because the peasants could no longer tolerate the dictatorship of the Communists, with its ensuing hardships and hunger.²² During 1928-1930 the Ukrainian GPU weekly informed the OGPU in Moscow about dangerous tendencies observed in the countryside. In the GPU’s operational materials, it has been noted that anti-Russian and anti-Jewish sentiment had been growing among the Ukrainian peasantry. According to the head of the GPU Balyts’kyi, in January 1930 alone 37 incidents of mass unrest in the countryside occurred, in which 12,000 peasants participated: by early February 1930 the GPU arrested 11,865 people for resistance to collectivization policies and terrorist activity.²³ The October 1929 Plenum of the TsK VKP(b) mobilized 6,435 workers from Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkiv and other cities of the USSR to be sent to the Ukrainian countryside to establish order. Through the efforts of the center and the GPU, on 5-6 October 1930 one of the biggest rebellions in Pavlohrad (*Pavlohrads’ke povstannia*) was suppressed in the countryside. The GPU launched an operation under the code name “Orhanizatory:” 79 peasants

²¹ Pidkur, 320-23.

²² HDA SBU, f.13, spr.370, t.5, ark.41-43,77-79.

²³ Shapoval in Kappeler, 332.

were arrested, 21 of the most dangerous individuals were executed.²⁴ Shortly after the rebellion several hundred more people were arrested by the GPU.²⁵ These developments strengthened the view of the center that Ukrainian nationalism presented a real threat to the Union.

Anticipating resistance among the intelligentsia against forcible agricultural policies, the GPU/NKVD implemented a preemptive blow against those who might have opposed force and violence in the countryside. The SVU trial was part of a thoroughly conceived and effectively implemented strategic state operation against “nationalist deviationists” in Ukraine, and the trial itself was preceded by meticulous work that had been conducted by the GPU since 1926. Over three years, the secret police collected *kompromat* (compromising materials) on thousands of Ukrainian intellectuals.²⁶

The crusade against Ukrainian nationalism was characterized by a cascade of subsequent group criminal cases that obtained code names from groups allegedly formed in Ukraine that struggled for political and cultural independence from Russia: SVU (*Spilka vyzvolennia Ukrainy*—The Union of the Liberation of Ukraine, launched in 1929), UNTs (*Ukrains'kyi natsional'nyi tsentr*—The Ukrainian National Center, fabricated in 1930-31), UVO (*Ukrains'ka viis'kova orhanizatsiia*—The Ukrainian Military Organization, fabricated in 1932-33), OUT (*Ob'iednannia ukrains'kykh natsionalistiv*—The Union of Ukrainian Nationalists, fabricated in 1935), and

²⁴ See the collection of documents in V. Danylenko, ed., *Pavlohrads'ke povstannia: 1930, dokumenty i materialy* (Kyiv: Ukrains'kyi pys'mennyk and HDA SBU, 2009), 16-17.

²⁵ Danylenko, 22. After filtering them, 360 remained arrested, and after screening those, 210 were tried during a closed court hearing in Dnipropetrivs'k. 27 people were sentenced to death, 19 individuals were released, and the rest were sentenced to 3-10 years in prison.

²⁶ See Khvyl'ovyi's role in the SVU trial in Chapter Five. Resistance of the Ukrainians to Bolshevik policies was manifested mostly in the Ukrainian countryside through individual efforts of peasants or groups of peasants. The Ukrainian intelligentsia in Soviet Ukraine had not been organized as an underground movement, a fact that determined their fate.

others.²⁷ The authorities broadcast only the SVU case, publishing daily reports about the trial, cultivating popular belief in internal enemies and counter-revolutionaries. Subsequently, the GPU eliminated “nationalists” in a quiet clandestine manner.

It appears that Moscow paid special attention to those who understood the central power and its intentions, and could articulate and convey their thoughts to others. The danger emanated from those who had an indisputable reputation as talented writers, scientists and scholars. Those who established themselves as independent original thinkers, and who had knowledge of three and more languages (English, French, Italian, Polish) were especially vulnerable.²⁸ Mass terror launched in 1929 by the SVU case that put thousands of intellectuals in prison was destroying “the social base” for Ukrainian separatism that might have put at risk the entire enterprise called the Soviet Union in economic and geo-political senses.²⁹

The Early Thirties: Vanquished *Slov’iany*

An analysis of archival documents reveals the virtual absence of resistance of Ukrainian intellectuals to state violence. In fact, many shouldered it and perpetuated violent practices. The *slov’ianny* and American scholar Hryhorii Kostiuk has always been careful in assessing the contribution of Ukrainian writers to the brutal repression of the Ukrainian intelligentsia during Stalin’s terror. He confessed that this is one of the most difficult and under-

²⁷ Iurii Shapoval, *Ukraina 20-50-kh rokiv: storinky nenapysanoi istorii* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1993); for more details about the SVU trial, see V. Prystaiko and I. Shapoval, “*Spilka vyzvolennia Ukrainy: Nevidomi dokumenty i fakty*” (Kyiv: Intel, 1995).

²⁸ Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains’ki Solovky* (Kyiv: “EksOb,” 2001), 64.

²⁹ Marochko and Hillig, 149. In total, during and shortly after the SVU trial, 30 000 people were exiled for terms of 3 to 10 years, or executed as anti-Soviet national deviationists. See Prystaiko and Shapoval, 44.

investigated topics in scholarly discourse. It is linked to questions of morality and social responsibility, questions that receive more attention in philosophical and psychological inquiries than in historical or sociological studies. The intelligentsia's fear of being repressed and beliefs in Communist ideas combined with political blindness seem to explain their behavior.

On demand of the center, the TsK KP(b)U and the Ukrainian GPU regularly compiled lists of Ukrainian, Jewish and Russian writers who resided and worked in Ukraine, lists that had to be delivered to Moscow. They contained brief biographical data, party membership, major publications, employment history, literary association affiliations and political views.³⁰ Most of these *kharakterystyky* (evaluations) of the writers were negative, revealing their "political physiognomy," "national deviations" and literary errors.

Many *slov'iany* were aware of these reports. The majority was plunged into deep personal crises and depression.³¹ Repressions sobered them and forced them to keep a low profile. Most of them were put on a black list, and state and private publishing houses stopped accepting their works for publication which further demoralized them.³²

The imposition of these constraints affected them financially. They could not support their families even through translation work because publishers, intimidated by the GPU, rejected any work by writers with the

³⁰ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6218, ark.134-48.

³¹ Stepan Kryzhanivskyi, *My piznavaly nepovtornyi chas: Portrety, ece, spohady* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1986), 149.

³² TsDAMLIMU, f.72. op.1, spr.12, ark.24.

reputation of nationalists.³³ Sudden poverty and hunger encouraged chameleon-like practices among them. In order to survive, Khvyl'ovyi's circle of writers had to disguise themselves as active supporters of the party line, even though they understood the baseness of methods the party employed.

After years of debates about the future of Ukrainian culture, gathering together in literary groups, they seemed to surrender their principles and their collective will to build a new Ukrainian culture. Their enthusiasm, exaltation, public actions, and the quest for like-minded conversationalists were dissolved in the shared fear of being repressed. Moreover, factory workers who were regularly invited to public discussions of a new novel or play written by the *slov'iany* served as state inquisitors who criticized the shortcomings and ideological shortsightedness of their work.³⁴ These party techniques brought about social "dissociation" and estrangement of workers and the intelligentsia from each other. In essence, the social unity was disintegrated, and the "national-popular collective will" necessary for historical change was suppressed.³⁵

Similarly, there was no unity between the *slov'iany* and the peasants, although many writers came from peasant backgrounds. In fact, the intelligentsia exhibited a lack of support for the Ukrainian peasants during the most tragic years of 1932-33 when the latter died by the millions in the countryside. The ambivalent attitude of the *slov'iany* to the collectivization

³³ On statistics of published translated works in the 1920s, see M. Hodkevych, "Ukrains'ke pys'menstvo za 10 lit," *Pluzhanyn* no. 11-12 (1927). After 1933, the number of translated works by European authors published in Ukraine was dramatically reduced.

³⁴ For more details on the workers' involvement in public denunciations of the *slov'iany* and their preliminary training by the party, see Chapter Six (Les' Kurbas's experience).

³⁵ See Kate Crehan's thought provoking interpretation of Gramsci's and Marx's ideas about the failure of isolated individuals to "make history" in her *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 154-55.

campaign and to the famine in 1932-33 contrasted with the focus on the peasantry that could be observed in late 19th century Ukrainian political thought and among Ukrainian intellectuals.³⁶ Although many *slov'iany* were former members of the Borot'bist party that supported the peasants and was popular among them, they publicly approved the party line of collectivization that terrorized the peasantry by procurement quotas, a fact that contributed to the disunity of Ukrainian society.

At the peak of the famine, writers were challenging each other in a socialist competition to identify whose novel on collectivization reflected more fully and realistically the marvelous achievements of Soviet power in the countryside. Such a competition was launched between Epik and Khvyl'ovyi as part of their self-rehabilitation. The official press unsurprisingly awarded victory to Epik's novel *Petro Romen*. Epik also promised to complete another novel about class struggle in the countryside by September 1933. Isolated and ostracized, Khvyl'ovyi was extremely quiet, and a newspaper reporter lamented that the author had provided no information on the progress of a new novel.³⁷

The *slov'iany* Oles' Dosvitnii openly hated the peasants, and never failed to express his attitude to his friends. In his novel *Who?* Dosvitnii wrote: "It is a useless attempt to engage the peasants in socialism."³⁸ Often Khvyl'ovyi supported him, emphasizing the low cultural level and

³⁶ Iwan Maistrenko, *Borot'bism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism*, ed. Peter Dornan, trans. George S.N. Luckyj with the assistance of Ivan L. Rudnytskyi (New York: Research Program on the U.S.S.R., the East European Fund, Inc., 1954), 7-10. For a comparative analysis, see Sarah Badcock's discussion about peasant support for the PSR in Russia and its reasons in "We're for the Muzhiks' Party!' Peasant Support for the Socialist Revolutionary Party During 1917," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 1 (2001): 133-49.

³⁷ *Literaturna hazeta*, no. 1, 16 February 1933, p. 1. See also *Literaturna hazeta*, no. 4, 16 March 1933, p. 1 and no. 5-6, 15 April 1933, p. 2.

³⁸ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.1, ark.25.

backwardness of the Ukrainian peasantry.³⁹ Khvyl'ovyi, Dosvitnii and Iohansen believed that the peasants simply sabotaged bread procurement plans, and that in reality there were plenty of grain and other foodstuffs in the Ukrainian countryside.⁴⁰

Moreover, the writers made regular trips to the Ukrainian villages to agitate for increased grain production and the rapid fulfillment of state procurements plans. They wrote reports and articles on the front pages of newspapers, uncovering sabotage by *kurkuls* in collective farms and calling for their complete bolshevization.⁴¹ In the press, the Union of Ukrainian Writers assured the party, Postyshev and Stalin, that the writers, traveling to the countryside, would not be simply tourists but active propagandists of party collectivization policies. Similarly, representatives of the Ukrainian theatre promised Ukrainian collective farms to deliver true Bolshevik theatrical performances and art which would inspire energy and enthusiasm in conducting Soviet policies in the countryside.⁴² Meanwhile, the Ukrainian villages were dying, and Molotov and Stalin demanded the application of measures of “extraordinary severity for failure to meet grain procurements in Ukraine.”⁴³

In the Ukrainian case, the Gramscian notion of a mass movement and resistance to state violence and repression, based on the alliance of a given class with other classes and their collective will, could not materialize. The

³⁹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.39. Dosvitnii believed that the peasantry was the root of all calamities in Ukraine. According to Ialovyi's testimony, Dosvitnii proclaimed: “If I had power, I would burn all villages, and kill the peasantry.”

⁴⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.102.

⁴¹ *Literaturna hazeta*, no. 4, 16 March 1933, p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 42.

absence of potential unity and lack of coordinated effort between the two essential social groups in Ukraine that might have brought about social and political change facilitated the repressive tactics of the secret police. Importantly, many *slov'iany* although they shared cultural traditions and a common origin with the peasantry, had become urbanized and modernized in Kharkiv, and had distanced themselves from the peasants. They passed through various stages searching for their identity: purely artistic, vulgarly politicized and individualistic. The individualistic stage amounted to little more than a scramble for mere physical survival. Myroslav Shkandrij noted that “as the general atmosphere degenerated, the charge of ‘nationalism’ was thrown around indiscriminately,” and Ukrainian intellectuals were left standing alone against the repressive state machine, without support, publically and secretly denouncing each other and discovering perhaps for the first time the extent of their isolation.⁴⁴

Importantly, for those who belonged to the literary bohemia, it was extremely difficult to reconcile their habits and lifestyle with their individual isolation, and to endure change in their status instigated by the political climate in Ukraine. The bohemian lifestyle formed in the twenties was very important to the *slov'iany*. According to Iurii Smolych, flamboyant parties and gatherings played a significant role in the writers’ intellectual development.⁴⁵ Their “domestic incarceration” in the early thirties because of the party’s

⁴⁴ Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992), 168.

⁴⁵ See Smolych’s four volumes of memoirs; Ivan Senchenko, “Notatky pro literaturne zhyttia 20—40 rokiv,” in Ivan Senchenko, *Opovidannia. Povisti. Spohady* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1990), 557-60.

routine harassment was as suspicious for the state as the writers' gatherings.

Some writers realized this earlier than others.

A number escaped from *Budynok Slovo*, increasingly perceived by the center as a nationalist nest, to northern Russian provinces. Others found safe anchor in Moscow and Leningrad. For instance, Raisa Troianker sensed danger prior to the beginning of mass arrests in *Budynok Slovo* and in 1931 left for Leningrad.⁴⁶ The belief was that Moscow, Leningrad, or any other big city in Russia, were safe places for the Ukrainians because they would be less visible for the state, and therefore, had an opportunity to avoid persecution. Moreover, the very fact that a former Ukrainian resident moved to Moscow was a certain statement that the writer had nothing to hide or conceal and was not particularly wedded to a Ukrainian or local identity. Many of those who did not escape at the height of the repression were repressed, and having survived the camps returned not to Ukraine but to Moscow for the same reason.⁴⁷ The false belief that an expatriate sanctuary existed proved to be wrong during the Great Terror and during the massive wave of the late 1940s repressions that absorbed people indiscriminately in all Soviet republics and other foreign cities as well.

By the early 1930s, Moscow had total control over cultural, and ultimately, political matters in Ukraine. On 5 April 1931, the Secret Political Department was created that began to fabricate criminal cases against

⁴⁶ Oleh Kotsarev and Iuliia Stakhivs'ka, "Rai-ia rodom z avanhardu," *Umans'kyi literaturnyi klub*, available at http://umanliteratura.ucoz.ua/index/raj_ja_rodом_z_avangardu/0-48 (accessed 6 November, 2011). For more on Troianker, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 111-64.

⁴⁷ For instance, professor Ivan Sokolians'kyi escaped to Moscow, and in 1947 in one of his letters to his friends, he strongly recommended they not return to Ukraine, "under any circumstances." See Marochko and Hillig, 123.

Ukrainian intellectuals and those who resisted collectivization in the countryside.⁴⁸ As we have seen, on the cultural front the idea that literature and the arts should primarily serve as tools of socialist construction had already become a dominant theme of party resolutions in 1926-27, and was developed by literary critics and local party officials in the press willingly and often eloquently, depending on the literary talent of the commentators.⁴⁹ Ukrainian writers were advised to support the party line not only by party officials but also by their fellow writers. The pressure on artists was totalizing, and emanated from above and below, creating a space of obligatory unison as demanded by the state. As Boris Groys posited, “all of society represent[ed] a single vast, unified, homogenous field of operation.”⁵⁰ Some writers contributed to the *Leniniana* and *Staliniana*, and published poems dedicated to the secret police, trying to prove their loyalty to the regime.⁵¹

Verbally challenging the party’s view about the dominant literary method that was to serve as an example for creative writing, was fraught with reprimands, purges and imprisonment, and by 1930 the *slov’iany* were fully aware of the potential ramifications of oppositional thinking. The early thirties and *Budynok Slovo* became the time and place where the devaluation of individual critical thinking occurred and *sovetskist*’ of Ukrainian literature

⁴⁸ The SPV, *Secretno-politychnyi viddil* of the GPU in the UkrSSR (Secret Political Department) was also responsible for the fulfillment of Stalin’s grain procurement plan that led to the famine of 1932-33. For a discussion about the SPV, see Vadym Zolotar’ov, *Secretno-politychnyi viddil DPU USSR: Spravy ta liudy* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007).

⁴⁹ Myroslav Shkandrij, “Politics and the Ukrainian Avant-garde,” in *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation*, ed. Irena R. Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 220.

⁵⁰ Groys in Dobrenko and Naiman, 99.

⁵¹ See *Hart*, no. 6-9 (1936). See also V. Sosiura, *Tretia rota* (Kyiv: Ukrains’kyi pys’mennyk, 1997), 255.

developed.⁵² The secret police divided society into “these” and “those,” and independent thinkers were identified and marginalized.⁵³

The Kharkiv GPU Prison and Staff: Practices and Traditions

By 1930, the Kharkiv GPU had compiled detailed individual dossiers on all residents of *Bydynok Slovo*, the result of meticulous work by GPU agents who had been collecting operational data already for several years before the writers moved to their new apartments. The data contained surveillance materials and denunciation reports delivered by GPU *seksoty*. During the preceding decade, the secret police had gained valuable experience in dealing with all kinds of enemies of the Soviet regime—*kurkuli*, religious zealots, Zionists, wreckers and nationalists. Everyday practices were established: interrogators worked efficiently and quickly. Confessions were effectively beaten out of prisoners in the cellars of the GPU, and as Merle Fainsod stated, “the extraction of real confession to imaginary crimes became a major industry.”⁵⁴

In 1930, the GPU began to arrest the *slov’iany*, and their confessions facilitated the elimination of the intellectual base of Ukrainian society that was, in the NKVD view, fertile soil for the growth of any resistance movement. The *slov’iany*’s psychological breaking began during the night of the arrest. The procedure of search and arrest was designed to discredit and to

⁵² Iurii Sheveliov, *Z istorii nezakinchenoii viiny*, ed. Oksana Zabuzhko and Larysa Masenko (Kyiv: KMA, 2009), 12, 159-76. *Sovetskist*’ implies a literary style required by the party, a style that was characterized by the proletarian approach to self-expression.

⁵³ Someone said to the Georgian poet Galaktion Tabidze: “We need to kill *those* so that *these* would live.” See Bulat Okudzhava, *Uprazdnennyi teatr: semeinaia khronika* (Moskva: Izdatel’skii dom Rusanova, 1995), 82.

⁵⁴ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 440.

humiliate the suspect in front of his neighbors and family members. In many cases during *slov'iany*'s arrests, all written or printed materials, money and personal possessions were confiscated, and in most cases no certificate or receipt was provided for the relatives of the arrested.⁵⁵

A common feature of behavior under arrest was complete surrender to interrogators and full confession of anti-Soviet activities. In her book *Police Aesthetics*, Cristina Vatulesku has examined the reasons for mass confessions in Soviet prisons in the 1930s. They were partially determined by the suspects' feelings of spatial disorientation in prison, when they lost their familiar cues and connections to their everyday environments. The suspects' confusion and inner disarray were skillfully created and manipulated by GPU interrogators. The absence of familiar routine practices, a network of people and personal material possessions induced their inner tension and even panic in prison cells.⁵⁶

The barbarity of the Kharkiv interrogators was boundless.⁵⁷ To break the suspect's will, the interrogators completely eliminated any interactions between the arrested and the outside world, and physically and mentally abused the arrested. The Kharkiv GPU prison had its own favorite practice—the GPU personnel expropriated people's underwear to dehumanize and to humiliate them.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Senchenko, "Notatky," 778.

⁵⁶ Cristina Vatulesku, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 177-80.

⁵⁷ On barbarous tactics employed by the Soviet secret police, see the narratives by Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, and Ivan Bahrianyi, *Sad Hetsymans'kyi* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo "Shkola," 2008). See also DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641; Myroslav Shkandrij and Olga Bertelsen, "Soviet Secret Police Files and 'Ukrainian Nationalist' Plots, 1929-1934," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, under review; Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 75, 87, 89, 121-27.

⁵⁸ See Vynohrads'kyi's group case in DAKhO, f.R6452, op.6, spr.1118, ark.13-13zv.

Following Andrei Vyshinskii's order that proclaimed that confessions should determine the sentence of the arrested, GPU associates designed special techniques for extorting confessions.⁵⁹ Several months of detention, isolation and humiliation exhausted the physical and moral inner resources of the strongest individual. Daily screaming and shouting by the interrogators often plunged the suspects into a hysterical state, and they were willing to sign their self-indictments which had been prepared beforehand. Physical torture became an indispensable dimension of preliminary investigation for the most obstinate prisoners in the Kharkiv GPU prison.⁶⁰ If prisoners resisted the torture and proved recalcitrant, intimidating tactics, such as verbal threats to retaliate against family members, were employed. Mock murders of relatives in front of the suspect or the raping of relatives in their presence, as in Kosior's case, became favorite methods to extract confessions.⁶¹ The suspect was forced to watch the physical torture of relatives and subjected to multiple personal confrontations (*ochnyie stavki*) with his former friends and co-workers who betrayed him in his presence for the same reasons—fear and exhaustion from physical and mental tortures. These methods provoked a certain “twilight” state in the suspect's mind—indifferent to everything and everyone.

A written admission of guilt by the arrested was usually preceded by several days, weeks or months of “persuasion” and tortures. The disruption of

⁵⁹ Boris Levytsky, *The Uses of Terror: The Soviet Secret Service 1917-1970*, trans. H.A. Piehler (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), 120. Andrei Vyshinskii is known as a state prosecutor of Stalin's show trials.

⁶⁰ Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia moho pokolinnia: Spohady uchasnyka revoliutsiinykh podii v Ukraini* (Edmonton, Canada: Kanads'kyi Instytut Ukrain's'kykh Studii, Al'berts'kyi Universytet, 1985), 263-89.

⁶¹ Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 248.

the suspect's perception of reality through "conveyer" interrogations (sleep deprivation), physical and chemical irritants, such as high or low room temperature, bright light or complete darkness, loud cries or noises, or excessively salty or sweet drinking water, inevitably led to psychiatric symptoms when mental control and moral judgments became problematic.⁶² As many memoirs revealed, the prolonged exposure to bright light or darkness caused pathological psychiatric symptoms such as hallucination, aggressive behavior and irritability, delusions, paranoia, memory lapses, the desire to be alone and so on. "Nothing could be more depressing than that cold sepulchral darkness; the cell seemed like the grave," remembered Tatiana Tchernavin, a victim of Stalin's terror.⁶³

Violent beatings were an everyday routine in the Kharkiv GPU. According to Fiodor Fiodorov-Berkov, former assistant head of the fourth UNKVD department in the Kharkiv region, the main GPU/NKVD headquarters in Kharkiv were a blood bath in the 1930s where screams, moaning, beating noises, shouting, and puddles of blood and urine in interrogation rooms were a routine everyday experience.⁶⁴

The evidence collected in Fiodorov-Berkov's criminal case confirmed many witness accounts about the GPU treatment and work with prisoners. This case demonstrated that the Kharkiv GPU/NKVD systematically employed physical tortures, intimidation of prisoners and falsification of investigative materials. Among those who practiced these methods were

⁶² Vatulesku, 178-79.

⁶³ Tatiana Tchernavin, *Escape from the Soviets*, trans. N. Alexander (New York: E.P.Dutton & Co., Inc., 1934), 139-40.

⁶⁴ See Fiodorov-Berkov's deposition about beating prisoners in DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641. On 8 March 1940, Berkov was incriminated for using his position for personal purposes and fabrication of criminal cases against innocent Soviet citizens. The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR sentenced him to ten years in labor camps.

Berkov, Lev Reikhman and Abram Simkhovich. Berkov routinely arranged “*avraly*,” using his own terminology, when he gave 24 hours for special *troika* to try 50-100 cases.⁶⁵

The responsibilities of GPU associates were precisely identified and carefully planned. The brigade of Drushliak, Kamenev and Gorokhovskii was responsible for providing physical “assistance” to prisoners who denied accusations. Investigator Gold’shtein was put in charge of the process of the falsification of interrogation protocols. NKVD associate Epel’baum fabricated more than 100 criminal cases against intelligentsia and religious figures. Through violent and exhausting beatings, compromising information even about Vyshyns’kyi and Ul’rikh was obtained from prosecutors’ assistants A.I. Moroz and M.I. Bron.⁶⁶ Hundreds of prisoners who were sitting in the cellars of Radnarkomivs’ka Street in Kharkiv were subjected to similar treatment. Former NKVD associate and witness in this criminal case V.I. Lenskii confirmed that all members of all NKVD sectors and departments participated in beatings. There were no exceptions.⁶⁷

Former assistant head of the fourth NKVD department, Boris Frei was especially inventive in extracting false confessions from prisoners. Former regional prosecutor Bron testified that during the investigation Frei systematically beat him and employed a “dog house” method. There was a little space in interrogation room no. 111 between the wall and a heavy cash register. Frei called Bron “a fascist dog,” and forced him to crawl into this little space and bark, or simply to stand there for days. “On the fifth or sixth

⁶⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.120. The term “*avraly*” means an accelerated processing of the accused to bring their criminal cases to conclusion.

⁶⁶ Vasiliy Ul’rikh was a senior judge in the Soviet Union during Stalin’s era. Ul’rikh served as the presiding judge at many of the major show trials in 1937-38.

⁶⁷ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.121.

day of standing there, blood went through my throat and I fell unconscious,” Bron testified.⁶⁸

Similarly, in his appeal to the Prosecutor of the UkrSSR, former prisoner Timokhin wrote that Frei together with two other associates tied him to the chair, burnt his nose and ears, forced him to eat paper, dance and imitate a rooster. Three of them systematically beat and kicked him with their boots. His cell mate P. P. Kipenko confirmed the allegations.⁶⁹ Testifying in court against Frei, Lenskii noted that “during this period, the situation in the GPU/UNKVD was such that the entire building was shaking from screams and moans...”⁷⁰

Usually, when a confession was obtained, another stage followed: the prisoner had to disclose all the names of his accomplices with whom he planned to assassinate the leaders of the Ukrainian government and the party, and with whom he would organize a military uprising against Soviet power in Ukraine.⁷¹ Intimidation and threats to root out the entire family of the arrested facilitated the deposition of the arrested about the imaginary members of the imaginary counterrevolutionary organization. They had no choice but to provide a list of the “members,” denouncing those who were still free.

The methods and esthetics of the Kharkiv *chekists* were shaped under the influence of the central secret organs, and the tactical and structural

⁶⁸ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.127.

⁶⁹ DAKhO, f. R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.128.

⁷⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.125-26,132. On 2-3 April 1940 Frei was sentenced to six years in labor camps; others were sentenced to death.

⁷¹ The knowledge about this is available to us through the testimonies of those who survived the repression and through interrogation protocols of GPU/NKVD interrogators who were arrested during the Great Terror as conspirators of an anti-Soviet plot in Ukrainian punitive organs.

changes that were dictated by the Lubianka.⁷² However, human qualities and features, in other words, personalities, of those who worked for the Kharkiv GPU/NKVD in the 1930s should not be overlooked. In the 1930s, the secret police was multifunctional, and implemented not only investigative and punitive functions but also supervised educational, economic and agricultural activities in the republics through various People's Commissariats.⁷³ Although under strict central party control, certain departments that executed repressive and punitive policies of the Soviet government were credited with special plenary powers. Among them were the Main Administration of State Security (GUDB), the Administration of State Security (UDB), and other departments that occupied a special position within the structure of the Soviet secret police.⁷⁴ The Central Committee in Moscow and the Lubianka supervised all structural changes, functions and everyday activities of the regional secret organs through written correspondence, phone calls, and regular combined meetings of central and regional authorities of the secret police.⁷⁵ Through the various stages of structural reorganization of the secret organs until 1941, the prominence of the GUDB, and of so-called "operational-*chekist*" sub-departments continued to grow, as political power was increasingly centralized in Moscow.⁷⁶

A description of the Kharkiv GPU prison has been provided by several Ukrainian writers who survived arrests and labor camps—Ivan Bahrianyi,

⁷² *Chekists* refers to those who worked in the secret police. The Lubianka is the street in Moscow where the main headquarters of the Soviet secret police were located.

⁷³ Volodymyr Okipniuk, "Rozvytok orhanizatsionnoi struktury orhaniv derzhavnoi bezpeky SRSR i Radians'koi Ukrainy u 1934-41 rr.," *Z arkhiviv VUChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB*, no. 1/2 (30/31) (2008): 293.

⁷⁴ Okipniuk, 294.

⁷⁵ Okipniuk, 295; Olga Bertelsen, "Repressions of Zionist Political Parties in Ukraine, 1920-30s," *Europe-Asia Studies*, forthcoming.

⁷⁶ Okipniuk, 302, 304.

Hryhorii Kostiuk, Ivan Maistrenko and others. In the early 1930s, a newly built prison in the internal yard of the Kharkiv headquarters was hidden from the public eye. The administrative building reliably surrounded the entire perimeter of the prison. Large cells had parquet floors and big windows, features that seemed absolutely inappropriate to the inspection commission from Moscow.



The Kharkiv SBU headquarters and the internal yard where in the 1930s the GPU prison was located. June, 2012.

The commission characterized the prison as a resort. The administration immediately found a solution. The most “dangerous” individuals were kept in Radnarkomivs’ka Street, and the rest who were under preliminary investigation were placed in a prison in the Kholodna Hora (Cold Mountain) district, an older prison and, thus, less modern and comfortable. Every day a truck delivered the prisoners to Radnarkomivs’ka Street for interrogation. The Kholodna Hora prison’s conditions and moldy cells were more suited to the Moscow inspectors’ conception of a proper prison environment. However, the commission was dissatisfied with the beautiful

view from the cells' windows. Its members ordered all trees in the internal yard of the prison to be cut, and the cells' windows to be covered by special hoods to obscure the view. In their view, the beauty of nature did not contribute to the interrogators' hard work of obtaining confessions. Green grass, trees and blue sky connected the arrested with the external world which was in clear violation with police norms, rules and aesthetics.⁷⁷

The First *Slov'iany* Arrested

The GPU began to arrest *slov'iany* three weeks after they moved to their new apartments. During the night of 19-20 January 1930, the GPU came to apartment 27 to arrest Ukrainian actress, writer and teacher Halyna Orlivna (Mnevs'ka).

Halyna Orlivna was born in the village of Kalandentsi in Poltava oblast' in 1895 but in 1920 she moved abroad to Lviv. She published her first prose in Ukrainian journals in Vienna, Prague and Lviv, and before she returned to Soviet Ukraine in 1925, she had two collections of short stories published.⁷⁸

In 1920 in Poland, she married the young writer Klym Polishchuk. The Lviv period became very productive for both writers but in 1925, the Polishchuk family decided to move to Kharkiv, which as the capital of Ukrainian culture was perceived to be a perfect place for a young couple with literary talent. Together with their little daughter Lesia, they moved first to Lubny (where Orlivna had been born), and later to Kharkiv. Klym was hesitant and reluctant; he anticipated repressions. Halyna was optimistic and

⁷⁷ Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 263-89.

⁷⁸ A.M. Lejtes and M.F Jasek, *Desiat' Rokiv Ukrajin's'koi Literatury (1917-1927)*, *Bio-Bibliohrafičnyj Charkiv. 1928* (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1986), 1: 346.

enthusiastic. According to Klym's letters from labor camps, Halyna was adamant in her decision to move to Kharkiv. In hindsight, Klym systematically rebuked Halyna for her thoughtlessness and shortsightedness.

In his 14 December 1934 letter to Halyna, Klym wrote:

I should have done what I thought was right...I would not have done this... if not for your desire to return as soon as possible there...I had to agree because I loved you and Lesia, and could not allow myself to stay there by myself...I could not allow this but I knew the consequences of this decision, I could predict them, and saw them in my dreams...⁷⁹

Their literary careers in Kharkiv followed different trajectories. Klym could not work, and what he wrote seemed to him insipid and colorless. The theme of the revolution, a feature of his earlier work, disappeared. His characters became hesitant and confused.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Halyna advanced her talent and grew professionally. The year of 1929 was extremely productive for her, and marked a qualitative change in her literary skill. Halyna published her novel *Emigrants* edited by Pavlo Tychyna.⁸¹ In 1929, she joined the literary association "Pluh." Following a popular subject among writers, Halyna conceived a novel about collectivization, and traveled to many collective farms in Poltava, Kharkiv and Myrhorod oblasts to study closely the problems and successes in the countryside. The result was unexpected. In the beginning of 1930, she published two works *Nove pole (New Field)* and *Babs'kyi bunt (Women's Uprising)* which tragically changed her life.⁸² In her works, Orlivna depicted the peasants' distrust of Soviet collectivization and

⁷⁹ Oleh Kotsariv, "Fatal'na pomyłka Klyma Polishchuka," *Litaksent*, available at <http://litakcent.com/2009/09/17/fatalna-pomyłka-klyma-polishchuka/> (accessed 13 November 2011).

⁸⁰ See Myroslav Shkandrij's analysis of Polishchuk's works in his *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 110-15.

⁸¹ *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 7-8, 9-10 (1927).

⁸² Mykola Zhulyns'kyi et al., eds., *Nashi vtraty: Materialy do biohrafichnoho slovnyka represovanykh u 1930-ykh rokakh diiachiv v URSR, zibrani Iuriiem Lavrinenkom* (Kyiv/New York: Ukrain's'ka Vil'na Akademiia Nauk u SShA, "Tvym Inter," 2005), 83.

their resistance to the methods of forcible collectivization the Soviets employed.

Despite the fact that their marriage deteriorated and they eventually separated, Halyna and Klym shared similar fates. Klym Polishchuk was arrested on 5 November 1929. Orlivna was “double-guilty.” She was identified as a relative of a counterrevolutionary, and because of her novels, she earned a reputation as a Ukrainian nationalist.⁸³ She was arrested in *Budynok Slovo* after she moved there together with her lover, the Russian writer Volodymyr Iurezans’kyi. According to Ukrainian scholar Petro Rotach, Iurezans’kyi’s and Orlivna’s affair began in 1927 ending the relationship between Halyna and Klym.⁸⁴ The GPU put her in Kholodna Hora prison, and in the same year she was exiled to Kazakhstan for 5 years.



Halyna Orlivna⁸⁵



Klym Polishchuk⁸⁶

She continued to write in Kazakhstan and even sent some of her work to Kharkiv but soon realized that her work would never be published. Her

⁸³ “Halyna Orlivna,” *Poltavshchyna literaturna* (Poltavs’ka oblasna organizatsiia Natsional’noi spilky pys’mennykiv Ukrainy), available at <http://www.pollitra.pi.net.ua/index2.php?a=300&b=301&m=11&d=15&cdr=38> (accessed 13 November 2011).

⁸⁴ See also Borys Kostyria, “Ternysti shliakhy Klyma Polishchuka,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 6 November 2011.

⁸⁵ The picture is located in the Iakov Voznyi family archive.

⁸⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr. 035261 (Polishchuk’s criminal file).

mother brought Lesia to Kazakhstan, and shortly after this trip Halyna's mother died. After her term, Orlivna taught in the Martunsk high school in Aktiubinsk oblast': the GPU/NKVD prohibited her to return to Ukraine. She was able to visit Kyiv and Lubny only after the war in 1948. She died in Kyiv on 21 March 1955 and was buried in the village of Holoby in Kovel' region (Volyn' oblast'), the native village of her second husband Iakiv Voznyi.⁸⁷

Some commentators argued that Orlivna denounced her ex-husband Klym Polishchuk but Klym's letters from labor camps gave no indication of Halyna's betrayal, and generally are very friendly and warm.⁸⁸ Polishchuk never lived in *Budynok Slovo* but his life is obliquely connected with this place and its residents. He was accused of counterrevolutionary activity, and on 29 January 1930 he was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps by the OGPU Collegium.⁸⁹ Polishchuk was shot on 3 November 1937 together with many other *slov'iany* and Ukrainian scholars and intellectuals, in Sandarmokh (Karelia).⁹⁰ On the order of the UNKVD troika in Leningrad oblast' no. 103010 /37, in total, 265 people were shot on this day. This day should be considered one of the most tragic days for Ukrainian culture: 134 Ukrainian literary figures and artists were exterminated in Sandarmokh to "celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution," as the NKVD called it. Among them were Omelian Volokh, Marko Voronyi, Mykola Zerov,

⁸⁷ S. Iakovenko's forward in Klym Polishchuk, *Vybrani tvory*, ed. V. Shevchuk (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2009).

⁸⁸ Oleh Kotsariv, "Fatal'na pomylka."

⁸⁹ P.T. Tron'ko et al., eds., *Reabilitovani istorieiu: Kharkivs'ka oblast'* (Kharkiv: Oryginal, 2008), 2:286.

⁹⁰ Bilokin', 136-37; Nelli Korniienko, *Rezhysiorskoie iskusstvo Lesia Kurbasa. Rekonstruktsiia (1887-1937)* (Kyiv: Gosudarstvennyi tsentr teatral'nogo iskusstva imeni Lesia Kurbasa, 2005), 355-6. From 27 October to 4 November 1937, 1111 people were shot there. The GB captain M. Matveev shot people in the back of their heads. When he ran out of bullets, he crushed the heads of prisoners with a stick. He lived until 1974 and never regretted his past. He was proud of his honorable and honest service to the state.

Antin Krushel'nyts'kyi, Mykola Kulish, Les' Kurbas, Iurko Mazurenko, Mykola Pavlushkov, Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi, Pavlo Fylypovych, Volodymyr Chekhiv's'kyi and many others.⁹¹

The Russian writer and *slov'ianyn* Volodymyr Iurezans'kyi was never repressed, and continued to live in *Budynok Slovo* with his adult son Borys in apartment 27 after Orlivna was arrested.⁹² However, in late 1933, when *Budynok Slovo* was shaken from night arrests, he left for Moscow.⁹³ Apparently, the GPU had reasons for granting him freedom, despite the fact that his life partner Orlivna was arrested and accused of being a Ukrainian nationalist. First, he was a Russian writer, one among few in *Budynok Slovo*, and in his daily life Iurezans'kyi never spoke Ukrainian. It would be problematic to accuse him of Ukrainian nationalism. Second, he wrote extensively about Dniprobud, glorifying Soviet industrialization, and became one of a few experts in the history of that construction site.⁹⁴ The party needed him as a popularizer of Soviet successes in industrialization.⁹⁵ Before the Great Terror, he moved to the Urals, although the exact date remains unknown. Iurezans'kyi worked in various newspapers, and later resided in Moscow. He died there on 9 February 1957. In his biographical statement, the Ukrainian period was totally erased, and one can only learn about his career in Ukraine by examining his published works.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Bilokin', 136-37.

⁹² Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vydannia zhurnalu "Berezil'," 2002), 533-34.

⁹³ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.127.

⁹⁴ O.O. Ignatusha, "Mistse Zaporiz'koho industrial'noho kompleksu v bil'shovyts'kii industrializatsii 20-30-ykh rokiv," *Naukovi pratsi istorychnoho fakul'tetu Zaporiz'koho natsional'noho universytetu*, no. XXX (2011): 134. Dniprobud is a collective term for multiple construction projects that constituted the industrial complex in Zaporizhia in the 1920s and 1930s.

⁹⁵ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6218, ark.147.

⁹⁶ V.P. Biriukov, *Zapiski ural'skogo kraieveda* (Cheliabinsk: YUKI, 1964), 57-61.

Galicians (*Halychany*): Proponents of Ukrainian Culture

The pattern of early arrests in *Budynok Slovo* followed the general pattern of arrests in Soviet Ukraine during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Those among the Ukrainian intelligentsia who had emigrated from Galicia or those Galicians who had re-emigrated to Soviet Ukraine from European states were arrested first.⁹⁷ The Galicians enthusiastically supported Ukrainization, and after their arrival in Soviet Ukraine they occupied leading positions in various cultural institutions. Moscow perceived the Galician Ukrainian intelligentsia as the authentic carriers and promoters of Ukrainian culture, and ultimately as Ukrainian nationalists. They were cast as “nationalists,” “counterrevolutionaries” and “spies.” Under the OGPU’s supervision, the Ukrainian secret police launched a mass operation that Pavel Postyshev called a “crusade against Galicians.”⁹⁸ The scholar Ivan Maistrenko who survived the terror in the 1930s noted that by the middle of the 1930s, if there were any Galician Ukrainians left in Kharkiv, they were either collaborating with the secret police or had some connections to the GPU.⁹⁹

The scholar Larysa Krushel’nyts’ka (she was six when almost all members of her large family were repressed in *Budynok Slovo*) suggested that Galicians had never perceived themselves as the provincial intellectual elite, views that were in drastic dissonance with the center’s perceptions about Moscow as the capital of all peoples—all other regions were a province for party leaders, and they preferred to keep it this way. She noted that the idea of

⁹⁷ Olga Bertelsen and Myroslav Shkandrij, “The Secret Police and the Campaign against Galicians in Soviet Ukraine, 1929-34,” *Nationalities Papers*, under review; see also AU SBUKhO, spr.021551, t.1, ark.83-86.

⁹⁸ Oleksandr Rubl’ov, *Zakhidnoukrains’ka intelihentsia u zahal’nonatsional’nykh politychnykh ta kul’turnykh protestakh (1914-1939)* (Kyiv: NANU, Instytut istorii Ukrainy, 2004), 24.

⁹⁹ Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 283.

freedom dominated the Galicians' psyche, and the national idea elevated their spirit and awoke their national pride.¹⁰⁰ Sixty thousand of Galicians immigrated to Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s-early 1930s, escaping persecutions by the Poles. The Soviets viewed the Galician intelligentsia not only as "nationalists" but also as "foreign spies" who were to be eliminated.¹⁰¹

The GPU began to methodically arrest Western Ukrainians in July and August 1929.¹⁰² The Galician Matvii Iavors'kyi, political figure, academic of the Ukrainian Academy of Science and the major theoretician of Ukrainian Marxist historiography in the 1920s, was arrested in 1930, and in 1931 was exiled to Solovky.¹⁰³ A new wave of repressions in Ukraine in 1931 absorbed approximately 70 prominent Ukrainian intellectuals. Among them were many Galicians and former members of the Ukrainian Central Rada and the UNR (Ukrainian People's Republic).¹⁰⁴ They were accused of membership in the underground "Ukrainian Nationalist Center" (UNTs) whose "leader" was Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi.¹⁰⁵ Within 5 months, the GPU conducted mass arrests all over Ukraine, and 60,000 Ukrainians, those who served in the UNR Army, were exiled to Siberia.¹⁰⁶ There were professors, teachers, engineers, academics, educators and cultural workers among those who were charged

¹⁰⁰ L.I. Krushel'nyts'ka, *Rubaly lis... (Spohady halychanky)* (L'viv: NANU, Lvivs'ka naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanyka, 2001), 254.

¹⁰¹ Bertelsen and Shkandrij, "The Secret Police."

¹⁰² Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN: 1920-1939 roky*, 3rd ed. (Kyiv: Tsentr doslidzhen' vyvol'noho rukhu, 2007), 161, 163, 167-68.

¹⁰³ See a 4 November 1932 agent report on Iavors'kyi's views in Ivan Drach et al., eds., *Ostannia adresa: Do 60-richchia solovets'koi trahedii* (Kyiv: Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrainy, Vydavnytstvo Sfera, 1997), 2:174-75.

¹⁰⁴ Bilokin', 240-41.

¹⁰⁵ After exhaustive interrogation, Hrushevs'kyi was released and lived in Moscow under the watchful eye of the GPU/NKVD. In 1934, he died from sepsis under mysterious circumstances. For more on Hrushevs'kyi, see V. Prystaiko and I. Shapoval, *Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi i GPU-NKVD: trahichne deciatylittia 1924-1934* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo "Ukraina," 1996), and I. Shapoval and I. Verba, *Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi* (Kyiv: Vydavnychi Dim "Al'ternatyvy," 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Mirchuk, 168.

with illegal activity within the UNTs, the UVO (the Ukrainian Military Organization) and the POV (the Polish Military Organization).¹⁰⁷

The repression of Galicians was a strategic mass operation, and its implementation was intense and vigorous. In 1933 at the November Party Plenum, the General Secretary of the TsK KP(b)U Stanislav Kosior summarized the attitudes of the Soviet government toward Galicians. He proclaimed: “The Ukrainian nationalists are preparing an intervention against the USSR. The majority of those counterrevolutionaries and nationalists that had been uncovered recently came to us from abroad—Prague, Galicia and other places...those Galician nationalists...were sent here to prepare the intervention from inside.”¹⁰⁸

The secret police included Orlivna and Polishchuk in the same dangerous circle of Galician nationalists and spies from Western Ukraine who had to be neutralized, as well as their “nationalist” art. Eastern Galicia was the main base of organized resistance and struggle for Ukrainian independence, and as the scholar Myroslav Prokop noted, “in the eyes of the Kremlin, every Ukrainian who belonged to any Ukrainian civic organization [before or after the revolution] was considered an enemy who had to be destroyed.”¹⁰⁹

Galicians who cherished their cultural roots and national heritage could be a

¹⁰⁷ Marochko and Hillig, 164.

¹⁰⁸ Nataliia Titova, “‘Sanatsiia’ prykordonnia USRR: poboriuvannia ‘pol’s’ko-ukrains’koho fashyzmu’ na Podilli, 1930-ti roky,” *Z arkhiviv VUChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB*, no. 1 (28) (2007): 228. Kosior’s speech was delivered in the Russian language and also officially marked the change of the VKP(b) course of Ukrainization. Kosior called it “petliurite Ukrainization.”

¹⁰⁹ Myroslav Prokop, *Naperedodni nezaleznoi Ukrainy: Sposterezhennia i vysnovky* (New York: Naukove Товариство ім. Шевченка, 1993), 35. See also Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 189.

stimulus for Soviet Ukrainians to follow the Western national path, an influence that had to be prevented.¹¹⁰

Independentist Pavlo Khrystiuk¹¹¹

Pavlo Khrystiuk, the *slov'ianyn* (resident of apartment 25), journalist and historian, was a former member of the Central Rada, Borot'bist, Vynnychenko's adherent and the author of monographs about Vynnychenko.¹¹² Khrystiuk's biography served as a pretext for his arrest. He was arrested on 2 March 1931 on the same day as other former members of the Central Rada Vsevolod Holubovych, Vasyl' Mazurenko and Mykola Chechil'.¹¹³

In April 1917, Khrystiuk was one of the founders of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (UPSR). A member of the Ukrainian Central Rada, he became chief secretary of the General Secretariat. In January 1918, when the independent Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed, he was appointed minister of internal affairs. In late February 1918 Khrystiuk became the secretary of state. Soon after the collapse of Het 'man Pavlo Skoropads'kyi's regime, on 3 August 1919, Khrystiuk emigrated to Vienna, worked for the journal *Boritiesia—poborete*, and wrote a four volume work *Notes and Materials on the History of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1920* which was published in 1922. Today Khrystiuk's work is being extensively

¹¹⁰ Myroslav Prokop, *Ukraina i ukrains'ka polityka Moskv: Period pidhotovy do Druhoi svitovoi viiny*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Suchasnist', 1981), 82.

¹¹¹ "Independentist" means *nezalezhnyk* in Ukrainian.

¹¹² See Khrystiuk's work "V. Vynnychenko i F. Nitsshe," *Ukrains'ka khata*, no. 4-5 (1913): 275-99.

¹¹³ Bilokin', 240-41; Dukyna, 532-33.

quoted and represents one of the eyewitness accounts about the Ukrainian revolution.¹¹⁴

In 1923, encouraged by the idea of Ukrainization, and having faith in the Bolshevik government, Khrystiuk, like many of his compatriots, returned to Soviet Ukraine.¹¹⁵ First he worked as an inspector in the Ukrainian bank. In 1925, the People's Commissar of Education Shums'kyi appointed Khrystiuk one of the administration members in the Ukrainian State Publishing House (the DVU). During this period, he befriended many *slov'iany*, members of VAPLITE.¹¹⁶ His close communication with this group of writers, such as Ostap Vyshnia, Ivan Dniprovs'kyi, Pavlo Tychyna, Mykola Kulish and of course Mykola Khvyl'ovyi encouraged him to continue to write. Their unique literary gifts and the feeling of community Khrystiuk experienced in their company attracted him to their circle, and he became a member of the cooperative "Slovo" with hopes of participating in the construction project of a new home for writers.

The period of the Literary Discussion was productive for Khrystiuk. However, his style went through dramatic changes under state pressure. In contrast to his history of the Ukrainian revolution that had been written abroad, his texts were ideologically adjusted, and constrained. However, Khrystiuk made a serious tactical mistake which the party could not forgive. He published a series of positive critical essays about several writers' literary works who were members of VAPLITE, including Khvyl'ovyi and Epik.

¹¹⁴ I. Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar revoliutsii: Zhyttia ta dolia Pavla Khrystiuka," *Den'*, available at <http://www.day.kiev.ua/167101/> (accessed 15 November, 2011). His work had been hidden in *spetskhrany* by Soviet censors immediately after his arrest in 1931 and remained so for decades.

¹¹⁵ I. Shapoval, *Ukraina XX stolittia: Osoby ta podii v konteksti vazhkoi istorii* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2001), 453; Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar."

¹¹⁶ Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar."

Khrystiuk's favorable tone drastically contrasted with severe party criticism of these individuals. These publications exacerbated his unstable political position. His support of "Ukrainian nationalists" was viewed by the secret police as a relapse of a former independentist, a member of the Central Rada.¹¹⁷

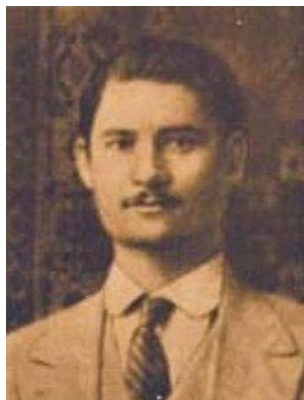
The members of VAPLITE (*vaplitiany*) considered Khrystiuk's articles ill-timed and provocative. They believed that these articles escalated state pressure on VAPLITE. According to Khrystiuk, after the disintegration of this literary association, *vaplitiany* began to avoid meeting him. His work in the DVU became unbearable and he resigned. He found a position at the People's Commissariat of Finances, and worked there from 1928 until 1931. Being employed helped Khrystiuk regularly pay his share during the construction process of *Budynok Slovo*. In early 1931 Khrystiuk accepted a position as a scientific worker at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature, but on 2 March 1931 he was arrested.¹¹⁸

Khrystiuk had always been a problematic and suspicious character in the eyes of the Soviet government. Several factors contributed to this. First, he was a former member of the Ukrainian Rada and the UPSR, entities that were "hostile" to the Bolshevik regime. Khrystiuk's "Galician trace" made him suspect. Second, in 1919 Khrystiuk emigrated to Vienna, "running" from the Bolsheviks, and as far as the GPU was concerned, he remained an immigrant. Very simply, his contact with "bourgeois" Europe made him an offender. Third, Khrystiuk's affinity for *vaplitiany* further compromised his reputation. In his diary, Serhii Iefremov noted that when VAPLITE was harassed by the

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ I. Shapoval, "Pavlo Khrystiuk—[politychnyi diiach Ukrainy]," in Shapoval's *Istoriia Ukrainy v osobakh XIX-XX st.* (Kyiv: Ukraina, 1995), 208-16; Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar."

party establishment, the literary association was rebuked for placing Khvyl'ovyi's and Khrystiuk's nationalistic works on the pages of its journal.¹¹⁹ For the GPU there were ample reasons to neutralize Khrystiuk as a nationalist and counter-revolutionist.



Pavlo Khrystiuk

The elimination of great numbers of the Ukrainian intelligentsia was conducted under the pretext of multiple contrived accusations, the more serious the better, such as treason and conspiracy against the Soviet government, organizing of a military uprising to dethrone the Soviet regime, spying for Western intelligence services to undermine the Soviet state and the like. Khrystiuk and other former members of the Central Rada were accused of membership in the UNTs, which automatically made them guilty of all these points. Khrystiuk signed all protocols that identified him as a nationalist and conspirator in an anti-Soviet plot, and on 7 February 1932 he was sentenced to five years in prison by the OGPU Collegium of the USSR.¹²⁰

Like many other Ukrainian intellectuals, Khrystiuk ended up in Solovky. He was from there assigned to the 9th Kems'kyi department of the

¹¹⁹ S.O. Iefremov, *Shchodennyky, 1923-1929*, eds. O.I. Putro, et al. (Kyiv: Hazeta Rada, 1997), 580.

¹²⁰ Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar."

BBK and worked there for the 5th kolkhoz in Veheraksha.¹²¹ But even in labor camps, GPU agents followed Khrystiuk's every step. A denunciation written by a GPU agent suggested that Khrystiuk communicated with fellow prisoners Iavors'kyi, Fylypovych and Kossak. Their interaction in prison was based on common political views and a common nationalist past. GPU agents characterized Khrystiuk's attitude to Soviet power as chronically hostile.¹²² This denunciation played a significant role in Khrystiuk's fate in the Solovky. On 21 January 1935, the NKVD Special Meeting of the USSR sentenced Khrystiuk to three more years in labor camps but even this additional term appeared to be insufficient for a *nezalezhnyk*. On 3 November 1936 the same NKVD body added another 8 years in prison which became fatal for Khrystiuk. According to recently declassified materials, Khrystiuk died in September 1941 in the labor camp "Sevvostlag" in Arkhangel'sk oblast'.¹²³

Through the efforts of Serhii Pustovoitov, Khrystiuk's interrogator, Khrystiuk, as others arrested in this case, informed on his friends and colleagues who, together with Khrystiuk, were accused of having "conspired" against the Soviet regime.¹²⁴ During his career in the GPU/NKVD,

¹²¹ *Ostannia adresa*, 3:377. The BBK refers to the Belomoro-Baltiiskii Kombinat (the White Sea-Baltic Combine) that was founded on the territory around the White Sea-Baltic Canal that connects the White Sea and the Onezhskoie Lake which falls into the Baltic Sea. The channel was built between 1931 and 1933 by the prisoners of the Gulag. On the BBK, see Nick Baron, *Production and Terror: The Operation of the Karelian Gulag, 1933-1939*, *Cahiers du Monde russe* 43, no.1 (2002): 139-179; Mikhail Morukov, "The White Sea-Baltic Canal," in *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*, ed. Paul R. Gregory and Valery Lazarev (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 151-62.

¹²² *Ostannia adresa*, 2:174. **Pavlo Fylypovych** was a Ukrainian poet, literary critic and teacher; **Hryhorii Kossak** was a former colonel in the Ukrainian Galician Army, and a teacher.

¹²³ Bilokin', 241; Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar," Dukyna, 532.

¹²⁴ **Serhii Pustovoitov** (1893-1937) was in charge of the secret and secret-political sectors in the Kharkiv GPU/NKVD. Before his arrest he was the head of the sector within the 4th department of the NKVD in Ukraine. He was famous for his cruelty. His predecessors belonged to the Russian nobility. On 23 July 1937 he was arrested as a member of a counterrevolutionary organization in the secret organs, and sentenced to death. He was shot in September 1937. Interestingly, on 3 June 1997 he was rehabilitated as a victim of Stalin's

Pustovoitov tortured hundreds of Ukrainian intellectuals. Khrystiuk was no exception. He signed a written confession that was filled with details of real events that were generously interwoven into the fictive narrative. Detailed narratives written in the first person were routinely invented by the GPU, an attempt at making the suspect's deposition believable, which would create the impression of a carefully investigated criminal case. During the first wave of rehabilitation in the 1950s and 1960s that sprang from Khrushchev's speech at the XX Party Congress, the truth about fabricated confessions emerged. Those who survived GPU tortures and interrogation in the thirties testified about the methods the secret police used to obtain self-incriminating statements from suspects.¹²⁵

Words, Deeds, Fear and Confusion

The first arrests in *Budynok Slovo* plunged the *slov'iany* into depression. They distrusted and feared each other, which culminated in hysterical and inappropriate reactions.¹²⁶ Ivan Senchenko remembered that during a friendly meeting at Khvyl'ovyi's place in the winter of 1932, Oles' Dosvitnii, who had known Senchenko for years, attacked him with the statement: "We don't know at all what and who you are," implying that Senchenko might have worked for the GPU.¹²⁷ It was clear for everyone that the GPU had focused its attention on the building, and the writers grew

terror. For more on Pustovoitov, see Bilokin', 20, 36, 84, 107, 111, 260, 277, 279, 301, and Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 241.

¹²⁵ Shapoval, "Heneral'nyi pysar."

¹²⁶ Montaigne ruminating about human fears wrote that "there is none that more easily throws our judgment off its proper balance." Through fear, people go mad, and fear "produce[s] even in the most sober-minded...a fearful bewilderment." See Montaigne, "Of Fear," in *The Essays of Montaigne*, trans. E.J. Trechmann (New York: The Modern Library, Random House, Inc., 1946), 60.

¹²⁷ Senchenko, "Notatky," 549.

increasingly concerned about their future and that of their families. The *slov'iany* searched for commonalities and linkages between “proper” behavior and personal safety. However, they seemed to be unable to systematize the reality that surrounded them. They simply could not grasp the discrepancy between the words and deeds of the party establishment. Khvyl'ovyi wrote in his 13 May 1933 suicide note that he did not understand why the most faithful Bolsheviks had been eliminated.¹²⁸

The absence of inner logic of the space in which the *slov'iany* existed, and whispered rumors about what was happening in Sovnarkomivs'ka Street further confused the community of *Budynok Slovo*. Their understanding of the events was pieced together from bits of information about the arrests of their neighbors. This sketchy information generated suppositions which favored any number of interpretations—from certainties to doubts about the guilt of the arrested. Their new understanding of the place where they lived came to them gradually, through uncertainty and incoherence that are imbedded in any spatial entity.¹²⁹ A lack of information about the reasons for arrests made some of them panic and search for their “perfect” outward representation. They stopped expressing strong opinions because this would expose them before the state. They became guarded in their public statements, and vagueness and ambiguity of expression were safety measures during this turbulent time. The *slov'iany* adapted to the time and place, incoherent, uncertain and fragile, hoping to become invisible to the state. Most of them did not succeed.

¹²⁸ Khvyl'ovyi wrote: “Ialovyi's arrest is the execution of the Entire Generation... For what? For that we were the sincerest Communists? I cannot comprehend it.” Iurii Shapoval, ed., *Poliuvannia na Val'dshnepa: Rozsekrechenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 184.

¹²⁹ Donna J. Peuquet, *Representations of Space and Time* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002), 308-09.

The arrests in *Budynok Slovo* were not conducted in a frenzy of aggression amid administrative chaos, or haphazard GPU leadership. They were a part of carefully planned mass operations which were designed to eliminate the nationally conscious elite. The *slov'iany*'s compromised past marked by their Galician links and prior membership in national parties defined their images as Ukrainian nationalists in the eyes of the state. Real individual histories were spiced with the “evidence” of a crime against the state, fabricated in the bowels of the GPU. As we shall see in Chapter Four, by May-July 1933, the GPU possessed hundreds of documents—fabricated evidence of the Ukrainian intelligentsia’s multiple crimes and ultimate guilt.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2048, ark.139.

Chapter Four

Ialovyi's Case: The Power of Interrogation Rooms

Get dressed for execution...

Pavlo Tychyna¹

Combating Ukrainian Nationalism

The mass terror against the intelligentsia was unleashed in Ukraine in 1933. In an important republic such as Ukraine, which because of widespread hostility to government policies might have been lost to the Soviet cause, “the year 1937 began with the year 1933.”² The December 1932 and January 1933 Plenums of the TsK VKP(b) issued resolutions (14 December 1932 and 24 January 1933) that sealed the fate of thousands of Ukrainians. The party severely criticized the KP(b)U for errors in collectivization and nationality policy. In 1933, Postyshev and 1,340 party apparatchiks were sent from Moscow to Kharkiv to “correct” these grave errors. Vsevolod Balyts’kyi was put in charge of the OGPU in Ukraine, and together with Pavel Postyshev, launched a mass terror attack against Ukrainian cultural institutions and the Ukrainian intelligentsia who were in favor of “Soviet Ukrainian, not all-Soviet, sovereignty.”³

The center observed a disturbing tendency: after the battle of the Literary Discussion that dismissed Khvyl’ovyi’s theory of gravitating toward

¹ Pavlo Tychyna, “Zamist’ sonetiv i oktav,” quoted in Ihor Bondar-Tereshchenko, *U zadzverkalli 1910-30-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 362.

² Lev Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 277. Also quoted in George O. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923-1934* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 159. On Stalin’s fear of losing Ukraine as a Soviet republic, see his 11 August 1932 letter to Kaganovich in RGASPI, f.81, op.3, spr.99, ark.144-51, or in R.W. Davies, Oleg V. Khlevniuk, and E.A. Rees, eds., *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence: 1931-36* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 179-81.

³ George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 190-92; Liber, 140; 141-42; Hennadii Iefimenko, *Natsional’no-kul’turna polityka VKP(b) shchodo Radians’koi Ukrainy (1932-38)* (Kyiv: NANU, Instytut istorii Ukrainy, 2001), 80.

“psychological Europe,” only 20 % of literature translated into Ukrainian and published in 1927 had been translated from the Russian language, while publications translated from various European languages doubled and constituted 80% of total publications.⁴ In Moscow’s view, Ukrainization exacerbated these tendencies which were considered unacceptable, and the policy was to be reconfigured and reformulated. Ukrainian “nationalism,” which, it was thought, had blossomed due to the efforts of Skrypnyk and other party leaders in Ukraine, was to be combated.⁵

The first written order that overtly launched counter-Ukrainization with subsequent consequences for Ukrainians came from Moscow in December 1932. Stalin and Molotov sent a telegram to Ukrainian party officials of contested geographical regions (the Kuban’, Kurs’k and Voronezh provinces), as well as the Soviet Far East and Turkestan where great numbers of Ukrainians lived, in which they ordered local authorities to “stop Ukrainization [in these areas], transform all Ukrainian-language newspapers, books, and publications into Russian-language ones, and to change the language of instruction from Ukrainian to Russian in all schools by fall of 1933.”⁶

A similarly blunt and direct demand about the reversal of Ukrainization in Kharkiv, the heart of Ukrainian culture, would have been

⁴ M. Hodkevych, “Ukrains’ke pys’menstvo za 10 lit,” in *Pluzhanyn*, no. 11-12 (1927): 60.

⁵ See S.V. Kosior’s report at the November 1933 Joint Plenum of the TsK and TsKK KP(b)U “Pidsumky i naiblyzhchi zavdannia natsional’noi polityky na Ukraini,” *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 8-9 (1933): 205-44. Kosior dedicated his speech to the danger of Ukrainian nationalism, and a necessary change in political course in Ukraine to combat Ukrainian nationalists. He emphasized that although Great Russian chauvinism remained a chief threat on the All-Union scale, Ukrainian nationalism was considered the main danger in Ukraine. See also Postyshev’s speech at the same Plenum “Radiants’ka Ukraina—nepokhytnyi forpost velykoho SRSR,” *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 8-9 (1933): 245- 60.

⁶ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.1, spr.2070, ark.6 (cited in Liber and O.I. Lozyts’kyi, “Polityka ukrainizatsii v 20-30-kh rokakh: istoriia, problem, uroky,” *Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* no. 3 (1989): 53-54).

considered inappropriate and inconsistent in the context of the political course of Ukrainization proclaimed by the party in 1923. A different solution had been found, and the GPU became the chief executor of a new covert course of counter-Ukrainization in Ukraine. The proponents of Ukrainization policies were to be proclaimed Ukrainian deviationists and nationalists and imprisoned for anti-Soviet activity. This idea was reinforced by Postyshev at the November, 1933 KP(b)U Plenum. He affirmed that Ukrainian nationalism had become a “chief threat to the Soviet state.”⁷ The support of the center, and collegial criticism of nationalistic tendencies by literary professionals from below, emboldened the GPU in their struggle against “nationalist deviations” in the republic.

By 1933 the nationalist deviations such as *khvyliovism*, *shumskism* and *volobuievshchyna* had been eliminated through party reprimands, public ostracism of their adherents and purges. The next task was to eliminate the “nest” of supporters of Ukrainian nationalists—the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkomosvita). After the 7 July 1933 suicide of the People’s Commissar of Enlightenment Mykola Skrypnyk, who was harassed because of his supposed national deviations, the center ordered the massive purge of the entire Narkomos which lasted from 1933 to early 1934.⁸ All Skrypnyk’s assistants were arrested. In total, 200 people were repressed from the Commissariat (in 1928 there were 202 associates in the office) for their national errors and deviations.⁹

⁷ Postyshev, “Radians’ka Ukraina,” 258. See also Liber, 170.

⁸ Previous massive purges of the Narkomos occurred in 1929-30. See DAKhO, f.15, op.2, spr.24, ark.1,2,20,31,36,51.

⁹ Vasyl’ Marochko and Götz Hillig, *Represovani pedahohy Ukrainy: zhertvy politychnoho teroru (1929-1941)* (Kyiv: Naukovyi svit, 2003), 7-10.

A massive purge of 1933-34 cleaned also the primary party cells of various cultural institutions, including Ukrainian publishing houses, newspapers and journals. The state purge commissions found party members guilty of turning a blind eye to nationalists and counterrevolutionaries in their cells. They accused *partorgy*¹⁰ of primary party cells of indifference toward wreckers and separatists who deliberately undermined the normal functioning of newspapers and the ideological purity of publications.¹¹

The capital city, highly saturated with intellectuals and progressive thinkers, attracted substantial GPU resources to investigate prominent figures as carriers of counterrevolutionary “heresy” and treason. *Budynok Slovo* was a place where “nationalists” could be conveniently observed in their daily activities. Domestic settings, sometimes even more than professional settings, revealed their habits and convictions. In addition to being writers, several *slov’iany* were editors of various Ukrainian journals and newspapers. By 1933, they functioned together with newly created staffs under constant GPU scrutiny. Most learned new rules of survival: purged and sanitized of “nationalist elements,” cultural institutions publicly and collectively had to condemn “deviationists,” and entire collectives unanimously had to report their faithfulness to the party.¹²

Publishing activities received special attention from the state and the GPU. Fighting Ukrainian nationalism, the center combined purges and repressions with economic measures, constraining publishing activities through a considerable reduction of paper allocated to state and private

¹⁰ *Partorgy* is the Soviet acronym for *partiini orhanizatory* (chiefs) of primary party cells.

¹¹ DAKhO, f.P58, op.3, spr.46, ark.293-94,296,300; DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.253, ark.15-16,28,211-12.

¹² DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.253, ark.43.

publishing houses in Ukraine. On 4 February 1933 Panas Liubchenko wrote Kaganovich that Ukrainian newspapers had not received 300 tons of paper that were specified in the documents of the Soiuzgosplan.¹³ On 4 March 1933 the secretary of the TsK KP(b)U Mykola Popov reiterated the problem to Kaganovich, stating that in 1932 the delivery of paper to Ukraine had constituted 85% of the norms that were originally planned by the Soiuzgosplan, while according to its statistics, the other Soviet republics received 95%.¹⁴ Popov complained that this situation resulted in the constant reduction of newspaper circulation, as well as in the reduction of the size of publications, changes in their format, and the frequency and regularity of issuing newspapers. Routinely, the writers began to receive rejection letters to their requests to publish their work.

Two of the most important state publishing houses in Ukraine, the DVU (the State Publishing House of Ukraine) and the Knyhospilka (the Book Association), as well as private publishers, such as “Rukh,” “Slovo,” “Chas” and “Siaivo,” became targets of repression. In April 1932, the party liquidated all independent literary organizations and their journals, such as *Pluzhanyn* and *Vaplite*, and in 1934 created the Union of Writers. Those individuals who had earlier served “oppositional” publishing houses and established their “nationalist” reputations were on the GPU’s black list. The *slov’ianyn* Mykhailo Ialovyi, an editor of the DVU, became one of the hundreds of

¹³ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6216, ark.27. In 1933, **Panas Liubchenko** was the first deputy of the Soviet People’s Commissariat in Ukraine (Radnarkom), and in 1934 he became the head of the Radnarkom and the member of the TsK KP(b)U.

¹⁴ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6216, ark.34-40. Soiuzgosplan is the acronym for *Gosudarstvennyi Planovyi Komitet Soveta Ministrov SSSR* (the State Plan Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR), a state institution responsible for industrial and agricultural planning and the fulfillment of state plans.

Ukrainian intellectuals who were arrested as a member of the mythical nationalist organization, UVO.¹⁵

The Uniqueness of Mykhailo Ialovyι's Criminal File

Oleh S. Ilnytskyj noted that Ialovyι “occup[ied] a modest place in the literature of the 1920s.”¹⁶ However, he was a recognizable figure among the literary community in Kharkiv: in 1926, he was the first president of the literary group VAPLITE that gained fame as an oppositional group to state-sponsored literary associations “Molodniak” (Youth) and VUSPP, and an editor of the journal *Chervonyi Shliakh*, and of publishing houses “LIM” (*Literatura i mystetstvo*/Literature and Art) and DVU.¹⁷ Together with censors, Ialovyι made final decisions about works that were published in Ukraine.¹⁸ But most importantly, he was a person who had close relationships with Khvyι’ovyι, and was associated with Khvyι’ovyι’s seditious views on the

¹⁵ The UVO (Ukrainian Military Organization) that was fabricated by the Soviet secret police in 1932-1933 should not be confused with the UVO that was created in the early 1920s in Western Ukraine by veterans of the army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, an organization which was later transformed into the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists). Despite the fact that some believed that the branches of these organizations existed in Soviet Ukraine, there is no comprehensive evidence that would support this claim. Moreover, archival materials recently declassified in Ukraine suggest that all Ukrainian nationalist organizations that allegedly existed in Soviet Ukraine were fabricated in the bowels of the secret police. For more details on the UVO in Eastern Galicia and abroad, see the section “UVO—pidzemne viis’ko Ukrainy,” in I. Boiko, ed., *Ivhen Konovalets’ ta ioho doba* (Miunkhen: Fundatsiia im. I. Konoval’tsia, 1974), 237-55; Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN: 1920-1939 roky*, 3rd ed. (Kyiv: Tsentr doslidzhen’ vyzvol’noho rukhu, 2007), 499-37; Myroslav Shkandrij and Olga Bertelsen, “Soviet Secret Police Files and ‘Ukrainian Nationalist’ Plots, 1929-1934,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, under review.

¹⁶ Oleh S. Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 290.

¹⁷ Oleksandr and Leonid Ushkalovy, eds., *Arkhiv rozstrilianoho vidrodzhennia: materialy arkhivno-slidchykh sprav pys’mennykh 1920-30 rokiv* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 13-14; Ilnytskyj, 287-90. Ialovyι’s pen name was Iuliian Shpol (1895-1937).

¹⁸ On practices and stages of censorship and on state control over printed products, see Viktor Ocheretianko, “Zahratovani knyhy. Vstanovlennia derzhavno-partiinoho kontroliu nad vydanniam, rozpovsiudzhenniam ta vykorystanniam literatury v Ukraini y 20-30-i roky,” *Z arkhiviv VUChK-GPU-NKVD-KGB* no. 1/2 (10/11) (1999): 128-41.

development of Ukrainian culture.¹⁹ Ialovyi became one of the first alleged *uvisty* who was arrested during the night of 12 May 1933 in apartment 30, the day before Mykola Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide.²⁰

Ialovyi's past, his active membership in the Borot'bist party before 1920, close relationships with Vasyl' Ellan-Blakytnyi, Oleksandr Shums'kyi and Mykhailo Poloz, the People's Commissar of Finance in the UkrSSR in the 1920s, and two years of interactions with Ukrainian futurists, such as Mykhailo Semenko, Oleksa Slisarenko, Volodymyr Iarovenko and Vasyl' Aleshko were factors that influenced the GPU decision to eliminate him.²¹ When in 1926 Ialovyi published an article in which he criticized Russian chauvinism and "the nihilistic interpretation of Ukrainian culture by the editorial board of the Leningrad journal *Zhyzn' iskusstva*," he earned his reputation with the secret police as a nationalist deviationist once and forever.²²



Mykhailo Ialovyi

¹⁹ For a discussion of Khvyl'ovyi's views, see Chapter Five.

²⁰ *Uvisty* is a GPU term (from the abbreviation UVO) that GPU agents used for those who were accused of being members of the UVO. DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.353.

²¹ For more details on Ialovyi's biography, see I. Shpol, *Vybrani tvory*, ed. O. Ushkalov (Kyiv: "Smoloskyp," 2007), 6-27. Before Ialovyi moved to *Budynok Slovo*, he shared a communal apartment with Poloz. See Senchenko, "Notatky," 552.

²² Shpol, 12. See M. Ialovyi, "Sankt-peterburz'ke khaluistvo," *Kul'tura i pobut*, no. 16 (1926).

His participation in the project on the systemization of Ukrainian spelling that was commissioned by the state and led by the People's Commissar of Education Oleksandr Shums'kyi also compromised his image. Among the members of the commission were the *slov'iany* and writers Maik Iohansen, Mykola Khvyl'ovyi and many prominent Ukrainian scholars who were not favored by the center. By 1933, the state considered the project harmful, and obstructed the commission's work in all possible ways. The All-Ukrainian Academy of Science received secret instructions from Moscow that the scholars had to "do everything they could to make the Ukrainian language as similar to Russian as possible."²³ Shortly thereafter, most commission members, including Ialovy, were repressed.²⁴

The scenario of his arrest was written by the GPU long before 12 May 1933. As a *vaplitiianyn*, Ialovy struggled "with anti-Ukrainian attitudes," and in 1929, he published his novel *Zoloti lyseniata* (*Golden Fox-cubs*) about the Ukrainian revolutions and the Borot'bists.²⁵ A vocal opponent of national oppression, Ialovy was doomed to repression. During the night of 11-12 May, he was arrested in the presence of two witnesses, the commandant of *Budynok Slovo* Pavlo Litvinenko and his neighbor Vasyl' Vrazhlyvyi (Shtan'ko).²⁶ Apparently, the GPU established an additional position within the cooperative's administration, and although it proved to be problematic to learn more about Litvinenko's identity, it is clear that he worked for the secret

²³ Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmarska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004), 160.

²⁴ For more details on this project, see L. Masenko, ed., *Ukrains'ka mova v XX storichchi: Istoriia linhvotsydu* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo "Kyievo-Mohylians'ka akademiia, 2005).

²⁵ Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992), 91, 116-17.

²⁶ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.2.

police. As the “commandant” of the building, his name appears in several criminal cases, including the case fabricated against the *slov’ianyn* Vasyl’ Desniak-Vasylenko. Litvinenko’s title emphasizes a complete regimentation of the building, militarization of its culture, and its appropriation by the secret police.

According to routine practice, before his arrest, Ialovyi was expelled from the party for his anti-Soviet activity. His arrest was secured by several depositions of the previously arrested who claimed that Ialovyi was a UVO member and took an active part in preparing a military uprising against Soviet power in Ukraine. One such denunciation was written by Ievhen Cherniak, the director of the Kharkiv Institute of the History of Ukrainian Culture who was arrested as a UVO member. He supposedly reported that he regularly attended UVO meetings at various residential places of the members of the counterrevolutionary organization. For instance, Cherniak was present at a 2 May 1933 UVO meeting that took place at Ialovyi’s apartment 30 in *Budynok Slovo*. The occasion was the visit of Mykhailo Poloz, one of the supposed leaders of the UVO Moscow branch. According to Cherniak’s testimony, the members of the organization, Ialovyi, Poloz, Tymophii Repa, Serhii Vikul, Andrii Richyts’kyi (another *slov’ianyn*), Ivan Tur and Iosyp Bukshovanyi discussed the urgency of the military uprising in Ukraine that was to be organized quickly because of the massive arrests of the UVO members by the GPU.²⁷ It is almost certain that Ialovyi was informed by his interrogator about

²⁷ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2048, ark.22. **Andrii Richyts’kyi** was a faculty member at the Ukrainian Institute of Marxism (the Department of a National Question) and a member of the editing board in *Bil’shovyk Ukrainy*. Richyts’kyi launched a series of critical articles in *Bil’shovyk Ukrainy* against Volobuiev’s economic national program, establishing Volobuiev’s image as an *uklonist* and “national deviationist.” See A. Richyts’kyi, “Do problemy likvidatsii

these depositions made by his former colleagues because on 8 June 1933, Ialovyi provided a detailed report about the goals of the organization, its composition, and its international support and connections.

Ialovyi's file may conceal the particulars of his behavior during the preliminary investigation, yet it discloses valuable details about how the GPU operated, how the secret police understood evidence, guilt, the ethics of investigation and the significance of collected testimonies. Several supervisors accepted Ialovyi's interrogation protocols, inconsistent and contradictory, as sufficient incriminating evidence of his guilt which discloses a crude debasement of law and its rudimentary instrumentalisation on the agency level, from top to bottom.

Many Soviet individual files are attempts to write a suspect's biography.²⁸ The biographies in the criminal files differ from conventional ones written by professional biographers in that they lack almost any description of childhood years. The Soviet police's lack of interest in a suspect's early years is understandable: in its view, childhoods were irrelevant because the transgressions committed as adults to which the arrested confessed were sufficient for closing the case. A victim's early years were reduced to the "social origin" of their families. Yet the conscious life of the individual had to be reflected in detail and shaped in a certain way to emphasize his or her "belonging," "membership," "participation," "ideological inclinations," "political views," and other ideological indicators, on which the whole case

perezhytkiv kolonial'nosti ta natsionalizmu (Vidpovid' Mykhailu Volobuevu), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy* no. 7 (1928).

²⁸ On biographies and autobiographies in criminal files, see Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 13, 39-40, 170.

was built, and which helped bring the suspect to the expected closure—a confession. Ialovyi's case is no exception. In the 108 pages of the autobiography which at the same time served as his confession, there is very little about Ialovyi's early years, although he, or possibly the interrogator, provided an extensive narrative about his criminal activities and nationalist views as a conscious adult.

Ialovyi was writing his confession *volens-nolens*, he was answering someone's questions: the document has the features of a dialogue, not a monologue. His answers appear fully scripted and carefully structured; his narrative effusively reflects the needs of the secret police. A clear attempt to follow the prescribed plan of an imagined narrative is the most striking feature of Ialovyi's self-indictment. Clear thinking and the organized manner of the narrative were hardly possible to achieve under circumstances that were so far from relaxing and tranquil. Perhaps Ialovyi was aware of what was expected of him in advance, and this knowledge helped him produce a book-length confession within three days.²⁹ The writer very accurately conveyed a sense of his own doom, as if he was ready from the beginning to expiate his guilt. His narrative includes every imaginable self-incriminating detail. The "thickness" of this description is remarkable.³⁰ Political expectations shaped the "formation" and "transformation" of Ialovyi's identity on paper: it unraveled

²⁹ On a political character of autobiographical expression, see Terell Carver and Matti Hyvarinen, eds., *Interpreting the political new methodologies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 21-24. On the implications of producing autobiography in the context of interrogation, see Nick Baron "Remaking Soviet Society: the Filtration of Returnees from Nazi Germany, 1944-49," in *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-50*, eds. Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 100-05.

³⁰ On "thick" and "thin" descriptions, see Carver and Hyvarinen, 27.

rapidly and obsessively.³¹ As the future testimonies of those who survived the Kharkiv GPU prison and labor camps demonstrate, interrogators promised “the guilty” a “soft” punishment or even freedom in exchange for a detailed narrative about counterrevolutionary activity, and this promise contoured the depositions of many victims.³²

Importantly, the file reveals an interesting detail that might provide some clues for considering the authenticity of Ialovyi’s depositions. On the back of page 32 of Ialovyi’s confession, there is a plan, written apparently by Pustovoitov, Ialovyi’s interrogator, of what Ialovyi was supposed to illuminate in his narrative. There were three points that the GPU was interested in having on paper: first, “my [Ialovyi’s] practical counterrevolutionary work, separately;” second, “the activity of the organization in general;” and third, “the activity of the members of the organization known to me.” Below this list, there is Pustovoitov’s signature.³³ Whatever the case might be, Ialovyi strictly followed the plan and provided the exact information the GPU agent listed.

In contrast to the filtration interrogation procedure imposed on returnees from Nazi Germany after WWII which demanded, as Nick Baron put it, “raw information,” such as dates, places, occupation and so on,³⁴ Ialovyi’s interrogator demanded psychological explanations of what brought the suspect to this point. The investigative flow was constructed along Freudian lines and schemes, revealing the underlying motivations of Ialovyi’s “regress.” It was clear that there was a pathological and morbid condition that

³¹ Carver and Hyvarinen, 18.

³² Ivan Bahrianyi, *Sad Hetsymans'kyi* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo “Shkola,” 2008), 106, 112.

³³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.32zv. Similar lists of points provided for Ialovyi for his answers can be found in DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.87,108zv.

³⁴ Baron in Gatrell and Baron 103.

had to be “treated,” but the “doctor” needed full self-disclosure and self-analysis in a written form that would expose weaknesses, vices and fallacies, together with pernicious influences that provoked the suspect to commit a crime. The interrogator demanded from the suspect a full and complete “disarmament” (*rozzbroiennia/razoruzhenie*), and Ialovyi provided it, as well as clarifications on his moral regression along his nationalist journey.

Moreover, in 1933 those arrested were given ample time to write as much as possible in their autobiographies and confessions. No one limited them in terms of the length of their compositions or in the time it took to create them. Writing such a lengthy confession must have seemed like a protracted torture and death for Ialovyi. This deposition became the last text that he created as a writer. Soon the responsibility of elaborating on the text was permanently shifted to his interrogator.

Interestingly, as the file progresses, the first-person narrative alternates with the third-person depositions which produces an effect of personal estrangement. For a reader, Ialovyi represents a person who has become judgmental and critical toward himself and his alleged criminal actions. However, another scenario is possible: the interrogator kept forgetting that Ialovyi was supposed to be the sole author of his own file, and the GPU agent was only a modest recorder of Ialovyi’s “recollections.” Such inadvertent digressions can be observed throughout many individual files but there is a common thread: the more believable the authorship of the suspect’s confession might be at the outset, the more striking becomes the stylistic dissonance between the first-person original narrative and the suspect’s sudden desire to refer to himself or herself in the third person. Such a stylistic transition

heightens a reader's concerns about authorship, and other changes in a narrator's style become more perceptible and more noticeable.

In contrast to other individual criminal files of representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who were arrested during the 1930s, Ialovyi's criminal file has some unique features, and therefore it is worthwhile to examine it in detail. First, this file is amazingly long—414 pages of tiny handwriting, written on both sides of many pages (roughly 600-700 pages in all).³⁵ By 1937, after years of file fabrication and experience, GPU craftsmen downsized their files, reducing the time and effort that was invested in these fabrications. Only group files consisted of several volumes of documents. During the Great Terror (1937-38), the record was set at 57 pages per file.³⁶ Only Ialovyi's confession of anti-Soviet activity reached 108 pages in the criminal file. He apparently completed the first 32 pages within three days after his arrest. The remaining pages were likely written within the next two weeks before Ialovyi's first interrogation. This confession is one of the lengthiest and detailed among criminal files of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and it left no avenue for Ialovyi to escape the death penalty.³⁷

Second, the number of testimonies within the file that revealed Ialovyi's supposed anti-Soviet activity is overwhelming. All of them belong to famous political and literary figures who were arrested before Ialovyi: many

³⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843. The approximate length of other files that were fabricated in 1933 consisted of 300 pages.

³⁶ See, for instance, the *slov'ianka* Liutsiana Piontek's criminal file in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp.

³⁷ In 1933, the GPU provided prisoners with a great deal of time for writing their confessions. As Josef Brodskii noted several decades later, prison was a lack of space which was compensated for by the excess of time. This observation is not applicable to the period of the Great Terror when people were hastily executed after a short period of preliminary investigation.

of them were from Western Ukraine, and from abroad (written by those who worked in Soviet embassies and *polpredstva* before their arrests).³⁸

Third, Ialovyi's confession, as well as his interrogation protocols, was written by hand which ceased to be a common practice of the GPU/NKVD after 1934. Ialovyi did not sign each page of the written documents, as he should have, and even an untrained eye can easily detect graphological inconsistencies in Ialovyi's handwritten testimonies during different periods of time. These inconsistencies might have occurred because as time progressed, Ialovyi's handwriting changed as his physical condition deteriorated because of the torture, or some sections were written by someone else. Both scenarios are possible.

Fourth, linguistic differences (Ukrainianisms employed by the author in Russian texts, his vocabulary and manner of expression) between the earlier testimonies and the later ones are rather drastic, a fact that encourages questions about the authenticity of Ialovyi's later pages, but not about the early confession (the first 82 pages).³⁹ From page 83 of the criminal file, the original voice of the writer faded away and was replaced by bureaucratic standard slang that was a trademark of GPU interrogators. In other words, the language of the first 82 pages of Ialovyi's criminal file is very different from the language of the remaining pages of his protocols, and readers need not be linguists to notice this difference. Certainly, this discrepancy neither confirms nor denies the circumstances under which his confession was extracted.

³⁸ *Polpredstvo* means an authoritative representation of the Soviet government in a foreign state (in Russian *polnomochnyie diplomaticheskie predstavitel'stva pri pravitel'stvakh inostrannykh gosudarstv*). In 1941 *polpredstva* were transformed into embassies or consulates.

³⁹ The term Ukrainianisms refers to an unconscious use of a Russian word that was slightly Ukrainized (modified) by a person whose native language was not Russian, but Ukrainian. Often this modified language (in its extreme form) is called *surzhyk*.

However, precisely this discrepancy should forestall any moral judgments of Ialovyi's behavior under arrest.

Fifth, Ialovyi's case was one of the first against Ukrainian intellectuals in which the GPU/NKVD broadly employed a "principle of escalation" when the suspect's deposition was built on a steady progression of numbers of meetings mentioned, its participants, organizations and its members. A plethora of names, individual connections and group links emerges while proceeding through interrogation protocols. With each new protocol, the alleged counterrevolutionary organization increasingly expanded, and new representatives of various cultural institutions in Ukraine were, it was claimed, members of this organization. By the time a reader gets to the last interrogation protocol, almost all significant cultural figures and representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia have been mentioned on the pages of this criminal file as participants in anti-Soviet activities: from Narkompros, the Ukrainian Academy of Science, various institutes and universities, the theatre "Berezil'," the literary association "Zakhidna Ukraina" (Western Ukraine), the publishing houses Sel'khozvydav, Radshkola and LIM, the Red Army, plants and factories, and republican cultural establishments and Soviet *polpredstva* abroad. The narrative of interrogation protocols identified a multifaceted conspiracy of Ukrainian nationalists against the Soviet state which ensured future purges of Ukrainian intellectuals on a massive scale. The escalation principle was extensively used in all subsequent criminal cases, and by the late 1930s there was no one left in Ukraine (among those who occupied noticeable positions in various cultural institutions) who would not be mentioned in criminal files as a counterrevolutionary. They were

swept away and replaced by new cadres, more obedient, and thus more reliable. Interestingly, even those who were never repressed were mentioned in individual and group files during different periods in the thirties.⁴⁰

05.28.1933 Ialovyi's interrogation protocol.⁴¹

05.28.1933 Ialovyi's interrogation protocol.⁴²

07.30.1933 Ialovyi's interrogation protocol.⁴³

07.30.1933 Ialovyi's interrogation protocol.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Among them were also the *slov'iany* Pavlo Tychyna, Iurii Smolych, Andrii Holovko, Anatol' Petryts'kyi, Teren' Masenko and Leonid Pervomais'kyi.

⁴¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.116.

⁴² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.118.

⁴³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.340.

⁴⁴ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.342.

Finally, the visual appearance of the pages dealing with the minutes of the last interrogation suggests an attempt might have been made to forge Ialovyi's handwriting. Even without expert evaluation, the writer's lack of patience is evident in the final minutes. Is it possible that the apparent difference in handwriting between questions and answers might have been done to persuade readers that the questions were written by the interrogator, and the answers by Ialovyi? Surely yes. What then can be made of the last minutes which reveal a similarity between these two handwritings? Readers might notice the sloppy and hasty handwriting which diminishes some differences between them. Might it be possible that by page 133 of the criminal case, the GPU agent tired of being a careful imitator because the investigation was to be completed and the file had to be transferred to the prosecutor?

As in Khrystiuk's case, Ialovyi's interrogator was the GPU operative Pustovoitov, whose name appears in many interrogation protocols of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and who was famous for his vicious and sadistic nature.⁴⁵ It is unknown whether Ialovyi endured physical torture but an analysis of his confession suggests he was subjected to possible mental abuse by Pustovoitov. The fates of interrogators became unexpectedly intertwined with the fates of the *slov'iany* which gave *Budynok Slovo* a tragic and, simultaneously, mystical aura. These two groups of people, although pitted against one another, had much in common: they spent time together and ultimately met similar fates and deaths in the same place. Indeed, some of them shared their final destination—the place of their last worldly days—

⁴⁵ On traditions and methods of the Kharkiv secret police, see Chapter Three, and Bahrianyi, 111-12.

Solovky. They met at the same time and in the same place, and they parted synchronically and forever in the same place, not accidentally but forcibly, against their wills.

Obliterating Human Bonds and Friendships

For the secret police, the bonds of friendship and personal loyalty seemed suspicious, and were thoroughly scrutinized and even compromised for the sake of “smooth” evidence in a fabricated case. An analysis of criminal files reveals interrogators’ attempts to compromise the relatives and friends of the suspects. Such tactics further demoralized them. Ultimately, all participants of the conspiracy narrative written by the police became enemies and counterrevolutionaries by definition. Interrogators designed a self-enclosing circle of untrustworthy individuals who, maintaining contacts with each other, committed and perpetuated a crime. Interactions, links, connections and affiliations, imaginary or real, were used for writing a conspiracy scenario. Everyone was guilty: some—of being a member of a nationalist organization, others—of their shortsightedness and maintaining connections with the enemy. The absence of logic confused the suspects: in interrogation rooms, they realized that any human bonds, friendships and social links were discouraged; the only passion the suspects should have was a passion for constructing socialism. To pass the interrogator’s test for loyalty, people had to collectively build socialism but only as separate individuals. Their circle, according to the interrogator, proved to be a group of nationalists. Many *slov’iany* accepted this ideological and psychological engineering

scheme, and as soon as they yielded to the fear of resisting it, they were no longer in control of their lives in prison.

Ialovyi was one of them. His friend Khvyl'ovyi avoided a similar fate by committing suicide. Before Khvyl'ovyi and Ialovyi moved to *Budynok Slovo*, there was an absolute bond between them. They regularly met in the Blakytnyi House, created new literary organizations and participated in vigorous literary discussions together, and under state pressure wrote letters of recantation together. However, Khvyl'ovyi's name was always in the forefront of the polemical battles. He was a better polemicist than Ialovyi and a more productive and talented writer. Ialovyi was an organizer and, strictly speaking, a literary bureaucrat. He wrote less, and therefore, was less visible to the state than Khvyl'ovyi. These differences might have contributed to their mutual alienation in 1933.

But in crucial moments of his life, Khvyl'ovyi sought Ialovyi's advice. When in the late 1920s Khvyl'ovyi was leaving for Vienna (the legitimate reason was treatment of his tuberculosis), he shared his intention with Ialovyi to continue fighting for Ukrainian culture from abroad, and not to return to Soviet Ukraine. Ialovyi argued that Khvyl'ovyi would never be able to live far away from Ukraine, and, as a writer and as a person, would cease to exist.⁴⁶ Ialovyi proved to be right: in his letter to Ialovyi from Vienna, Khvyl'ovyi informed him about his decision to return. The first person Khvyl'ovyi visited upon his return to Kharkiv was Ialovyi. Moreover, according to the testimonies of those who were in Khvyl'ovyi's apartment at the moment of his suicide on 13 May 1933, Kvyly'ovyi feverishly searched for a solution to help

⁴⁶ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.38.

Ialovyi. After he learned from Ialovyi's wife about his arrest, Khvyl'ovyi made phone calls to the highest officials in the Central Committee and the GPU/NKVD.⁴⁷

Considering the tone of Ialovyi's confession written on 15 May 1933, he knew nothing about Khvyl'ovyi's death. In his testimony to the GPU, Ialovyi emphasized his literary and ideological difference from Khvyl'ovyi, estranging himself from this odious figure.⁴⁸ He stated that he did not share Khvyl'ovyi's ideas about the gravitation of Ukrainian culture toward European culture, and the pernicious influence of Russian cultural traditions on the development of Ukrainian literature. He called the program of VAPLITE "openly nationalistic and fascist," and stated that it was approved and inspired by Khvyl'ovyi and Shums'kyi. According to Ialovyi's deposition, the counterrevolutionary and national-chauvinistic ideas of VAPLITE were propagandized on the pages of *Chervonyi Shliakh*, *Vaplite*, *Kul'tura i pobut* and other journals.⁴⁹

Ialovyi persuasively described the 1920s meetings with both Khvyl'ovyi and Shums'kyi, during which they discussed the Kremlin's crusade against Ukrainian culture. He stated that all of them believed that there was nothing left from the original idea of socialism, and the entire situation in Ukraine looked like the "renaissance of the Russian national state."⁵⁰

He also admitted that the December 1926 letter of self-criticism written together with Khvyl'ovyi and Dosvitnii was insincere and purely formal, and

⁴⁷ Ushkalovy, 136.

⁴⁸ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.23, 36-7.

⁴⁹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.272.

⁵⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op. 4, spr.1843, ark.37.

this act only exacerbated his wrong-doing. Ialovyi condemned his own nationalist views and argued that nationalist manifestations in his behavior were nothing but the old shadow of his Borot'bist past that haunted him for years.⁵¹ He informed the GPU that Khvyl'ovyi was one of the central figures in the counter-revolutionary nationalist organization UVO that planned a military uprising and the assassination of the highest party leaders in Ukraine. According to Ialovyi, in 1932-33, the organization also planned to undermine the sowing and bread procurement campaigns, and to organize resistance to collectivization in the countryside.⁵²

Moreover, according to Ialovyi's confession, in the early 1930s the apartments of Khvyl'ovyi, Ialovyi and Mykola Kulish in *Budynok Slovo* were regularly used as places for meetings of the organization. The meetings became especially frequent after the summer of 1932 when in July the leadership of the organization decided to activate its efforts to organize a military uprising against the Bolshevik dictatorship in Ukraine.⁵³ The members, usually the nucleus of the organization and the former members of VAPLITE, discussed the reliability of rebel cadres in the periphery and in the countryside that were allegedly recruited into the UVO. Interestingly, Ialovyi named not only the members of the former VAPLITE among the participants in these meetings but also those *slov'iany* who in the past were members of state-sponsored literary organizations and party functionaries in publishing houses. In the minutes of each subsequent interrogation, the list of the members grew but Khvyl'ovyi was mentioned quite often as an active participant at all meetings of the organization. Whether these meetings were

⁵¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.24-6.

⁵² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.118.

⁵³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.280.

real, or only a figment of Ialovyi's tortured imagination, or a product of the interrogator's morbid fantasy is hard to say.

This narrative appears to be a fiction because in the early 1930s Ialovyi and Khvyl'ovyi seemed to drift apart. Few *slov'iany* failed to sense the danger of being around the rebel (Khvyl'ovyi) who provoked Stalin's fury.⁵⁴ Moreover, most *slov'iany* knew about the arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals, and this certainly limited their contacts with each other.⁵⁵ Social interactions became extremely dangerous for them. In addition, Ialovyi was involved in the organizational work in publishing houses, and Khvyl'ovyi fell silent, began to drink, became socially inactive and unproductive as a writer. Their trajectories rarely crossed.

The interrogator Pustovoitov who can hardly be suspected of mercy or kindness toward prisoners managed to destroy Ialovyi's and Khvyl'ovyi's friendship, a friendship that did exist, according to many memoirs. Their friendship was born during the years of seeming freedom in the 1920s and blessed by their romantic views about the promising future of the new Ukrainian literature.⁵⁶ Yet, beyond the friendship between these two individuals, Pustovoitov managed to destroy Ialovyi's integrity and poise. It seems likely that he familiarized Ialovyi with his friends' depositions denouncing Ialovyi as a member of the UVO.

The tactics the GPU employed seemed to work effectively each time in destroying the inner core of the arrested before investigators even began to

⁵⁴ See the details in Chapter Five.

⁵⁵ The *slov'iany* knew about *halychany*'s arrests and the fear in *Budynok Slovo* was in the air long before May 1933. About Iurii Ianovskii's, Ivan Kulyk's, Hryhorii Epik's, Mykola Khvyl'ovyi's, Maik Iohansen's, Ostap Vyshnia's and Ivan Senchenko's conversations with Ialovyi about this, see DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1843, ark.105.

⁵⁶ Kostiuk, 1: 574-75.

work with them. Emptied, wounded and devastated by human disloyalty and treachery, the victims presented malleable human material for interrogators. The weakest, less resilient and more vulnerable were broken first. They betrayed those who were considered stronger than their predecessors who, in turn, were broken by their friends' betrayals, or committed suicide. The circle repeated and perpetuated itself.

The finale of this criminal investigation precisely followed the scenario that was designed by the GPU. The secret police forced Ialovyi to reveal his friendship with oppositionists, such as Khvyl'ovyi, Shums'kyi and many others, as well as their alleged co-attendance at meetings and active co-participation in the conspiracy. The ultimate task of interrogators was to lead the suspect to a moral decline when he would betray his friends and loved ones, denouncing them on paper. This scenario usually prevented surprises at the final stages of the investigation. Destroyed morally, very few recanted their depositions during the trial. Indifferent to the future and hateful of their past, the suspects usually confirmed their preliminary statements in front of *dvoikas*, *troikas* and prosecutors.

The destruction of human bonds and friendship was one of the tasks of the Soviet secret police. With all necessary means in hand, mainly guided by the party's blessing, the GPU secured complete control over the *slov'iany*'s interpersonal relationships, including their flow of ideas and deeds. Broken and depressed, in prison and labor camps, people who were betrayed by their friends and loved ones (or were persuaded they had been) carried a burden that was beyond physical suffering: they carried a ruined faith in morality, love and friendship, a feeling that crippled them for life. Those who survived

repressions never recovered fully in a physical, psychological or psychiatric sense.⁵⁷ Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide without learning the bitterness of his friend's betrayal or weakness.

Prison could change people in many unpredictable ways, as Ivan Bahrianyi demonstrated. In prison, Ialovyi asked Pustovoitov to spare his life because of his sincerity and openness with the secret police. These written lines invite the reader to remember what was at stake—human life. Not everyone was prepared to die instantly, without negotiations or a struggle with the system.

Love and Fear: Lidiia Vovchyk-Blakytna

Individual criminal files on each Ukrainian intellectual usually begin with a detailed characterization of the suspect (supplied by a questionnaire or *anketa*) which provides data on his or her relatives, including wives, husbands and children, as well as the suspect's parents, and siblings. Sometimes, the circle of personal connections was even broader than this, and the list incorporated those individuals who lived at the same address with the suspect. Ultimately, in the eyes of the GPU, they were criminalized and constituted a future target for the punitive organs. They were guilty *ab definitio* as the relatives of a nationalist deviationist, a wrecker and a counterrevolutionary.⁵⁸ As Vatulesku noted, "each file became the potential originator of other files in

⁵⁷ See Misha Perlman's story (a well-known poet in the twenties and early thirties) in Janusz Bardach and Kathleen Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man: Surviving the Gulag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 342-44. Kostiuk also admitted that learning about the "confessions" of those writers he closely knew was a traumatic experience for him, although he did not believe these confessions were authentic. See Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:490.

⁵⁸ For more on criminalization of wives of the arrested and close relatives in the 1930s, see Melanie Ilic, "The Forgotten Five per cent: Women, Political Repression and the Purges," in *Stalin's Terror Revisited*, ed. Melanie Ilic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 116-39.

an arborescent model that first takes over the family tree and later threateningly spreads out to ‘any inimical and personal relationships.’”⁵⁹ The closest connection to Ialovyι was Lidiia Vovchyk-Blakytina who also lived in *Budynok Slovo* together with Ialovyι.

Although they were never officially married, she and Ialovyι moved together to *Budynok Slovo* in 1930. Lidiia was Vasyl’ Ellan-Blakytyni’s wife and they had a daughter Maia. Before and after Blakytyni’s death in 1925, Lidiia had a relationship with Ialovyι which was interrupted by different professional assignments for both. Ialovyι worked in Kyiv and Moscow; Lidiia was sent to work for the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw.⁶⁰



Maia Vovchyk-Blakytina with her mother Lidiia Vovchyk-Blakytina (1977).⁶¹

Upon their return to Kharkiv, during the most tragic periods of Lidiia’s life (the sicknesses of her daughter Maiia and Blakytyni, and Blakytyni’s subsequent death), Ialovyι took good care of Lidiia and Maia. In

⁵⁹ Vatulesku, 52.

⁶⁰ Ushkalovy, 129.

⁶¹ *Sils’ki Visti*, no. 30, 16 March 2010. For more on Maia and Lidiia, see Andrii Mel’nychuk, “Ni slova pro spokii! Ni zvuku pro vtomu!” in *Sils’ki Visti*, no. 30, 16 March 2010.

her report to the GPU, Vovchyk suggested that she was very grateful to Ialovyi because he literally saved her daughter's life.⁶²

However, when she was arrested, clearly because of her relationship with Ialovyi, her acquaintances with Ukrainian writers and her residence in *Budynok Slovo*, Vovchyk transparently described Ialovyi as a person who made political and ideological mistakes. She claimed that because of this their relationship remained incredibly tense. She informed the organs that she expressed her concerns to Ialovyi about his presidency in VAPLITE, suggesting that this literary association was bourgeois, as well as the title of his position in it...“president.” Moreover, in their conversations with Ialovyi she insisted that before he died, Blakytnyi, an influential literary and party figure, was adamantly against the very concept of this association which deeply offended Ialovyi on collective and personal levels.⁶³ According to Lidiia, these disagreements estranged them from one another.

However, for some time in 1930 they lived happily together. Ialovyi was entitled to a three-room apartment in a newly built *Budynok Slovo*. According to the decision of the Blakytnyi's legacy committee, Vovchyk was also offered a three-room apartment. At the final stage, it turned out that there were not enough apartments for all writers who originally applied for membership, and Ialovyi and Vovchyk voluntarily gave up the right to an extra apartment. They moved to apartment 30 together with Maia.⁶⁴

According to Vovchyk's deposition, their relationship with Ialovyi was terminated when she told him that she had met Vasyl' Krasen'kov from

⁶² Ushkalovy, 129. See also a group criminal case of K.O. Ialovyi, L.I. Vovchyk and K.I. Tymets'ka in DAKhO, f.R6452, op.3, spr.94.

⁶³ Ushkalovy, 130-31.

⁶⁴ Ushkalovy, 132.

Moscow during her vacation at the Zheleznovodsk resort. The couple continued to live together although they were separated.⁶⁵ She also reported that many *slov'iany* came to visit Ialovyi, but Khvyl'ovyi, Dosvitnii and Vyshnia were not among them. She was curious and asked Ialovyi about it. He replied that he was “sick of everybody,” and as for Dosvitnii, “[he] never had respect for him.”⁶⁶ Vovchyk also reported to GPU interrogators that she did not appreciate the atmosphere in *Budynok Slovo*: the writers were constantly drinking, arranging scandals and generally led noisy bohemian lifestyles. In her view, among *slov'iany*, there were also two people, Bazhan and Ianovs'kyi, who differed from the rest of the writers.⁶⁷

Throughout the report, Vovchyk emphasized that although Ialovyi and she lived in one apartment, they were on absolutely different work schedules, and during 1932-33 they had not seen each other “for weeks,” sometimes “for months.”⁶⁸ Yet she could not believe that Ialovyi was an “enemy,” because he was an “adherent to the general party line.” Vovchyk even suggested that someone might have denounced him.⁶⁹ After Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, she tried to share her concerns with the *slov'ianyn* Ivan Kulyk. His response was typical of this time: “No one is arrested without a reason...Apparently, I was mistaken about Ialovyi.”⁷⁰

Importantly, in April 1934, Serhii's Pylypenko's wife Kardinalowska visited Vovchyk and asked her to sign the collective letter to Maxim Gorky from the wives of those *slov'iany* who were arrested. Vovchyk replied that she

⁶⁵ Ushkalovy, 133.

⁶⁶ Ushkalovy, 134.

⁶⁷ Ibid. According to Vovchyk, they were serious, shy and at the same time optimistic and always in good spirits. Both Mykola Bazhan and Iurii Ianovs'kyi survived the repression.

⁶⁸ Ushkalovy, 135.

⁶⁹ Ushkalovy, 136.

⁷⁰ Ushkalovy, 137.

found this absolutely inappropriate and refused to do so. In her deposition to the GPU, she stated that Kardinalowska was frightened by her response, told her that she would abandon the idea, and very soon left.⁷¹

Like many others who were questioned by the secret police, Vovchyk exhibited the behavior of alienation from her friend who was in the GPU's custody. Vovchyk lamented that she continued to bring food and warm clothes to Ialovyi while he was in prison in Kharkiv and in exile in the Solovky. Her human duty was to thank Ialovyi for everything that he did for her and her daughter. However, she wished she would have terminated any relationship with him much earlier, and her behavior was dictated by the norm of the intelligentsia.⁷²

After many years in prison and during her rehabilitation process, Lidiia asked the prosecutor about the reasons for her arrest in the 1930s. The prosecutor looked at her in surprise, and said: "But you yourself signed the confession and the verdict." Lidiia requested the KGB to allow her to look through her criminal file and found two clean pages with her signature, pages that had never been completed. For Lidiia, this was a complete surprise, for a reader of her criminal file—a bitter irony and a rare phenomenon that confirms the methods of fabrication of criminal cases the secret police employed.⁷³

⁷¹ According to Kardinalowska, the idea to write to Gorky belonged to Andrii Richyts'kyi's wife. Kardinalowska wrote a letter but only five or six women "had the courage to sign it." Pasicznyk, 165, 166-69.

⁷² Ushkalovy, 144. Vovchyk-Blakytina was sentenced to 10 years in prison for nationalist conspiracy against the Soviet government.

⁷³ Vovchyk-Blakytina told this story to the Ukrainian scholar Serhii Bilokin'. See also Dukyna, 535.

The Ukrainian Scenario of Conversion

The year of 1933 marked the high point of repressions and state violence in Ukraine. The secret police moved on “nationalists,” reassured in its methods and practices that bore results desirable for the state. In late 1932, Stalin published a congratulatory letter to the secret police that celebrated its 15th anniversary, a sign of approval and encouragement of its work.⁷⁴ By 1933, the number of labor camps increased dramatically, where Ukrainian “nationalists” were supposed to be reforged.⁷⁵

Yet, there was another effective method of conversion of Ukrainian nationalists and enemies of the state—their recruitment to work as informants.⁷⁶ Their reeducation was implemented through blackmail, intimidation and fear for their relatives who were kept under various constraints within the country as hostages. Nevertheless, the names of the informants had never migrated from the lists of politically unreliable enemies to the lists of trustworthy and recanted individuals. They were used when needed, and eliminated whenever possible.

As many observers pointed out, the final stage of the Soviet preliminary investigation should have been the suspect’s ideological conversion, recantation and reeducation.⁷⁷ Reeducation began in the

⁷⁴ *Pravda*, no. 350, 20 December 1932.

⁷⁵ As Jörg Baberowski noted, “the regime discovered for itself forced labor as a method of socialist production and as a tool of people’s reeducation.” Jörg Baberowski, *Chervonyi terror: Istoriia stalinizmu* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo “K.I.S.,” 2007), 104.

⁷⁶ Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939-1957,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 32.

⁷⁷ For a discussion about Gulag reeducation theory and practice, see Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG: The Soviet Prison Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 41-44, 133-34. It was cynical of Soviet officials to argue about the re-educational value of labor camps: the conditions there were so bad that, as Jakobson put it, “the death of one prisoner meant the survival of another; the survival of one

interrogator's room and continued in the labor camp. "Corrective labor" was considered a part of the re-educational program.⁷⁸ The methods of the conversion into Soviet values varied, depending on the degree of humanity the supervisors of the "transformation" possessed. Persuasion and oral speeches played a minor role in such exercises. Physical and moral tortures, including humiliation and erasing feelings of personal pride and dignity, were deemed the most effective measures in re-creating a new Soviet man.⁷⁹

In Ukraine, the ideological conversion of "nationalists" and "separatists" was largely considered impractical. Their recidivism and relapses seemed to the state chronic and untreatable. Such relapses were discussed with each suspect individually in interrogation rooms. The interrogators believed that the roots of routine transgressions could be traced back to the suspects' active political involvement in the creation of an independent Ukrainian People's Republic and their membership in the Borot'bist Party. Indeed, former membership in any national party that existed in the territory of Ukraine made people suspects, and was a pretext for the GPU to closely investigate their former and current activities.⁸⁰ Those individuals who fought against the Soviet Army in the past or who were famous for their resistance to the Bolsheviks earned their reputations once and forever. Their past and origin were sufficient incriminating evidence against them which could not be undone, altered, changed, and most importantly, could not be ignored,

meant the death of another. These conditions...persisted in northern places of confinement until the 1950s, when they improved slightly."

⁷⁸ Jakobson, 141.

⁷⁹ Vatulesku, 183.

⁸⁰ On persecution, for instance, of Ukrainian Jews who were former members of various Zionist parties, see Olga Bertelsen, "New Archival Documentation on Soviet Jewish Policy in Interwar Ukraine. Part One: GPU Repressions of Zionist Parties and Groups in the 1920s," *On the Jewish Street* 1, no. 1 (2011): 37-112, and "Part Two: Repressions of Zionist Parties and Groups in the 1930s," *On the Jewish Street* no. 2 (2011): 165-206.

neglected or forgiven. Nationalistic relapses and reversions were expected, and had to be uprooted by eliminating individuals with compromised reputations, as well as their social networks.

Such practices were established immediately after the XII Congress of the RKP(b) in 1923 which proclaimed the struggle against Russian chauvinism a chief priority. Two months after the Congress, the recanting of the Tatar Communist Sultan-Galiev of his supposed nationalistic deviations became the agenda of the All-Union party meeting about the national question.⁸¹ Sultan-Galiev's case became the first attack against local nationalisms. He was accused of spying for foreign states (Persia, Turkey), and without any evidence arrested in 1923 by Stalin's order. Because many members of the Politburo, including Trotsky, regretted their approval of Sultan-Galiev's arrest and insisted on his release, this followed shortly thereafter. Yet Stalin and the GPU were persistent, and in 1929, again without any evidence, Sultan-Galiev was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and in 1940 he was shot.⁸² Ivan Maistrenko noted that "the entire period of the struggle for the implementation of the XII Congress's decrees about the national question does not contain a single prosecution case of a Russian chauvinist...while the struggle with local nationalisms and their proponents echoed in all national republics."⁸³

Given Ukraine's striving for national liberation, the republic could not serve as an experimental field for developing Soviet citizens. In Stalin's and

⁸¹ **Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev** was a member of the Collegium of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities in Moscow and simultaneously the head of the Central Muslim Military Collegium within the People's Commissariat of Naval Forces in Kazan'. For a discussion about Sultan-Galiev, see Mark Baker, "Did he really do it? Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, Party Disloyalty, and the 1923 Affair," *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 1 (forthcoming early 2013).

⁸² Ivan Maistrenko, *Natsional'naiia politika KPSS v ee istoricheskoi razvitii* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1978), 98-9, 109-10.

⁸³ Maistrenko, *Natsional'naiia politika*, 96, 104.

the GPU's views, Ukraine was filled with Sultan-Galievs, and their national aspirations could only be curbed radically, by terror, which would produce a desirable effect—compliance in the republic. Experiments in reforming or appeasing nationalists on an explosively dangerous soil, or even in the Gulag, seemed to be an endeavor which the secret police had no interest in exploring.

In light of the brutal treatment of humans in general, and national minorities in particular in the Gulag by the Soviet regime, the statements made by historian Stephen Barnes that “the Gulag was not a death chamber,” and that the Soviet authorities “chose not to create a truly genocidal institution,” such as the Gulag, seem problematic.⁸⁴ Interestingly, Barnes ultimately admitted that Ukrainian nationalism, like other local nationalisms, was considered an especially dangerous state crime, and those who were accused of being a Ukrainian nationalist were exempted from release.⁸⁵ Indeed, many Ukrainian intellectuals, writers and journalists did not even reach the Gulag—they were shot in the cellars at Radnarkomivs'ka Street.⁸⁶ In the early 1930s, every night a truck with the sign “Meat” left the GPU headquarters, taking the Belgorod road toward the Forest Zone (*Lesopark*) near Kharkiv. The interior of the truck was made of steel to prevent blood from dripping through the bottom of the truck. The victims were buried in mass graves in the 6th *kvartal* (bloc) in *Lesopark*, together with the victims who died during the famine.⁸⁷ Most of those who survived preliminary investigation in the Kharkiv GPU prison and served their term in Solovky were shot there in November 1937.

⁸⁴ Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 10. For a more thorough consideration of the term “genocide” see a dissertation-in-progress on Lemkin and the definition of genocide by Douglas Irvin-Erickson (Rutgers University-Newark).

⁸⁵ Barnes, 238-39.

⁸⁶ Bahrianyi, 114.

⁸⁷ Konstantin Kevorkian, *Pervaia stolitsa* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007), 102.

Those who were released after the completion of their terms were subsequently arrested for new crimes, and later were also shot.⁸⁸

The GPU cover-up operations of mass executions of the Kharkiv intelligentsia deserve special attention, and remain one of the least investigated topics in Ukrainian history. It seems appropriate to mention here a spatial aspect of the Soviet secret police's activities, and their special affinity to one place. In 1937, with great irony, the NKVD built a modern gated community with luxurious apartments in the 6th *kvartal* in the Kharkiv park zone (Lesopark), on the bones of their victims.⁸⁹ The place still remains in possession of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU), and apparently, the history of the landscape and human remains under the resort do not seem to disturb visitors who are associates of the current successor organization of the GPU/NKVD. Today, the place is nondescript: there are no open pits, piles of dead bodies covered with lime, or soil bumps or impressions. Everything has been leveled by human effort, nature and time. But a violent space still exists there, in human memories and physical artifacts that are carefully hidden from the human eye. The space and place of the 6th *kvartal*, and spatial practices related to them, reveal how the GPU envisioned individual reforging in Ukraine. The spatial status quo also illuminates the stability and unshaken persistence of established Stalinist definitions of life, society and culture that were cynically extended and perpetuated by the secret agency.

W.G. Hoskin posited that “all studies of the past, in fact, draw their evidence from three primary terms—documents, archeology, and the

⁸⁸ Jakobson, 134.

⁸⁹ Maistrenko, *Natsional'naia politika*, 131-32. See also Kevorkian, 102.

landscape.”⁹⁰ Perhaps one day the 6th *kvartal* will become a subject of archeological investigation, and testimonies and memoirs about this place will guide that investigation and lead to material confirmation of those guides. This place, for many of us abstract and imaginary, is nevertheless “concretely historical,” as any other landscape.⁹¹ It instructs us about the moral disposition of GPU/NKVD associates, as well as their inclinations to ameliorate Ukrainian nationalists.

Was the reforging mission implemented in Soviet prison successful? Were those few *slov’iany* who survived the terror ever converted? Some commentators answered these questions negatively, suggesting that they were certainly broken, and physically and morally destroyed. Soviet-like amelioration (*po-Sovetski*) *a contrario* meant “broken,” a euphemism for Soviet conversion. In this sense, the survivors had been ameliorated: some of them spoke about it through the silence of their own voices after the prison term; some of them—through the lies and distortions of the past.⁹²

On 23 September 1933, after four months of interrogations, Ialovyι was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps by the GPU troika. In Solovky where he served his term, Ialovyι was denounced by his prison mate Ianov. Ialovyι’s appeal was ignored, and he was shot as a Ukrainian nationalist and a member of an anti-Soviet organization according to the decision of the NKVD troika in Leningrad oblast’ on 3 November 1937 in Sandarmokh (Karelia).⁹³

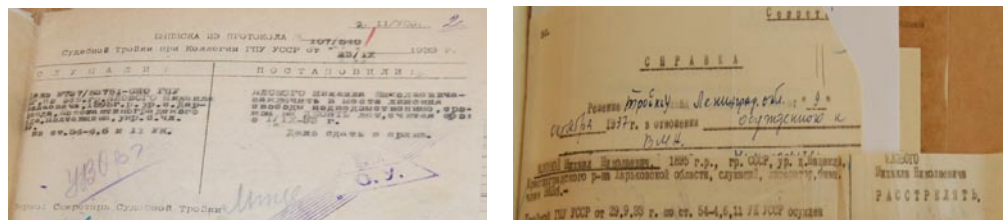
⁹⁰ W.G. Hoskin, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968), 79. Quoted in Edward S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape, Paintings and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 275.

⁹¹ Casey, *Representing Place*, 274-75.

⁹² This is a paraphrase of Edward Casey’s ruminations about place, landscape and art. See Casey, *Representing Place*, 39.

⁹³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1844, ark.1-2,10-11.

On 25 February 2003, Ialovyi, as well as other UVO “members,” was rehabilitated because of the false accusations used to convict them.⁹⁴



Ialovy's verdict, 23 September 1933.⁹⁵ Ialovy's second verdict, 9 October 1937.⁹⁶

Mykhailo Ialovyi was the first *slov'ianyn* whose arrest resonated in a series of tragic events in Ukraine. Ialovyi's prominence as a political figure conditioned the final outlook of his criminal case: bulky and “full of evidence” of his anti-Soviet activities, the volume was fabricated in a methodical and thorough fashion. The glib and detailed confession contains denunciations of many representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia nationwide and even abroad. Ialovyi's depositions are read as an attempt of the secret police to justify further mass arrests in *Budynok Slovo*.

Interestingly, according to memoirs, Ialovyi had a special affinity for *Budynok Slovo*—he enjoyed the place and its surroundings. He liked to sit outside and quietly sing songs in the garden.⁹⁷ Yet, his depositions portray a place in which he was constantly subjected to nationalist influences and which was hostile to his essence as a Communist. Evidently, his later perceptions of his home fully coincided and adhered to the image held by the secret police. Or rather it would be fair to say that he willingly or unwillingly delivered the

⁹⁴ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1844, ark.12-13.

⁹⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1844, ark.2.

⁹⁶ DAKhO, f. R6452, op. 4, spr. 1844, ark.10.

⁹⁷ I. Senchenko, *Podorozh do Chervonohrada*, VAPLITE ch. 5 (1927): 78-117; Shpol, 25.

description of *Budynok Slovo* which was expected of him and imposed on him by his interrogator.

Through deception and intimidation, the secret police eroded the civil cohesiveness and dissolved human bonds among the *slov'iany*, reforging the human psyche of those who were chosen to survive according to the tasks of class struggle, a psyche that was to be devoid of national consciousness and personality. The obligatory thinking on the "All-Union" level had to replace the "All-Ukrainian" one, and the creativity of individual thinking was dismissed as a bourgeois phenomenon. The achievements of social construction claimed to be a product of collective thinking and Communist upbringing.

A question of great significance emerges here about the charges of Ukrainian nationalism that the secret police commonly applied to anyone in the 1930s who spoke Ukrainian or occupied leading positions in bringing Ukrainian language and culture to the people: were they true or false? More than twenty years ago, George S.N. Luckyj deconstructed the notion of a Ukrainian nationalist:

If by nationalism is meant national pride and identity then the Ukrainians were guilty of the charge, but so were the Russians. As an emerging nationality, after the centuries of oppression, Ukrainians were certainly eager to assert themselves culturally, especially linguistically. On the other hand, nationalism such as this was far removed from any political "integral" nationalism, in which most Ukrainians did not participate. Probably most of the people, following a long tradition, did not object to a federation with Russia, as long as this meant full cultural and some political autonomy. The Soviet charges blurred this important distinction and in attacking everything Ukrainian helped to create an image of national genocide rather than indiscriminate mass terror. These perceptions in Ukraine were strengthened by the fact that the sweeping purges ordered by Moscow were carried out by special Russian emissaries like Postyshev and Khrushchev. Ukrainian communist leaders who had purged literary groups in the early 1930s were themselves purged a few years later, without a single exception.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ George S.N. Luckyj, *Keeping a Record: Literary Purges in Soviet Ukraine (1930s): A Bio-Bibliography* (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, The University of Alberta, 1987), xix.

Certainly, the Ukrainian revolution shaped and mobilized certain popular perceptions and “feelings of collective belonging.” The British historian Eric Hobsbawm would call them “popular proto-identification or nationalism.”⁹⁹ However, these feelings were not extended and did not operate on the macro-political scale and therefore, could not result in an enormous political change in the republic.

Yet the Ukrainian intelligentsia’s aspirations to advance the Ukrainian language and culture and to share them with the broader population were a conscious political choice. Was the language a central element of these aspirations? Yes and no. Banned for centuries, the Ukrainian language was perceived as a significant marker of the Ukrainian nation that had to be rejuvenated and appreciated. But Russian oppression, the cause of the deplorable state of Ukrainian public education, was no less relevant or significant for Ukrainian intellectuals, a trend that continued to dominate throughout the twenties and to disrupt proto-national cohesion. They resisted it on a cultural or micro-political level. Their cohesion was more cultural than linguistic, and cultural bonds perhaps had a stronger potential for survival, which is evident in contemporary Ukraine. The Ukrainian elite came from various origins, and among them were Russians and Jews. What united them was a belief in Ukrainian culture and they fought to preserve it. Their response to oppression, or their proto-nationalism, was rooted in this belief and it was passionate, but spontaneous, immature, disorganized and chaotic.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1789: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press), 46.

¹⁰⁰ Hobsbawm noted that few modern national movements were based on pure ethnicity. Instead, he suggested that a belief in the “imagined community” (Anderson) and in its culture unite people. Hobsbawm, 65.

A well-policed state such as the Soviet Union perceived cultural bonds among the Ukrainian intelligentsia as politically sensitive, and as a factor that could be lethal to the Soviet project. These bonds spelled national loyalty that ran against state loyalty. The state made no distinction between demands for cultural and political freedoms and considered them essential and existential aspirations and ambitions of the Ukrainians. The center did not pursue a reconciliation scenario and believed that these aspirations, together with their proponents, had to be purged and destroyed. The state had no expectations of the development of all-union state patriotism from a nation that was annexed by force in 1919. Conversely, the language that reinforced national and cultural bonds was to be reduced to a minimal level of education and usage. In his 13 February 1933 operational report to the GPU organs, the head of the GPU in Ukraine Balyts'kyi reported that a thorough analysis of criminal cases revealed that an underground network of Ukrainian nationalist organizations functioned in Ukraine that planned a military uprising to demolish the Soviet regime in spring 1933 and to establish a capitalist state—"the Ukrainian independent republic."¹⁰¹ According to the statistical data of the GPU and decrees by the court *troiki* of the GPU Collegium in the UkrSSR, throughout 1933, 805 people were executed for anti-Soviet activity.¹⁰²

"A network" (in Balyts'kyi's words) meant further repression. The elimination of the *slov'iany* was a part of mass operations conducted all over Ukraine, operations that received different code names at different times. Ialovyi's case and his depositions prepared the grounds for arresting a number of prominent cultural figures in *Budynok Slovo* as UVO members. Throughout

¹⁰¹ HDA SBU, f.9, spr.666, ark.56,58.

¹⁰² HDA SBU, f.42, spr.10, ark.48 (the 31 March 1934 report by the head of the OSV GPU UkrSSR Bukshpan to the head of the ASV OGPU Genkin in Moscow).

Ukraine during 1933-1934, approximately 150 Ukrainian intellectuals who originated in or had connections with Galicia were accused of membership in the UVO. All “members” of this imaginary organization were rehabilitated in the 1950s, 1980s and 1990s.¹⁰³

An analysis of operational materials, and their criminal cases fabricated by the GPU in 1933 reveals the absurdity of accusations and outrageous illegality and misconduct by the secret police that was suitable for the center’s purposes and, thus, possible in the 1930s. Brandishing weapons in interrogation rooms and beating the arrested until they were unconscious, the interrogators openly boasted about their power over their victims’ lives. The British historian Andrew Wilson noted that the repressions of the 1930s were “brutally effective,”¹⁰⁴ and precisely the brutality and the non-human treatment of the arrested and mass executions made them so effective, cultivating fear and compliance among the *slov’iany*.

It is noteworthy that although the human losses during 1929-30 and during the Great Terror of 1937-38 were disastrous for Ukraine, they are incomparable with the period of 1932-34, a time when the foundation of Ukrainian society was completely destroyed—the intelligentsia and the peasantry. The pre-revolutionary “intellectual potential” of the nation that survived the revolution and wars was irreversibly lost during this period. Sociologists, anthropologists, and historians usually characterize human losses

¹⁰³ Iurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko and Vadym Zolotar’ov, *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abris, 1997), 52-53; Vadym Zolotar’ov, *Sekretno-politychnyi viddil [SPV] DPU USSR: Spravy ta liudy* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007), 200-03.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 146.

on this scale as an event that eventually leads to a “cultural and spiritual collapse” of society.¹⁰⁵

A missing generation of scholars, artists, writers and composers in one place portends the interruption of the national cultural tradition which in turn promotes pernicious behavioral trends, characteristic of “post-genocidal” societies.¹⁰⁶ In a culturally groundless space and place, social connections and networks are problematic. Anti-intellectualism is celebrated and even considered a necessary attribute of survival. The repression of educators and intellectuals in the early thirties in Ukraine echoes throughout all spheres of contemporary Ukrainian society. The spatial vacuum and cultural disruption persist, and is evident in daily human behavior and in the literature produced by contemporary Ukrainians.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Marochko and Hillig, 286.

¹⁰⁶ See James Mace’s works on the “post-genocidal” Ukrainian society, for instance, his *Vashi mertvi vybraly mene...*, ed. Larysa Ivshyna (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo ZAT “Ukrains’ka pres-grupa,” 2008), 457-58.

¹⁰⁷ Volodymyr Bazylevs’kyi, “Do z’izdu pys’mennykiv Ukrainy: Zamakh na boha,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 6 November 2011; Marochko and Hillig, 12, 52, 90.

Chapter Five

Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: Suicide or Murder?

To die, my friend, is the simplest and easiest thing. Anyone can do this. But to live, overcoming everything, is something different. To live and fight is worth something. And under our circumstances, I can assure you, it is quite an achievement.

Mykola Khvyl'ovyi¹

The Ukrainian writer and *slov'ianyn* Mykola Khvyl'ovyi played a prominent role in establishing Ukrainian national identity in the 1920s. There is no doubt that the GPU planned to neutralize Khvyl'ovyi as the most dangerous “nationalist element” in Ukraine. A secret GPU file (*papka-formuliar*) on Khvyl'ovyi existed for three years before he allegedly committed suicide on 13 May 1933. The surveillance reports are filled with information that describes Khvyl'ovyi as an opinionated person, independent thinker, and nationalist.

Today it is still unknown whether Khvyl'ovyi's suicide came as a complete surprise to the secret police. What happened that morning, the day after Ialovyi's arrest?

Khvyl'ovyi invited his friends and *slov'iany*, the playwright Mykola Kulish and writer Oles' Dosvitnii, for tea to discuss the arrest of Ialovyi. According to a number of witnesses, Khvyl'ovyi was disturbed and agitated. After the conversation, he found his guitar and sang some songs, then walked out onto the balcony, looked around, returned to the dining room and walked to his office. Very shortly after this, his friends heard a sound, as if a shelf had broken and collapsed. The visitors and Khvyl'ovyi's wife rushed into his

¹ Arkadii Liubchenko, “Ioho taiemnytsia,” in Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, *Arabesky Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho: opovidannia ta novely*, ed. Vira Aheeva (Kyiv: Hrani, 2010), 157.

office. Khvyl'ovyi was sitting in the chair. A gun was lying on the floor. From an opening in Khvyl'ovyi's right temple, a little stream of blood was dripping down his cheek.

After Khvyl'ovyi's death, the *slov'iany*, more than ever, perceived *Budynok Slovo* as a threatening place. The American scholar Yi-Fu Tuan has noted that "security [of place] lies in routine," in repetition of activities that are connected with a place. Khvyl'ovyi's suicide violated this routine for the *slov'iany*, and the events of 1933, the peak of repression in *Budynok Slovo*, eventually destroyed it.² A primary and perhaps unconscious source of the residents' seeming stability and confidence, the building now became a source of ambivalent feelings. The *slov'iany* cherished it as the last vestige of their privacy, and yet despised it because Khvyl'ovyi exposed its community to the authorities. The site became a focus of increased attention from the GPU as his gun shot reverberated, summoning ever increasing GPU infiltration into their space.

The GPU intrusion became ubiquitous, changing the personality of the building. Routine practices of the residents were altered. The façade doors of the building were locked and the trajectory of ingress and egress to and from their homes now took them past two or three GPU agents who occupied the space of the internal yard day and night. The importance of corners as outposts of space, emphasized by Tuan,³ materialized in a triangle of fear that the residents had to overcome each time they went in or out: the entrance door on

² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 188, 200. As Tuan emphasized, human "routine activity and standard performance do not require analytical thought." When the routine is interrupted or ruined, this requires a "pause" and "analytical thought" to find a new direction and to form a new routine of activities which produce a feeling of stability and security.

³ Tuan, *Space*, 17.

the ground floor, and the two wings of the building were guarded. The fear of walking through this triangle obscured their perceptions of other elements of the intellectual and geographical landscape and landmarks. For instance, the other triangle, conceptual and perceptual, that was represented by the competing ideas of Khvyl'ovyi, Pylypenko and Blakytnyi about cultural construction in Ukraine that had conditioned the Literary Discussion and became popular in the 1920s, receded into the shadows in the early 1930s.⁴ Their debates became irrelevant in light of state repressions and the physical deaths of the *slov'iany*. The guards, wearing similar outfits which seemed to the residents almost like a uniform provided by the GPU, now constituted and dominated the space in which they lived. The experience of this newly formed triangle, especially its elementary everyday repetition and recognition, as well as their individual memories of 13 May 1933, amplified their fears. The mixed feelings of the *slov'iany* toward Khvyl'ovyi, their pride in being his neighbor, their jealousy of his talents and their pleasure of knowing him, now gravitated more toward a negative perspective, changing the perceptions, and simultaneously the identity of the place. Once experienced and now remembered as flamboyant and exciting, the place became illegible, quiet and dismal.⁵

Who was Khvyl'ovyi, what was his influence on *Budynok Slovo* and its residents, and why did the state perceive him as the most dangerous nationalist in Ukraine?

⁴ Vasyly' Sokil, *Zdaleka do blyz'koho (spohady, rozdumy)* (Edmonton: Kanads'kyi instytut ukrains'kykh studii, Al'berts'kyi universytet, 1987), 57.

⁵ Sokil, 103.



Mykola Khvyl'ovyi.⁶



Mykola Khvyl'ovyi.⁷

In order to understand the role Khvyl'ovyi played in the lives of the *slov'iany*, it is worthwhile to examine how his life changed after he moved to *Budynok Slovo*, and to explore how his ideas, attitudes and behavior evolved in the literary, social and political context of the 1920s and the early 1930s. An analysis of possible connections between Khvyl'ovyi's role in the Literary Discussion (1925-28) and the tragic event of 13 May 1933 will shed light on the political climate in Ukraine at the time, and the attitudes of the state and the GPU toward the intelligentsia.

Khvyl'ovyi in Scholarly Discourse

Khvyl'ovyi's name is often mentioned in the discourse about Ukrainian national liberation and anti-colonial sentiment in Ukraine that reached its peak during the Literary Discussion of 1925-28, and in the context of Stalin's subsequent massive political repression in Ukraine. Importantly, the contradictory nature of Khvyl'ovyi's character invited similarly

⁶ Khvyl'ovyi's picture is published in *Vsesvit*, no. 8 (1926): 10.

⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.301, ark.1.

contradictory, often mutually exclusive, analyses of his creative writings, political activities and human behavior. Khvyl'ovyi's passionate temper, charisma, and, as Myroslav Shkandrij formulated it, the "playfulness," "inconsistencies in the tone," and "discontinuities" in his thinking have contributed to multiple interpretations of his essence as a writer and as a human being.⁸

To illustrate this idea, it would be expedient to mention just a few opinions by different authors about Khvyl'ovyi at different times. Many Soviet Russian and Ukrainian scholars, as well as Soviet authorities, considered him a Ukrainian bourgeois "nationalist, a chauvinist and a fascist," as George S.N. Luckyj noted.⁹ Stalin himself called Khvyl'ovyi an extremist who "has nothing to say in favor of Moscow except to call on Ukrainian leaders to run away from Moscow as fast as possible," and ordered the Ukrainian party leadership to "combat" Khvyl'ovyi's extreme views.¹⁰

In contrast, Ivan Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky, a Canadian specialist in Ukrainian intellectual history, had a more positive view of Khvyl'ovyi, calling him a "flag-bearer of the 'Ukrainian renaissance' of the 1920s."¹¹ He considered Khvyl'ovyi a courageous person, a dialectic thinker and a brilliant polemicist who opposed Moscow politics. According to Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky,

⁸ Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 224-25.

⁹ George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 65. As examples, see A. Khvyliia, "Literatura—sostavnaia chast' stroitel'stva ukrainskoi sovetskoi kul'tury," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29 July 1933; V. Cherednychenko, *Natsionalizm proty natsii* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literatury Ukrainy, 1970).

¹⁰ I.V. Stalin, "Tov. Kaganovichu i drugim chlenam PB TsK KP(b)U," in *Sochineniia* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoie izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1954), 8:149-54. See Stalin's text in Luckyj's translation in *Literary Politics*, 66-68.

¹¹ Ivan Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky, "Mykola Khvyl'ovyi," in his *Istorychni Ese*, ed. Frank Sysyn (Kyiv: Peter Jacyk Centre, the CIUS, University of Alberta, 1994), 2:121.

the phenomenon of Khvyl'ovyi should not be determined only in national communist terms. Khvyl'ovyi dreamed about national liberation through the prism of individual intellectual and creative developments. His notion of the "Asiatic Renaissance" identified the eventual emancipation of colonial states, and attributed an important role for Ukraine as a geographical and intellectual mediator between Europe and liberated nations of Asia.¹² Yet, Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky admitted the ambiguities and mysteries of Khvyl'ovyi's thinking that may have been conditioned by constraints the Soviet system imposed on his writings. Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky also suggested that Khvyl'ovyi went too far in his conflict with Soviet authorities precisely because he was not certain about how to proceed, to remain faithful to Communism, or to reject the socialist utopia. However, for Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky, Khvyl'ovyi's evolution from a neo-romantic to a pragmatic in his writings suggested his disillusionment and a loss of faith in Communism.¹³

Western émigré historians and scholars of Ukrainian culture and literature Luckyj, Hryhorii Kostiuk and Iurii Shevel'ov considered Khvyl'ovyi a theoretician of Ukrainian national liberation whose system was radical but comprehensible and consistent. They believed that Khvyl'ovyi's conviction and faith in the independent cultural development of Ukraine away from Russian influence, and the gravitation of Ukrainian culture toward European art conditioned by what Osip Mandel'shtam called *toska po mirovoi kul'ture* were harmonious, natural and politically justifiable.¹⁴ Luckyj wrote that

¹² Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky, 2:122-23.

¹³ Lysiak-Rudnyts'ky, 2:123.

¹⁴ *Toska po mirovoi kul'ture* is nostalgia for world culture. See Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 3, 109, 158.

Khvyl'ovyi "was a master of biting invective and satirical criticism, and a brilliant pamphleteer," and by his pamphlets and essays, he provoked "the rage and retribution of the Communist Party."¹⁵ For Luckyj, the protest of Khvyl'ovyi, "a defiant Ukrainian Communist," against the regimentation of art and society by the state was legitimate, and resulted in "a bold and new theory of Ukrainian proletarian literature and culture."¹⁶ Kostiuk posited that Khvyl'ovyi passionately and sacrificially loved life and Ukraine but despised the "slavery psychology" of its intelligentsia.¹⁷ According to Shevel'ov, Khvyl'ovyi lost his struggle with Moscow because of the Kremlin's massive ideological campaign and pressure, and due to the ignorance of the intelligentsia (Shevel'ov called it "*protointelighentsia*") that originated in the Ukrainian countryside.¹⁸ However, Shevel'ov considered Khvyl'ovyi unique not because Khvyl'ovyi proclaimed the necessity for Ukrainian culture to "get away from Moscow" in its quest for novelty (this idea existed before Khvyl'ovyi), but because of Khvyl'ovyi's intellectual and moral integrity and civic courage, which enabled him to resist Moscow's desire to keep Ukraine culturally provincial.¹⁹

The American scholar George G. Grabowicz discussed the paradigm of symbolic autobiography that should be associated with Khvyl'ovyi's prose.

Grabowicz suggested that the narrative of Khvyl'ovyi's prose played a

¹⁵ Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 62.

¹⁶ Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, 62. See also George Luckyj, "Mykola Khvylovy: A Defiant Ukrainian Communist," in *Enemies of the People: The Destruction of Soviet Literary Theatre, and Film Arts in the 1930s*, ed. Katherine Bliss Eaton (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 165-78.

¹⁷ Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, "Zustrichi bez proshchan' na ukraiins'komu prostori XX stolittia," in Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 2:14.

¹⁸ Iurii Shevel'ov, *Ia—Mene—Meni... (i dovkruih): spohady. V Ukraini* (Kharkiv-New York: Vydannia chasopysu "Berezil," Vydavnytstvo M.P. Kots', 2001), 1:136.

¹⁹ Iurii Sheveliov, *Z istorii nezakinchenoï viiny*, eds. Oksana Zabushko and Larysa Masenko (Kyiv: KMA, 2009), 154-56, 164.

mediating role between his life and his art through the deep psychological structures of his character, and, therefore, his life and art, being symbiotic and holistic, were shaped one through the other, culminating in his suicide.²⁰

Grabowicz also noted that many Ukrainian scholars living in the West (Kostiuk, Iurii Lawrinenko, Iurii Boiko-Blokhin and George Shevelov), as well as political figures such as Vasyl' Hryshko and Ivan Maistrenko, developed a cult of Khvyl'ovyi because for them he exemplified an accurate and desirable vision of the Ukrainian past and future.²¹ Grabowicz also linked the cult of Khvyl'ovyi and the interpretational conflation of Khvyl'ovyi's prose and his biography ("he wrote his life, and ultimately his death" scenario) with the emergence of a primitive and false interpretation, formulated by contemporary right-wing nationalists.²² They based their accusations against Khvyl'ovyi on his novel *Ia (Romantyka)*, in which the main character, a *chekist*, kills his own mother. For them, Khvyl'ovyi became a fanatical Communist, a *chekist* and a murderer.²³ Grabowicz made use of Christeva's notion of intertextuality to analyze Khvyl'ovyi's style in prose, in which "literary allusions, scenes, characters, themes and methods" revealed the possibility of constructing an original prose, using mosaic pieces of different universally recognizable cultures. Khvyl'ovyi's characters migrated from one novel to another supporting his desire to continue the very same story, the conversation with his readers he established in the beginning of his literary career. His

²⁰ George G. Grabowicz, "Symvolichna biohrafia u prozi Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho," *chastyna I, Kritik*, 22 May 2005, available at <http://www.kritiki.net/2003/06/22/simvolichna-avtobiografiya-u-prozi-mikoli-xvilovogo-chastina-1> (accessed 20 May 2010).

²¹ Grabowicz, "Symvolichna biohrafia," ch. 1.

²² Among such interpretations, see an earlier one (a harbinger of today's right nationalists) by the head of the Union of the Liberation of Ukraine Vasyl' Pliushch, *Pravda pro khvyliovizm* (Miunkhen: Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukrainy, 1954).

²³ *Ibid.*

psychological inner “I,” conscious and unconscious, and his obsession with the images and themes that were important for him, produced art through his emotional life, and his life through art.²⁴

The tragic figure of Khvyl’ovyi evokes tremendous interest among contemporary Ukrainian scholars, and their investigations resulted in a number of thoughtful and innovative scholarly works. The Ukrainian scholar Ivan Dziuba believed that Khvyl’ovyi’s exercises in political mimicry, systematic public self-denunciations and self-criticisms as methods of adaptation to the system were a torture for the writer and resulted in a deep inner crisis. At the same time they also enriched his literary works emotionally and intellectually.²⁵ Ukrainian scholar Mykola Zhulyns’kyi noted that Khvyl’ovyi balanced on the edge of art and politics.²⁶

Similarly, the Ukrainian scholar Mykhailo Naienko believes that Khvyl’ovyi “was poisoned by Communist ideology,” and was tortured by an inner conflict. He tried to transcend Communism through national consciousness.²⁷ According to Naienko, Khvyl’ovyi’s vacillation, confusion and doubts in the appropriateness of his path marked his art, as well as personal and social life.

More recently, the Ukrainian historian Iurii Shapoval has argued that Khvyl’ovyi regularly tried to manipulate Soviet power. Surrendering his

²⁴ George G. Grabowicz, “Symvolichna biohrafiia u prozi Mykoly Khvyl’ovoho,” *chastyna II, Kritik*, 22 May 2005. Available at <http://www.kritiki.net/2003/06/22/simvolichna-avtobiografiya-u-prozi-mikoli-xvilovogo-chastina-2> (accessed 20 May 2010).

²⁵ Ivan Dziuba, “Masky demaskatora,” *Slovo i chas*, no. 4 (2008): 3-13.

²⁶ See Mykola Zhulyns’kyi’s foreword “Vin piznav radist’ buntu” to Mykola Khvyl’ovyi, *Ukraina chy Malorosii? Pamflety*, ed. Mykola Zhulyns’kyi and Osyp Zinkevych (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo “Smoloskyp,” 1993), 5-16.

²⁷ Mykhailo Naienko, *Khudozhnia literatura Ukrainy: Vid mifiv do modernoi real’nosti* (Kyiv: Vydavnychi tsestr “Prosvita,” 2008), 828. See also Mykhailo Naienko, “M’iatezhnyi genii’ literatury i zhertva komunistychnoho bozhevillia,” *Vitchyzna*, no. 11-12 (2008).

beliefs under state pressure at one moment, he would persistently continue to publicize those same beliefs at another. The state demanded self-criticism, and in response Khvyl'ovyi repented. After several instances of public self-criticism, he returned to his literary activity and editorial work in journals, through which he continued to propagandize his convictions. Shapoval is convinced that Khvyl'ovyi's behavior was not cynical. His repentant letters should be considered as the "price that he had to pay for preserving his intellectual sovereignty, for the right to defend his friends who supported him, and finally the price for an opportunity to continue living and writing."²⁸

Khvyl'ovyi's contemporaries treated him as a hero and as a talented original writer, although they suggested that Khvyl'ovyi the Communist had killed Khvyl'ovyi the artist. The writer Ievhen Malaniuk lamented that Khvyl'ovyi was a citizen of the imaginary Ukraine which because of the "millions of Pylypenkos ...cannot come into being."²⁹ Malaniuk posited that, jealous of Khvyl'ovyi's talent and eminent personality, his colleagues crucified him, "knowing perfectly well why they hate[d] him so much."³⁰ The writer Arkadii Liubchenko considered Khvyl'ovyi a moral leader of the intelligentsia.³¹ The critic Volodymyr Koriak noted that Khvyl'ovyi was cruel to himself and to others; he was "morbidly sensitive and proud, arrogant and severe, but often tender and timid...a dreamer."³² Koriak also characterized Khvyl'ovyi as a writer who created not for the proletariat, but for the

²⁸ Iurii Shapoval, *Poliuvannia na Val'dshnepa: Rozsekrechenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 17.

²⁹ Ievhen Malaniuk, *Notatnyky (1936-1968)* (Kyiv: "Tempora," 2008), 119. See a discussion about the argument between Pylypenko and Khvyl'ovyi later in the chapter.

³⁰ Malaniuk, 120, 152.

³¹ Liubchenko in Aheeva, 144-57.

³² See A.M. Lejtes and M.F. Jasek, *Desiat' Rokiv Ukraïns'koi Literatury (1917-1927)*, *Bio-Bibliohrafičnyj Charkiv. 1928* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1986), 1: 142, 526.

intelligentsia, although “his soul [was] proletarian.”³³ The scholar and writer Victor Petrov (who wrote fiction under the pseudonym Domontovich) stated that Khvyl’ovyi’s disposition or worldview was grounded in an almost messianic faith in a renaissance of Ukrainian culture and in a historical moment, time and place, categories which were crucial for its reawakening.³⁴ Petrov believed that the quintessence of the conflict between Khvyl’ovyi and Moscow laid in the fact that Khvyl’ovyi prioritized notions and categories that were rejected and demonized by the party, a “psychological category” against a “material base,” an “individual” against “masses,” the “intelligentsia” against the “proletariat,” a “civil person” and a “social criterion” against the “party.”³⁵

The interwar Galician literary critic Mykhailo Rudnyts’kyi, who lived in Polish-ruled Lviv, posited that the bureaucratization and profanation of revolutionary ideas provoked a belief in Khvyl’ovyi that change was urgently needed. He was disgusted with the musty and stagnant atmosphere produced by revolutionary slogans.³⁶ However, Rudnyts’kyi suggested that paradoxically, Khvyl’ovyi’s pamphlets which made him one of the most popular Ukrainian authors (unlike his prose) revealed a total absence of ideological cohesiveness, coherence and wholesome elegance. Rudnyts’kyi argued that a lack of any attempt to link his impressions to a coherent system

³³ See Lejtes and Jasek, 1: 526

³⁴ V. Petrov, *Diiachi Ukrain’s’koi kul’tury /1920-1940 rr./: Zhertvy bil’shovys’koho teroru* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo “Voskresinnia,” 1992), 40. In a most coherent way, these ideas found their reflection in Khvyl’ovyi, *Ukraina chy Malorosii?*

³⁵ Petrov, 42. See also Mykola Khvyl’ovyi, *Dumky proty techii: Pamflety* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1926), 24.

³⁶ Mykhailo Rudnyts’kyi, *Vid Myrnoho do Khvyl’ovoho. Mizh ideieiu i formoiu. Shcho take “Moloda Muza”?* in the series “Cogito: navchal’na klasyka” (Drohobych: “Vidrozhennia,” 2009), 267.

or *Weltanschauung* made Khvyl'ovyi a kind of impressionist.³⁷ He described Khvyl'ovyi's writing as "digressions," "dissonance," and "scraps from the diary of a drunken poet."³⁸ In other words, Rudnyts'kyi believed that Khvyl'ovyi's essays on the theory of art were no more than handy comments toward a psychological portrait of Khvyl'ovyi himself and were of no value as theoretical guidance to cultural construction. However, Rudnyts'kyi gave credit to Khvyl'ovyi the writer because of his originality and literary innovations. "One can dislike Khvyl'ovyi but no one can be indifferent to him," wrote Rudnyts'kyi.

Khvyl'ovyi's Views and the Literary Landscape of the 1920s

In the 1920s, Khvyl'ovyi was not the only one who understood the deplorable condition of Ukrainian literature, and the abnormality of party orders designed to control culture in Ukraine. However, a founder of the literary organization VAPLITE, he became the central figure of the polemics, drawing the fire toward himself and trying to explain that art was not a construction project that should involve masses, but an individual quest.³⁹

Khvyl'ovyi's failure to tolerate unprofessionalism and mediocrity resulted in the Literary Discussion that emerged in April 1925. The influence of Khvyl'ovyi's ideas on the Literary Discussion was enormous, although they produced a number of strong opponents. Khvyl'ovyi exploded in a series of essays that criticized the class approach in art which camouflaged lack of literary talent. He denounced graphomaniacs and *massovism* that, according to

³⁷ Rudnyts'kyi, 269.

³⁸ Rudnyts'kyi, 269, 271.

³⁹ Ihor Mykhailin, *Hamartiia Mykolya Khvyl'ovoho* (Kharkiv: "Linotyp," 1993), 6, 12-13.

Khvyl'ovyi, was a credo of the literary association "Pluh."⁴⁰ In his view, *massovism* and the development of bureaucracy in the literary process were anti-social and anti-artistic phenomena.⁴¹ Khvyl'ovyi's most active opponent Pylypenko, the founder of "Pluh," together with his adherents, accused Khvyl'ovyi of monopolizing the idea of proletarian art (Olympism/*olimpiistvo*). They believed that his arrogance and revisionist tendencies jeopardized the authentic understanding of party directions about cultural construction in Ukraine. The debates escalated, and Khvyl'ovyi followed his article with a series of his pamphlets, in which he advocated the need for quality and originality in writing, emphasizing the absence of literary taste and professional knowledge among *pluzhany* (members of "Pluh"). He rebelled against literary amateurs and a class approach in literature. Moreover, while accepting the greatness of Russian literature, Khvyl'ovyi advocated the literary independence of Ukrainian art and the right to follow its own path.

According to Khvyl'ovyi, European standards needed to be applied to a nascent Ukrainian socialist culture. For him, Ukrainian culture was not a mere derivative of Russian culture; it should develop independently and orient itself along the lines of "psychological Europe;" otherwise, the slave psychology of Ukrainian writers and their attempts to mimic and to follow the Russian literary tradition would be inextinguishable. For Khvyl'ovyi, the image of "psychological Europe" was embodied primarily through the ideas of German romanticism.

⁴⁰ Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, "Pro 'satanu v bochtsi' abo pro grafomaniv, spekulantiv ta inshykh prosvitian," *Kul'tura i pobut*, no. 17 (1925). *Khaltura* is a slipshod literary work which is not enlightened by talent.

⁴¹ Khvyl'ovyi, *Dumky*, 70.

However, the debates were not purely artistic. Their participants were concerned with a broad specter of fundamental national, economic and political questions related to Ukraine. Their discourse included social and political implications of Ukrainization, and also focused on painful questions of speedy industrialization and collectivization in Ukraine. The dilemma was whether to pursue independence from Moscow and the preservation of cultural distinctiveness, or to effect a complete surrender to the center in political, economic and cultural spheres.⁴² Under pressure from Moscow, the necessity for writers to take sides gradually became clear.

Khvyl'ovyi emphasized that for VAPLITE the national sentiment was not a fetish but in choosing a new path for Ukrainian culture, *vaplitiany* were inclined to follow their own literary expertise, intellect and intuition, assets that drew their strength from the Ukrainian language and the Ukrainian cultural tradition. Rebelling against the dictatorship of Moscow about how to manage Ukrainian art, Khvyl'ovyi wrote:

The Union still remains the Union, and Ukraine is an independent unit...Russia is an independent state, isn't it? Yes, it is. In the same coin, we are also independent.⁴³

Obviously, these ideas addressed directly to the Ukrainian literary community were nothing short of seditious for Moscow.

No less seditious was Khvyl'ovyi's theory of an "Asiatic Renaissance," a theory of cultural development in Ukraine. This concept was based on the ideas of classical Greek and Roman thinkers, as well as European and Russian writers and philosophers. *Vaplitiany* believed that Ukraine would become a beacon for Euro-Asian cultural renaissance. Centered in Ukraine,

⁴² Iurii Shevel'ov, "Lit Ikara" in *Literaturoznavstvo: Vybrani pratsi*, ed. Ivan Dziuba (Kyiv: KMA, 2008), 2:290-92.

⁴³ Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, *Tvory* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990), 2:573.

the renaissance was to embrace China, India and other Asian states. Inspired by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, and his cyclical theory of historical development, Khvyl'ovyi argued that Europe exhausted itself in creating feudal and capitalistic societies.⁴⁴ In his view, Russian culture was also stagnated because of its tradition of Christian dualism and, therefore, was incapable of leading the oppressed peoples of Asia toward the fourth stage of human development—the "proletarian phase of civilization."⁴⁵ The leading role of a shepherd in the cultural awakening of Asian states should belong to the non-Russian nations of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia and others.

Furthermore, the idea of independent Ukraine permeates many of Khvyl'ovyi's works. It is especially pronounced in his pamphlet *Ukraine or Little Russia*, and therefore, it was banned from publication. In his polemics with the party official of the Agitprom Andrii Khvyliia, Khvyl'ovyi denounced the pseudointernationalism advocated by Khvyliia. Khvyl'ovyi suggested that Khvyliia ought to stop patronizing Ukrainian writers. He accused him of a distorted representation of Ukrainian literature before the Central Committee in Moscow, reminding Khvyliia that in the past, it was the literature of Little Russia; now it was the literature of Ukraine.⁴⁶ He wrote:

Comrade Khvyliia is offended because we called Ukraine an independent state. Go figure. Isn't it independent? Bless yourself, comrade, and read our constitution. Find paragraph number one and reread carefully. Or maybe you think that our constitution was written by "boys?"⁴⁷

⁴⁴ For a discussion about Spengler, see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 181-82.

⁴⁵ See Khvyl'ovyi's explanations of "an Asiatic Renaissance" in his pamphlet *Ukraina chy Malorosiia?*, and Ivan Dziuba's analysis in *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: "Aziats'kyi renesans" i "psykhologichna Ievropa"* (Kyiv: KMA, 2005).

⁴⁶ Khvyl'ovyi, *Ukraina chy Malorosiia?*, 232, 236, 238.

⁴⁷ Khvyl'ovyi, *Ukraina chy Malorosiia?*, 233-34.

Further, in response to Khvyliia, Khvyl'ovyi continued:

We are indeed an independent state whose republican organism is a part of the Soviet Union. And Ukraine is independent not because we, Communists, desire this, but because the iron and irresistible will of the laws of history demands it, because only in this way shall we hasten class differentiation in Ukraine.⁴⁸

These lines were a message of a nascent and independent people, and were read and understood as one by Stalin and the Central Committee.

It is noteworthy that Khvyl'ovyi's pamphlets are historical and political documents, as Shevel'ov fairly noted.⁴⁹ Readers are able to trace in them the dynamics of the Literary Discussion, its main events and publications, key literary figures who were active participants in the discussion and their views. Moreover, through his pamphlets, Khvyl'ovyi fully and clearly exposed himself to the regime, and contributed to the center's view about the Ukrainian intelligentsia as a whole. He openly discussed the most painful and sensitive topics of the time which helped Soviet authorities label Khvyl'ovyi a counterrevolutionary and Ukrainian nationalist.

In the late 1920s, the state considered his subsequent creative work exclusively through the prism of his pamphlets, and the characters of Khvyl'ovyi's prose, and their dispositions and motivations were analyzed in the context of Khvyl'ovyi's reputation earned during the Literary Discussion.

The features inherent in Khvyl'ovyi's art amplified his image as a nationalist. The leitmotif of his creative work is the "unconquered" nature of the *kham* (the rude crude individuals) who came to power, propagandizing the

⁴⁸ Mykola Khvylovyi, "Ukraine or Little Russia?" in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. and ed. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), 227.

⁴⁹ Shevel'ov, "Lit Ikara," in *Dziuba*, 2:288, 298, 302.

commune.⁵⁰ Khvyl'ovyi persistently continued to depict *chekists* and party functionaries in dark shrouds. They were presented as ignorant and undereducated individuals. For instance, in his "Zaulok" (Sidestreet), Mar'iana "gave up the secondary school ("for the hell of it"), and found a job in the Cheka."⁵¹ Through Ahlaia's lips, Khvyl'ovyi's main character of *Val'dshnepy*, he described the Communists as "boring" individuals whose worldview was limited to conversations about "Chamberlain with the monocle, and the primary party cell."⁵² In one of his most famous novels *Ia* (*Romantyka*), Khvyl'ovyi presents the image of a "new commune" (new society) through a "black tribunal" of comrades who are in charge of people's lives. "Here sadism is meeting," he writes.⁵³ One of the comrades of the black tribunal is a degenerate with a low forehead, the other is an individual "with a stone instead of a heart" who signs the resolutions "to be shot" left and right.⁵⁴ No wonder that Khvyl'ovyi could not be tolerated by Stalin, an individual with similar anatomical features and unfinished education. People with narrow foreheads were a type the party tended to promote: "less thinking, more deeds," as one scholar noted.⁵⁵ For the Kremlin, through his characters, Khvyl'ovyi undermined the authority of the party and discredited the image of the party member and the *chekist*.

⁵⁰ See for instance, Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, "Arabesky" in *Arabesky Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho: opovidannia ta novely*, ed. Vira Aheeva (Kyiv: Hrani, 2010), 152, and Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, *Val'dshnepy* (Zal'tsburg: Vydavnytstvo "Novi Dni," 1946), 58.

⁵¹ Khvyl'ovyi, "Zaulok," in Aheeva, 55.

⁵² Khvyl'ovyi, *Val'dshnepy*, 53.

⁵³ Khvyl'ovyi, "Ia (Romantyka)," in Aheeva, 71.

⁵⁴ Khvyl'ovyi, "Ia (Romantyka)," in Aheeva, 72-73.

⁵⁵ Private conversation with professor S.V. Krasnokutskii (summer 2005, Kharkiv, Ukraine).

The State's Attitudes toward Khvyl'ovyi

In the 1920s, Khvyl'ovyi's ideas of a culturally sovereign Ukraine infuriated Stalin and literary circles, although the Ukrainian party leaders Shums'kyi and later Skrypnyk supported them.⁵⁶ For Stalin, Ukrainization had indeed gone out of control and produced a rather dangerous phenomenon for the center, the Ukrainian intelligentsia that "looked" to the West and spoke of a culturally independent Ukraine. In his 26 April 1926 letter to Kaganovich and the members of the Politburo of the KP(b)U Central Committee, Stalin criticized the position of the Communist Khvyl'ovyi and suggested that Shums'kyi did not fully understand the danger of Khvyl'ovyi and like-minded individuals in Ukraine. Stalin's letter made it completely clear for the secret police that the policy of concession to gain the loyalty of Ukrainians was to be replaced by sheer force and repression. Moscow and Russophile forces in Ukraine could not afford a culturally independent Ukraine. For them, Khvyl'ovyi undermined Communist international ideals and the plans to create a union. As has been mentioned in Chapter Three, several months later on 4 September 1926, following Stalin's order to combat Ukrainian national tendencies in the republic, the Ukrainian GPU issued a secret circular entitled "On Ukrainian Separatism," which marked the starting point of counter-Ukrainization.⁵⁷ Together with the GPU 30 March 1926 circular "On Ukrainian Civic Society," the document identified the avenues of combating

⁵⁶ See also Luckyj, *Literary Politics*, and Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 162.

⁵⁷ See the full text of the document in Iurii Shapoval, "On Ukrainian Separatism: A GPU Circular of 1926," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (1994): 291-302.

nationally conscious individuals in Ukraine, and stressed the importance of surveillance of the adherents of Ukrainization.⁵⁸

It is unknown whether Khvyl'ovyi read Stalin's secret letter because it was published in Stalin's collection of work only after the demise of Ukrainization. But certainly Khvyl'ovyi was instructed by Ukrainian communists about Stalin's position, and most likely, by Skrypnyk or Shums'kyi with whom Khvyl'ovyi was close.⁵⁹ Ivan Maistrenko suggested that only a few people were aware of Stalin's secret letter at the time but those who enthusiastically conducted Ukrainization policies immediately felt its consequences. They were accused of national deviations and proclaimed "deviationists."⁶⁰

In 1926, the political pressure from Moscow and pro-Soviet forces in Ukraine on Khvyl'ovyi and his colleagues steadily increased. The June 1926 Plenum of the Central Committee KP(b)U summarized achievements of Soviet Ukrainization policies but also unleashed attacks on Shumsk'yi and Khvyl'ovyi, accusing them of nationalist tendencies and bourgeois thinking. Stalin did not forgive Shums'kyi's proposition to dismiss Kaganovich from responsibilities as the leader of the KP(b)U and to appoint a party leader of Ukrainian origin instead of Kaganovich. The GPU began to thoroughly scrutinize Shums'kyi's and Khvyl'ovyi's everyday lives.

The *vaplitiyany*'s gallant behavior was replaced by the fear of being arrested. On 4 December 1926, Khvyl'ovyi, together with his colleagues in

⁵⁸ Shapoval, "'On Ukrainian Separatism,'" 301.

⁵⁹ Ivan Maistrenko, *Natsional'naia politika KPSS v ee istoricheskoy razvitii* (München: Suchasnist', 1978), 107.

⁶⁰ Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia moho pokolinnia: Spohady uchasnykh revoliutsiinykh podii v Ukraini* (Edmonton, Canada: Kanads'kyi Instytut Ukrain's'kykh Studii, Al'berts'kyi Universytet, 1985), 190.

VAPLITE Oles' Dosvitnii and Mykhailo Ialovyi, wrote his first collective repentant letter that was published in *Visti VUTSVK*. They hoped to alleviate their unsteady position within the party. They denounced their previous views, their "ideological and political mistakes," and assured the party of their loyalty.⁶¹ The text was formulaic, and the party and Khvyl'ovyi's opponents accused the *vaplitiany* of political trickery and insincerity.

The further dynamics of events developed precipitously. At the X Congress of the KP(b)U in November, 1927, Kaganovich took revenge and gave a speech, in which he severely criticized Khvyl'ovyi's and Shums'kyi's deviations. He claimed that their vision of the development of national culture was bourgeois, and therefore, counterrevolutionary.⁶² On 2 February 1927, Shums'kyi was dismissed from the position of the Narkom of Education. In January 1927, Khvyl'ovyi and his colleagues were expelled from VAPLITE, but Khvyl'ovyi and his family were allowed to leave Kharkiv to treat Khvyl'ovyi's tuberculosis in Vienna.⁶³

Before and during his trip to Vienna, Khvyl'ovyi went through several personal crises, publically repudiating his principles, and claiming that he "had fallen prey to a national deviation, *khvyliovism*."⁶⁴ But he persistently returned to an active social and political life. The journal *Vaplite* continued its activity, and published Khvyl'ovyi's works, as well as the works of other *vaplitiany*. The Soviet press methodically criticized Khvyl'ovyi for his nationalism even in his absence. His novel *Val'dshnepy* which was published in *Vaplite* in its

⁶¹ *Visti*, no. 280 (1926). This letter is also published in Lejtes and Jasek, 2:205-06.

⁶² See the stenographic report of the Central Committee at the X Congress of the KP(b)U (Kharkiv, 1927), 126.

⁶³ O. Zinkevych, "Chomu Khvyl'ovyi?," *Smoloskyp: Magazine of the Ukrainian Youth and Students* 14, no.24 (94) (May-June, 1962).

⁶⁴ James Mace, "Morituri te salutant: Remembering Mykola Khvyliovyi," in *Day and Eternity of James Mace*, ed. Larysa Ivshyna (Kyiv: Ukrainian Press Group Ltd., 2005), 99.

fifth and sixth issues resulted in the destruction of VAPLITE as a literary organization, and in the seizure of the entire circulation of the sixth issue of *Vaplite* by the GPU.⁶⁵ It took Khvyl'ovyi about a month to decide what to do. After the forcible collapse of VAPLITE on 28 January 1928 and the official banning of his novel *Val'dshnepy*, on 22 February 1928 Khvyl'ovyi wrote his second repentant letter from Vienna which was published in the newspaper *Communist*, and decided to return to Soviet Ukraine.⁶⁶ He assured the party that he destroyed the end of *Val'dshnepy*, and that he would try to restore his “blemished party reputation and literary name.”⁶⁷

The boisterous twenties produced unmanageable chaos and noise among the Ukrainian literati. Sensational public debates and scandals helped the party establish the ideological profile of their participants. Khvyl'ovyi's role in the radicalization of these debates was paramount. Importantly, by 1928, Khvyl'ovyi earned a reputation as a rebel and nationalist, and ultimately he compromised and exposed his friends and supporters to thorough scrutiny by the state and the GPU. Observing the dynamics of these debates, the state came to the unsettling realization that the strong intellectual drive of the Ukrainian intelligentsia for a new national culture might be effortlessly transformed into popular resistance. *Val'dshnepy* became additional evidence

⁶⁵ The main character of *Val'dshnepy* Karamazov who romanticized the revolution finally realized that the Communist party turned into a mere “collector of Russian lands,” and was reduced to a petty bourgeois unit with its cunning and counting interests. He characterized Soviet policies of Ukrainization as “idiotic.” Through the characters of *Val'dshnepy*, Khvyl'ovyi analyzed the tragedy of the Ukrainian consciousness that was confused throughout its history and was compromised by the violence of the revolution. See Khvyl'ovyi, *Val'dshnepy*, 33, 81, 114.

⁶⁶ See the full text of this letter in TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.5a, ark.1-4.

⁶⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.5a, ark.3-4. However, his intentions seemed insincere to the GPU. See a report by a GPU agent under the name “Literator” in HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.15. In his January 1928 letter to Mykhailo Ialovyi from Vienna, Khvyl'ovyi wrote: “We wrote a ‘repentant letter’ [zrechennia], didn’t we? Yes, we did. What else do they want from us? To suck someone’s ass, or what? As for *Val'dshnepy*, I am certain that if *Val'dshnepy* had not been written, they would find something else to accuse me of.” See the letter perلustrated by the GPU in HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.19.

of Khvyl'ovyi's nationalist and counterrevolutionary intentions for the GPU.

Together with the literary debates, *Val'dshnepy* served as an impetus for state repressions and conditioned their intensity and extent in the early 1930s.

The Noose Tightened: The Late 1920s

In December 1928, after Khvyl'ovyi wrote a repentant letter from Vienna and returned to Ukraine, the party granted him another opportunity to rehabilitate himself. He obtained permission to found an almanac *Literaturnyi iarmarok* (*Literary Fair*). *Literaturnyi iarmarok* became an important feature in the Ukrainian cultural landscape, but because of pressure from competing official literary groups and the party it managed to maintain its position only until February 1930. "Prolitfront," the literary group that was organized in April 1930 by Khvyl'ovyi, represented the final attempt to recover the lost hopes for independent individual creative work.⁶⁸ However, the members of "Prolitfront" failed to withstand political pressure and one by one escaped to VUSPP. In December of 1930, "Prolitfront" was disbanded.⁶⁹ What price did Khvyl'ovyi pay for the opportunity to create "Prolitfront" after the party methodically destroyed literary organizations led by Khvyl'ovyi in the past?

Massive party purges in Ukrainian cultural institutions in April 1929 contributed to Khvyl'ovyi's understanding that the party demanded a new round of repentant letters and self-criticisms.⁷⁰ Khvyl'ovyi received a negative

⁶⁸ "Prolitfront" (*Prolitars'kyi front*/Proletarian front) was organized in 1930 after VAPLITE was destroyed by the Soviets. Prolitfront was in opposition to pro-Soviet proletarian organizations, such as RAPP, Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, and its Ukrainian counterparts, such as VUSPP, All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers, and others.

⁶⁹ Ivan Dziuba, *Z krynytsi lit* (Kyiv: KMA, 2006), 1: 237-38. See also Shevel'ov, "Lit Ikara," in Dziuba, 2:301.

⁷⁰ In 1929, Ukrainian institutions such as the censorship organization Holovlit, the All-Ukrainian Cinema Administration (VUFKU), the Odesa Cinema-Factory, the VUAMLIN, the primary party cells of the DVU, the Kharkiv Art Institute, the Knyhospilka, and the All-

evaluation of his social and literary activities. The party admonished him for not exposing and explaining mistakes that he made in the past.⁷¹ At the April 1929 meeting of the Housing Cooperative of Writers “Slovo,” inspired by the vigor of party purges, the party leaders and official writers viciously attacked Khvyl’ovyi and Kulish, accusing them of counterrevolution.⁷²

Khvyl’ovyi’s and Kulish’s resistance to aggressive official literary dignitaries was powerful and courageous. In Ievhen Kas’ianenko’s speech, he claimed that Khvyl’ovyi and Kulish created a bloc with *kurkuls*.⁷³ Kas’ianenko also complained that they viciously attacked him because he criticized Kulish’s play *Myno Mazailo* in the party newspaper *Visti*. In turn, Kulish was surprised and concerned by the fact that Kas’ianenko and Kost’ Kotko offered a negative evaluation of the play after it was approved by the Central Committee.⁷⁴ Kulish noted that he would not mind this criticism but the fact that Kotko sent this negative report to the party organs was outrageous and out of bounds. Khvyl’ovyi defended Kulish, but Pylypenko intervened in the conversation and accused Kulish of the desire to capitalize on this scandal. He emphasized that the negative article in *Communist* did not reflect the opinion of the party, as Kulish stated. The head of the meeting Ivan Kulyk

Ukrainian Theatre were purged of counterrevolutionary and nationalist elements. See DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.36, ark.122; f.P4834, op.1, spr.33; f.P15, op.2, spr.11; f.P15, op.2, spr.47; f.P45, op.2, spr.28; f.P5, op.1, spr.65. Writers Oles’ Dosvitnii, Volodymyr Sosiura, Mykhailo Ialovy and Mykola Kulish (Khvyl’ovyi’s friends) were also reprimanded during the 1929 party purge. See DAKhO, f.P15, op. 2, spr.11, ark.17,22,24,27.

⁷¹ DAKhO, f.P15, op.2, spr.11, ark.30.

⁷² See the stenographic report of the meeting in DAKhO, f.P15, op.1, spr.62, ark.27-28. Despite his own tenuous position, Khvyl’ovyi tried to defend Mykola Kulish against the majority who attacked Kulish for his ideological mistakes in his play *Myno Mazailo*. This detailed protocol enhances understandings of a struggle that occurred between loyal and “disloyal” party members.

⁷³ DAKhO, f.P15, op.1, spr.62, ark.27.

⁷⁴ For details about Kas’ianenko, see Chapter Nine. **Kost’ Kotko** was a penname of the Ukrainian writer and journalist Mykola Liubchenko. In the 1920s and the early 1930s, he worked for the newspaper *Comunist*. He was arrested on 4 December 1934, and sentenced to 7 years in labor camps. He was executed as a Ukrainian nationalist on 8 December 1937 in Leningrad oblast’.

accused Khvyl'ovyi and Kulish of siding with enemy elements.⁷⁵ As a result, Kulish lost his temper and began to use profanity against all those present. Kulyk had to close the meeting.⁷⁶ Its atmosphere, conceptually and aesthetically, resembled the traditions of party politicking at the time, and “criticism” of Kulish ordered from above was consistent with the general attitudes of the center toward the most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals. This incident estranged Khvyl'ovyi from communal affairs.

The SVU show trial presented another opportunity for Khvyl'ovyi to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the party for his chronic “ideological errors.” Today there is a consensus among historians that the SVU, the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, never existed in reality, and was a GPU fabrication from start to finish, a scenario that was designed and orchestrated by the center in Moscow. Mass arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals resulted in a trial that was conducted in the Kharkiv opera theatre in March-April of 1929. Forty-five of the most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals were prosecuted in the SVU trial for nationalist and bourgeois propaganda and received sentences varying from imprisonment to VMN (the “highest degree of punishment,” i.e. execution). 30,000 thousand people were arrested as SVU members throughout Ukraine.⁷⁷ Paradoxically, Khvyl'ovyi, whose initiatives were routinely strangled at their conception by the party, was assigned the task of public accuser at the SVU trial. In spring 1930, Khvyl'ovyi published a series

⁷⁵ For details about Kulyk, see Chapter Nine.

⁷⁶ DAKhO, f.P15, op.1, spr.62, ark.28. The meeting devolved into a shouting match saturated with a most creative, artistic exhibition of colorful yet hideous Ukrainian profanity.

⁷⁷ For more on the SVU trial, see also Volodymyr Prystaiko and Iurii Shapoval, “Fars z trahichnym finalom: Do 65-richchia protsesu u spravi ‘Spilky vyzvolennia Ukrainy,’” *Z arkhiviv VUCK-GPU-NKVD-KGB* 1-2 (2-3), (1995): 190-99. The group criminal case called SVU (*Spilka vyzvolennia Ukrainy*/ Union for the Liberation of Ukraine) is presented in 239 volumes in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.67098fp.

of revelatory articles, in which he denounced *khvyliovism* as a bourgeois phenomenon, and condemned the nationalist counterrevolutionary views of the Ukrainian intelligentsia that were illuminated by the state through the trial. By 1930, he, as well as other *slov'iany*, understood that the battle against anti-Ukrainian stances emanating from Moscow was lost. As Shevel'ov described it, "Khvyl'ovyi was on his knees."⁷⁸ By the time he moved into *Budynok Slovo*, he became "quieter."⁷⁹

Potential Reasons for Khvyl'ovyi's Suicide

Stalin's growing concern that the influence of the Ukrainian intelligentsia on the Ukrainian party leadership had increased and might be extended to the peasantry resulted in a number of repressive actions initiated by Moscow.⁸⁰ In 1932, the TsK VKP(b) clamped down on all literary organizations by issuing the infamous 23 April 1932 resolution which disbanded them, and ordered the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers. As Iosyp Hirniak characterized it, by this resolution "Stalin drove all literature into one herd."⁸¹

By 1933 the atmosphere in *Budynok Slovo* became increasingly oppressive, according to many memoirs. The building was under surveillance

⁷⁸ Shevel'ov, "Lit Ikara" in Dziuba, 2:302.

⁷⁹ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.107. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 180-81.

⁸⁰ Suny and Martin suggested that "most disturbing to Stalin was his growing conviction that the alliance with national elites was leading to a nationalizing of Bolshevism, rather than a Bolshevization of nationals." See Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, "Introduction," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12.

⁸¹ Iosyp Hirniak, *Spomyny*, ed. Bohdan Boichuk (New York: Vydavnytstvo "Suchasnist," 1982), 341.

“day and night,” and people began to disappear.⁸² By 13 May 1933, Foucault’s principle of panopticism was in full flower in *Budynok Slovo*: the *slov’iany* became objects of information but no longer participants in mutual communication.⁸³ Common tea ceremonies accompanied by vigorous literary discussions, which the state considered nothing but mutual ideological contamination, receded into the past. By the day of Khvyl’ovyi’s suicide, the *slov’iany* and the rest of the Ukrainian intelligentsia had already learned the safest direction of their personal literary path and social behavior.

Khvyl’ovyi was certain that his literary activity, as well as his private life, was under close scrutiny by the GPU. For him, there was no doubt that his friends and colleagues were also closely watched by the secret organs. In his report, a GPU agent (under the code name “Engineer”) described Khvyl’ovyi as “not only a clever person, but an extremely clever person.”⁸⁴ Khvyl’ovyi sensed that his political and social visibility, his civic position, irreconcilable with what he saw as the frantic bureaucratization of socialist ideas and the profanation of lofty tasks and principles of proletarian literature, encouraged the authorities to perceive the entire building where he lived as a “nest of Ukrainian nationalism.” In addition, as a sophisticated and knowledgeable hunter, Khvyl’ovyi could not fail to identify GPU attempts to follow him.

⁸² Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmarska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004), 161.

⁸³ M. Foucault, “Panopticism,” in *Material Culture: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, ed. Victor Buchli (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 1 (I):269. Foucault argued that in panoptical society, “a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, [was] abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities.”

⁸⁴ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.51. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 115.

Kostiuk remembered that once Khvyl'ovyi leaned closely toward him and told him: "Every single step of ours is followed. Do not give them any pretexts."⁸⁵

The extent to which this subject concerned Khvyl'ovyi is revealed in Arkadii Liubchenko's memoirs. Liubchenko remembered that two weeks before Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, he had a long conversation with Khvyl'ovyi on the train when they traveled together to the village Lokhvytsia near Kharkiv. Among other topics they discussed was the shameful system of the secret service in Ukraine, in which half of the population watched the other half.⁸⁶ Tragically, Khvyl'ovyi's observations proved to be correct, a fact which was confirmed only recently through the secret file, *papka-formuliar*, that was initiated by the GPU in 1930. This secret file contains operational information delivered to the GPU by agents who investigated and followed Khvyl'ovyi for three years until his death.⁸⁷

His friends and those who later studied Khvyl'ovyi's individual history and his literary works believed that Khvyl'ovyi's visibility to Stalin exacerbated his psychological isolation and eventually killed him.⁸⁸ As American political scientist Murray Edelman argues, this kind of visibility usually "increases alienation because, like visibility in a prison or psychiatric ward, it is experienced as surveillance and threat. In such settings visibility and proximity only emphasize the impossibility of communication."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Zhulyns'kyi, "Zustrichi bez proshchan'" in Kostiuk, 1:10.

⁸⁶ Liubchenko in Aheeva, 151.

⁸⁷ See HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183. More than 20 GPU agents followed Khvyl'ovyi and regularly wrote reports to the GPU. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, and the 2009-10 documentary film *Tsar i rab khytroshchiv* by I. Shatokhina and I. Shapoval.

⁸⁸ In *Master and Margarita*, Mikhail Bulgakov skillfully exhibited the idea of danger to individuals because of their proximity and visibility to those with power. In Bulgakov's novel, power was embodied by Woland, the central character.

⁸⁹ Murray Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 86.

Although Khvyl'ovyi limited his personal contacts with other residents in the early 1930s, he remained a very significant person for the GPU.⁹⁰

Khvyl'ovyi's friends explained his suicide as an act motivated by his personal responsibility for those who shared his ideas and who supported him. The 12 May 1933 arrest of his best friend Mykhailo Ialovyi became a personal tragedy for Khvyl'ovyi.⁹¹ In his suicide note, Khvyl'ovyi wrote: "Ialovyi's arrest is a murder of the Entire Generation...I am solely responsible for Ialovyi's Generation, me, Mykola Khvyl'ovyi."⁹²

Interestingly enough, the scenario according to which Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide emerged immediately after the actual tragic event on 13 May 1933, and mainly was instigated by the hasty conclusion of the GPU on the same day. To the best knowledge of scholars, no autopsy or ballistic tests were conducted, although Khvyl'ovyi's body was taken somewhere, and returned to *Budynok Slovo* in several hours on the same day. The GPU informed the writers' community that Khvyl'ovyi's funeral was to be conducted quickly the next morning. The widely held opinion that Khvyl'ovyi decided to sacrifice himself for the Ukrainian intelligentsia persists.

Among other possible reasons for Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, the *slov'iany* have emphasized Khvyl'ovyi's shocking experience in the Ukrainian villages. Mobilized to the countryside to "fight for the grain," he observed devastated

⁹⁰ According to Senchenko, Khvyl'ovyi's neighbor Andrii Paniv borrowed his typewriter to write negative articles about Khvyl'ovyi. Khvyl'ovyi stated: "Well...no surprise here." See Ivan Senchenko, *Opovidannia. Povisti. Spohady* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990), 568.

⁹¹ On the morning of 13 May 1933, Khvyl'ovyi tried to contact Kosior and Balyts'kyi to inquire about the details of Ialovyi's arrest but in vain—they did not return his phone calls. See Hirniak, 356.

⁹² Allegedly Khvyl'ovyi wrote two suicide notes. On 13 May 1933, in Khvyl'ovyi's apartment, a conflict between two competing agencies emerged, the prosecutor's office and the GPU. As a result, the originals of Khvyl'ovyi's suicide notes disappeared without a trace. File C-183 contains copies of both of Khvyl'ovyi's suicide notes, allegedly written by him. See HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.100, and Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 36, 184.

and depopulated villages, and this plunged him into a deep depression, according to Liubchenko. Khvyl'ovyi immediately telegraphed the Central Committee that the Ukrainian countryside was dying, and requested urgent help. The response was laconic. Khvyl'ovyi was informed that "everything was proceeding according to plan and the Party's directives," and he was ordered to return to Kharkiv.⁹³ Apparently, this happened two weeks before Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide, shortly after his last visit to Ukrainian villages.⁹⁴ His reputation as a nationalist was once again affirmed and strengthened. Previously compromised by his anti-Communist and nationalistic behavior and forgiven many times by the state for his deeds, Khvyl'ovyi dared to discuss one of the most sensitive topics among the party leaders in Ukraine and in Moscow, the famine of 1932-33. Whether Khvyl'ovyi's moral suffering provoked by what he saw in the countryside was a sufficient reason to commit suicide would be difficult to say. However, the shock of discovery that he experienced in the countryside might be a factor that contributed to his fatal decision.

Many scholars (Shevel'ov, Dziuba, Shapoval, Pavlychko and others) emphasized Khvyl'ovyi's ambivalence and self-rejection, evidence of his inner psychological instability that might have led to his suicide. It appears that Khvyl'ovyi's ideological vacillation finally resulted in his capitulation to the Soviet regime, and ultimate death through suicide. Indeed, he was psychologically unstable, although it became especially pronounced in the early 1930s. Shevel'ov argued that Khvyl'ovyi's ambivalence was rooted in his understanding of the dissonance between his desire to follow his individual

⁹³ Pasicznyk, 159.

⁹⁴ See Liubchenko's account about this trip in Liubchenko in Aheeva, 144-57.

path and the impossibility of doing so.⁹⁵ Solomiia Pavlychko suggested that Khvyl'ovyi's ambivalence manifested itself not only in his everyday behavior but also through his "hysterical" manner of writing that he exhibited in his pamphlets. He even chose psychopathic themes for his prose (*Ia Romantyka, Sanatoriina zona* and others), such as abnormal behavior, hysteria, psychosis, nervous breakdowns and personal crises. The unbalanced state of Khvyl'ovyi's mood alternated between periods of mental arousal and depression.⁹⁶

Living in the future that was romanticized and idealized by the revolution, Khvyl'ovyi strove for a new Ukraine, the "dream house," and the "house of the future," in French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's terms.⁹⁷ The politics of the space in which he existed disillusioned him—he stopped writing, became inconsistent in his conduct and often drunk in the early 1930s.⁹⁸ Official literary critics fulfilling the social order of the state facilitated the emergence of a truncated and distorted public image of Khvyl'ovyi, "the garbled image of a devil," reduced to the level of his interpreters, as Iurii Shevel'ov noted.⁹⁹

Tragically, Khvyl'ovyi himself frequently talked about his inclination to end his life. His melancholia and depression had a long history, and these feelings bled through his letters and novels as indicators and precipitators of his tendency toward suicide. These underlying patterns of Khvyl'ovyi's

⁹⁵ Shevel'ov, "Lit Ikara" in Dziuba, 2:323.

⁹⁶ Solomiia Pavlychko, *Teoriia literatury*, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2009), 180, 266-69.

⁹⁷ Khvyl'ovyi lived in the future, and "the dream house" for him was not only a spatial notion but a conceptual notion that meant new society, new culture and new literature. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 61-66.

⁹⁸ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.73. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 157.

⁹⁹ Shevel'ov in Zabuzhko and Masenko, 152. See also Shevel'ov, "Khvyl'ovyi bez polityky" in Dziuba, 2:284.

behavior had been described by his friends and contemporaries. Although this tendency might have served as an immediate cause of Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, the act itself was surely amplified by his frustration with the cultural policies in Ukraine.¹⁰⁰

Khvyl'ovyi's complex emotional state and lack of psychological equilibrium present a methodological problem in establishing the degree and intensity of his psycho-suicidal impulse. However, even if accepting his emotional problems as a basis for his suicide, one should not reject the role of social precipitation and motifs in his suicide.

Some *slov'iany*, and later some scholars, mentioned Khvyl'ovyi's unhappy family life which might have had a great effect on his final decision. Almost a century ago, Emile Durkheim noted that there was a great risk of suicides among those who were only slightly integrated into family life. "The greater the density of the family the greater the immunity of individuals to suicide," he concluded.¹⁰¹ After Khvyl'ovyi divorced his first wife Kateryna Gashchenko, he married Iuliia Umantseva who saved his life during the civil war.¹⁰² Umantseva had a daughter Liuba from her previous marriage whom Khvyl'ovyi loved as his own daughter. Iraida Kryvych, Khvyl'ovyi's daughter from his first marriage, confirmed Umantseva's lack of involvement in her daughter's upbringing. Umantseva was devoted to the ideas of revolution and, like many women in the 1920s, sacrificed her family life for the Communist

¹⁰⁰ See Khvyl'ovyi's letter to Mykola Zerov in Aheeva, 109, 118, 119.

¹⁰¹ Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, ed. George Simpson, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968), 14.

¹⁰² I.D. Kryvych, "Ja vpervyie uvidela otsta miortvym...", *Gazeta po-Khar'kovski*, 26 January 2011, available at http://kharkov.mycityua.com/articles/people_kharkov/2011/01/26/144232.html (accessed 18 March 2011).

party.¹⁰³ She did not have time for her family, let alone for having a common child with Khvyl'ovyi, and according to her own testimony to the regional prosecutor M.I. Bron on 13 May 1933, she “[came] home only to spend the night.”¹⁰⁴

According to Kulish, Iuliia Umantseva was far from beautiful, and neglected her home, as well as her appearance. Khvyl'ovyi appeared to be lonely. Being a frequent guest at the “Berezil” theatre, he never was seen with his wife there but only with his step-daughter Liuba.¹⁰⁵ Some scholars emphasized the extraordinarily strange fact that Khvyl'ovyi's second suicide note was addressed not to his wife but to his step-daughter. Khvyl'ovyi tenderly called her “golden lovage.”¹⁰⁶ The scholar Mykhailo Naienko suggested that perhaps both Khvyl'ovyi and Liuba, who in 1930 was 16-17 years old, experienced some mutual attraction and might even have been involved in a romantic relationship. Such rumors existed, and Khvyl'ovyi's friend, the writer and *slov'ianyn* Ivan Dniprovs'yi left a written statement that Khvyl'ovyi's family life was unhappy.¹⁰⁷ Avoiding speculation, it is clear that Khvyl'ovyi's marriage to Iuliia Umantseva was unhappy, which could be a factor that influenced his decision to commit suicide.

Whatever the case might be, during the night after Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, the *slov'iany* did not sleep. The entire *Budynok Slovo* boiled. The

¹⁰³ Kryvych, “Ia vpervyie uvidela otsta miortvym...”

¹⁰⁴ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.99. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 183.

¹⁰⁵ Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers' Home 'Slovo:’ Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: “Homin Ukrainy,” 1966), 17.

¹⁰⁶ Lovage is a tall perennial plant, in Ukrainian language, *liubystok*.

¹⁰⁷ Naienko, “Mykola Hryhorovych Khvyl'ovyi” in Naienko, *Khudozhnia literatura*, 843-44. See also Ihor Iona Shevchenko, “Naperedodni lykholittia,” *Suchasnist'*, ch. 9 (353) (1990): 115. In his memoirs, Ihor Iona Shevchenko remembered Liuba (she was his classmate) as girl of a rare beauty, always dressed nicely, polite and modest, with beautiful dark eyes.

residents tried to find explanations to the tragedy.¹⁰⁸ The *slov'iany* evaluated Khvyl'ovyi's act as heroism. According to the GPU report, the writer Dniprov's'kyi lamented that the community of Ukrainian writers made a huge mistake failing to inform Maxim Gorky about the conditions in which Ukrainian writers found themselves; the writer Iohansen believed that Khvyl'ovyi hoped that his suicide would evoke a great international resonance; the writer Senchenko argued that Khvyl'ovyi clearly understood that he would be arrested after what he saw in the countryside; the writer Mykhailo Stel'makh stated that "today there is only one option for a writer, death, because material and moral conditions became unbearable."¹⁰⁹ Professor Nemchinov was convinced that the reasons for Khvyl'ovyi's suicide were much deeper than everyone thought. He posited that "the intellectual Khvyl'ovyi could not bear the existing barriers."¹¹⁰

The Controversy over Khvyl'ovyi's Suicide

In the Soviet Union, the idea that human beings had to be useful to the state was unbearable for many intellectuals. Many refused to participate in this experiment and committed suicide. In Durkheim's terms, these suicides were purely social acts. In Khvyl'ovyi's case, if accepting his suicide as the legitimate truth of how he died, one can lean to the argument of Khvyl'ovyi's psychological morbidity, an argument that was promoted by the party and uttered by some party officials even in their speeches at the cemetery over Khvyl'ovyi's casket.

¹⁰⁸ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.112-15. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 187-91.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.114.

However, in a philosophical sense, Khvyl'ovyi as an individual did not kill himself. Rather, social constraints and the entire moral base of society made his life impossible. His suicide signaled a deep political and social crisis in Ukraine in the early 1930s. Certainly, the knowledge of the true causes of Khvyl'ovyi's suicide would greatly enhance understandings of the political and social realities in Soviet society, and particularly among Ukrainian intellectuals. But despite the fact that Khvyl'ovyi's case falls neatly into this oversimplified scheme of explanations, several doubts appear to leave space for skepticism about whether Khvyl'ovyi actually committed suicide.

The memoirs of those who were in Khvyl'ovyi's apartment during his suicide and those who entered the apartment immediately after the shot reveal significant inconsistencies and contradictions. First, their recollections are imprecise regarding the number of people who were present in Khvyl'ovyi's apartment at the moment of his suicide. The *slov'iany* remembered even different people who were invited that morning by Khvyl'ovyi and who witnessed his last moments. In this connection, we might recall Walter Benjamin's experience that postulated the dominance of space over physical objects, people and time. Benjamin noticed that his memory was overwhelmed with various details of the cities he visited, in other words, spatial details. But interestingly, people were almost absent from the picture. Memories keep a precise spatial map of the past, leaving the appearance of people in the human mind only in connection with this map, as a secondary element of realities in the past.¹¹¹ Perhaps, something similar happened to those who were in Khvyl'ovyi's apartment after the shot, and they should not be suspected of any

¹¹¹ Peter Demetz, "Introduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1978), xvii.

deliberate attempt at falsifying the reality. Clearly, confusing testimonies and contradictory reminiscences are hardly helpful in restoring the last minutes of Khvyl'ovyi's life. Moreover, they should be expected amid the shock and tragedy of the event.

However, at least one interesting detail is certain. According to all memoirs, the GPU arrived at Khvyl'ovyi's apartment after his suicide within a very short period of time, and all Khvyl'ovyi's documents, including suicide notes, his correspondence, unpublished pamphlets, the novel *Iraida*, the second part of *Val'dshnepy* and other papers were expropriated by the GPU. As Kostiuk noted, most likely these documents were destroyed by the GPU but this is only a hypothesis.¹¹² The residents had a feeling that the secret police expected the tragedy.

In Western, as well as in Ukrainian scholarship, there are no scholarly works that examine the possibility of Khvyl'ovyi's murder by the GPU. The only attempt at such investigation was undertaken by the Ukrainian journalist and writer Vitalii Shevchenko who demonstrated that there was no conclusive evidence of Khvyl'ovyi's suicide.¹¹³ For Shevchenko, the most important detail related to 13 May 1933 that has not been investigated properly is a little hole in the window of Khvyl'ovyi's study that faces the internal yard. According to Iurii Bedzyk, the son of Ukrainian writer Dmytro Bedzyk who lived in apartment 66 in the fifth entrance, right across from Khvyl'ovyi's first

¹¹² Kostiuk, "Piznaiemo ioho hlybynno" in Khvyl'ovyi, *Ukraina chu Malorosii?*, 17. See also M.K. Naienko, "Proshchalne slovo M. Khvyl'ovoho," in *Radians'ke literaturoznavstvo*, no. 8 (1989): 29.

¹¹³ See Vitalii Shevchenko, "Rozbyta shybka: obstavyny zahybeli Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho. Sproba doslidzhennia," *Literaturna Ukraina*, no. 42-43, 2007.



Khvyl'ovyi's balcony on the third floor (apartment 9).
June, 2012.

entrance, he was playing in the internal yard with his friends on the tragic morning. Suddenly, the boys heard a sound of broken glass. They looked up and saw a “spider-web” in the broken window of Khvyl'ovyi's study. There was a small hole in the middle of this spider-web. Most importantly, Iurii Bedzyk noted that in several days this opening was covered by a large piece of white paper which stayed there for six years until the war.¹¹⁴ This disturbing detail does not fit the official version of what happened in apartment 9 on 13 May 1933.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Iurii Bedzyk, “Iak ubyvaly Mykolu Khvyl'ovoho,” *Ukrains'ke slovo*, 11 February 1999. See also Shevchenko, “Rozbyta shybka,” no. 43, and Vitalii Shevchenko, “Taiemnytsia kvartyry Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho,” *Narodna Pravda*, available at <http://www.narodnapravda.com.ua/history/4bc508113a685/> (accessed 17 March 2011).

¹¹⁵ According to memoirs, Khvyl'ovyi had a small hole in his right temple which is seen in the picture of him in his casket below. Nothing has been said about an exit wound which would certainly be noticeable, so there seems little likelihood that a bullet fired by Khvyl'ovyi made the hole in the window. Moreover, the gun Khvyl'ovyi supposedly used had smaller calibre rounds which would not have enough power to enter and exit the skull, which confirms the memoirs about only an entry wound. If the bullet never left Khvyl'ovyi's skull, this would have produced a relatively small amount of blood, a scenario that had been confirmed by those present in his office at the moment of the tragedy. However, usually when people shoot from close range, the damage to the skin around the entry wound is considerable, which is not the case here. Combined with the hole in the window, these factors fuel the assassination argument.

Moreover, the configuration of Khvyl'ovyi's apartment suggests that multiple entries into his study make another scenario—the scenario of his murder by the GPU—possible. In fact, knowledge of the configuration of all apartments in *Budynok Slovo* helps filter lies and half-truths about the events in the building, and constitutes a valuable asset in analyzing criminal cases fabricated by the Soviet police.¹¹⁶ Three rooms of Khvyl'ovyi's apartment are accessible from at least two other locations in the apartment because of multiple doors installed in each room. This configuration allows an individual to enter the room from one location and leave it through some other space, a factor that should not be overlooked in an analysis of the 13 May tragedy.

The only hope for solving this apparent dilemma is to recover the autopsy protocol that might have been made by pathologists on 13 May 1933 which should also contain the data of the ballistic test if it was performed. However, information recently obtained from professor of medicine in Kharkiv, Serhii Krasnokutsk'kyi, revealed that only special permission granted by the chief prosecutor in Kharkiv oblast' would allow a scholar to see an archival document, such as an autopsy protocol.¹¹⁷ The chances of receiving such permission are at this point minimal, and the probability of documentary fraud often encouraged by GPU associates in the 1930s is very high. Nevertheless, this assumption might inspire future research and this sort of investigation could be the subject of scholarly inquiry.

¹¹⁶ See Kas'ianenko case in Chapter Nine.

¹¹⁷ Personal conversation with professor S. Krasnokutsk'kyi in May 2011.

Free in the Space of Art

Khvyl'ovyi's death, certainly in more dramatic ways than his life, transformed the meaning of *Budynok Slovo*. Instead of a place that celebrated privilege and special status, as it was conceived by the writers, their home became a politically controlled place and space which held the "potentiality of a hostile encounter," using Edelman's terms.¹¹⁸ The close proximity of death made the *slov'iany* realize with crystal clarity that their home was a place where nothing but the alternative existed: either death for their freedom and ideals, or life in betrayal of those ideals. In Tuan's discourse, the possible alternative implied the absence of freedom, and therefore, revealed the absurdity of having a personal place, their home, in which they no longer felt at home.¹¹⁹

Arkadii Liubchenko wrote that life in *Budynok Slovo* was akin to a "forcible existence in a golden cage," in which "every step, every action were under control of your best neighbor, whose voice sounded piercingly behind the wall...[people]walked on their tiptoes...and talked quietly as if at the cemetery...The building was christened the 'crematorium.'"¹²⁰ The *slov'iany* continued to have a place of their own but their space of freedom was narrowed to their desks, and only the experience of writing left an illusion of freedom at least for some of them. Most began to realize how captive they really were only when they began to write or talk. Iuliiian Movchan noted, for instance, that in his conversations with Sosiura, he never dared to ask Sosiura about his experience of being a soldier in the UNR army in which he served as

¹¹⁸ Edelman, 89.

¹¹⁹ Tuan argued that "freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act." See Tuan, *Space*, 52.

¹²⁰ Liubchenko in Aheeva, 148.

Semen Petliura's personal guard. Movchan stated that this sort of question was dangerous and inappropriate even among close friends.¹²¹ Sincerity became extinct in the beginning of the 1930s, and this disturbed those *slov'iany* who had difficulty adjusting themselves to the new Soviet society. Khvyl'ovyi seemed to be disturbed by this for many years, and certainly his residence in *Budynok Slovo* only exacerbated this feeling.

Perhaps, his sharp intuition and intellect allowed him to understand more and to see deeper than other writers. Liubchenko emphasized that Khvyl'ovyi could grasp the essence of reality in chaos that was incomprehensible for others, and could clearly and laconically formulate it.¹²² According to Liubchenko, Khvyl'ovyi stated that the worst fate was awaiting those Ukrainian writers who, like Abel's brother Cain, would betray their colleagues following Moscow's orders. "You will see. Beyond shame, death is awaiting them. They will be used as much as needed, and then, as useless ballast, will be thrown overboard, will be exterminated. You will see," said Khvyl'ovyi to Liubchenko.¹²³ Today Khvyl'ovyi's words sound accurately predictive.

In contrast to many *slov'iany*, Khvyl'ovyi enlarged his private space by creative writing, the world where he was not free, but not enslaved either. His intimate thoughts were encapsulated in his prose because of a lack of any other permanent, stable or trustworthy space where he could share them. The moral and intellectual values Khvyl'ovyi established for himself in this space remained unflinching. "When you sit down at the table to write, don't forget to

¹²¹ Iuliian Movchan, *Shcho varto b znaty: Problemy Ukrain's'koho natsional'no-derzhavnoho vyzvolennia, podorozhni notatky, portrety, zustrichi ta kharakterystyky* (Toronto: Sribna Surma, 1966), 305-06.

¹²² Liubchenko in Aheeva, 148, 154.

¹²³ Liubchenko in Aheeva, 155.

wash your hands,” Khvyl’ovyi pronounced.¹²⁴ His personal integrity remained unchanged, and therefore, Khvyl’ovyi’s creative work is of distinct relevance to an analysis of his social and political evolution, and its meaning in the context of the history of *Budynok Slovo*. Attempted conformity led to the deterioration of his inner essence, and it took him some time to realize his inability to conform.¹²⁵

The scenario of Khvyl’ovyi’s suicide was understandably presented by the Soviet state as the logical closure of his life and his ambivalent personality. Those who consider Khvyl’ovyi’s views, convictions and actions confusing, inconsistent, and oscillating from one extreme to another might find Shapoval’s term “fatal ambivalence” quite accurate.¹²⁶ Yet, ambivalence or irrational behavior does not overpower the persistence of his ideas expressed in creative writings, in the space where Khvyl’ovyi was most often rational and honest, and therefore, free, the space where he could only be himself.

Khvyl’ovyi’s philosophical wholeness and intellectual integrity seem to violate the image of an ambivalent personality. It would be most fair to say that he made a fatal mistake: he overestimated his role in history, passionately believing in the strength of his argument that would unite the Ukrainian intelligentsia in their quest for new proletarian literature and a culturally independent Ukraine under the leadership of the Communist party. Khvyl’ovyi, like his character Karamazov in *Val’dshnepy*, could not imagine the rejuvenation of the nation without socialism.¹²⁷ He presumed that Ukrainian national liberation was possible only within the framework of the

¹²⁴ Quoted in Iushchenko, 68.

¹²⁵ See Khvyl’ovyi’s confession to Kulish in HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183, ark.115; Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 190; TsDAMLIMU f.815, op.1, spr.5a, ark.2.

¹²⁶ Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 12.

¹²⁷ Khvyl’ovyi, *Val’dshnepy*, 52.

Communist proletarian state. The realization that the state propagandized Ukrainization in Ukraine, but at the same time, physically exterminated the Ukrainian intelligentsia that was supposed to implement it, bewildered him. However, as Mykhailin suggested, Khvyl'ovyi the Communist never made the last step to eliminate this internal contradiction. He refused to betray his young romantic revolutionary ideals.¹²⁸

Khvyl'ovyi's suicide might also be analyzed in the context of his spatialized existence, or, in other words, in the context of his awareness of spatial and temporal constraints. Following the logic of philosopher J. E. Malpas, who tried to establish a connection between human existence in a space and human awareness of mortality and death, Khvyl'ovyi was able to comprehend, to "grasp" himself in relation to *Budynok Slovo* and to the social and political system in general in which he lived. He managed to realize his mortality as something inevitable under the circumstances and as something that could be manipulated by him. Death was at his mercy, as he was at the mercy of this place, space and time. His home acquired deep meaning for Khvyl'ovyi through the memories and sentiments he accumulated there. His emotional and experiential attachments to the place might partly explain and illustrate this idea, as well as his decision to end his life the way he wanted, at a certain time and in a certain place, his home.¹²⁹

The changing meaning of *Budynok Slovo*, as well as the changing meaning of himself as a writer and as a public figure, undermined Khvyl'ovyi's psychological equilibrium: his home connoted a lack of freedom, hopelessness and despair. Time and space dictated new experiences

¹²⁸ Mykhailin, 31.

¹²⁹ See Malpas's discussion about mortality as a consequence of our located existence in his *Place and Experience*, 192-93.

for him, producing new memories, mostly tragic. The future, so clear and optimistic in the past, became undefined for Khvyl'ovyi. Since he moved to *Budynok Slovo*, he developed a taste for liquor and began to drink uncontrollably. He stopped writing.¹³⁰ Disillusioned and lonely, he certainly could commit suicide. However, metaphorically speaking, from the bloodiest scenarios to the most benign ones possibly imaginable, Khvyl'ovyi did not pull the trigger himself. It was done for him long before 13 May 1933. A protracted and torturous murder, committed by the state and by his colleagues and fellow writers, preceded his death.

For several decades, the Soviet regime tried to erase Khvyl'ovyi's name and his works from the cultural memory of Ukrainians. After 1933, his books were removed from the state and communal libraries all over Ukraine for their nationalist and fascist content.¹³¹ The Soviet authorities and party leaders could not even stand the existence of Khvyl'ovyi's grave in one of the oldest cemeteries in Kharkiv. To make people forget him and others like him, they destroyed his grave together with the cemetery, creating a faceless and impersonal Park of Youth (*Molodizhnyi Park*), one of thousands on former Soviet terrain. Khvyl'ovyi's spirit and the remnants of his physical body appeared to be more dangerous for the state than *Budynok Slovo*, a monument to Khvyl'ovyi and other *slov'iany*, the building that survived even the Nazi occupation of Kharkiv. Several decades later, the Ukrainian poet Tetiana Shamrai wrote about this act of vandalism by the Soviets:

¹³⁰ HDA SBU f.11, spr.C-183, ark.93,107,123. See also Shapoval, *Poliuvannia*, 172, 180-81 and Senchenko, "Notatky," 567-68.

¹³¹ DAKhO, f.P4511, op.1, spr.16, ark.38-39. The NKVD provided multiple lists of books that must be purged from the libraries. Among others, there were Khvyl'ovyi's books.

There is not enough room for poets in the cemetery,
Soon they'll be buried right in the sky.¹³²



Khvyl'ovyi's funeral. 14 May 1933, Kharkiv.¹³³

Khvyl'ovyi's death further fragmented the *slov'iany*. Their common space and place had been split into many private spaces and places, in which *Budynok Slovo*'s inhabitants preferred to hide. They realized that the counter-space of their art which was conformed to party demands did not help reduce their exposure to repression. The state seemed to negate the differences between unreliable, loyal and repentant artists, and this provision encouraged them to reassemble the truth, as they understood it, about their art and their future as artists and individuals. For the state, this fragmentation was a powerful "instrument of political power," a condition to rule.¹³⁴ The secret police continued the process of the sorting of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, organizing their social space according to the principle of collective ghettos.¹³⁵

¹³² Tetiana Shamrai, *Morozom namaliovana vesna* (Kharkiv: Prapor, 1991), 104.

¹³³ TsDAMLIMU, f.144c, op.2, spr.45, ark.1-2.

¹³⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essay*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 214-15. Lefebvre noted that fragmentation as a phenomenon has always been a powerful tool of state regimination.

¹³⁵ On a collection of ghettos under state control, see Lefebvre, *State*, 244.

Chapter Six

The UVO Case and the Repressions of 1933

As the Lavra's bells ring their dirge,
Iron *chekists* are being raised.
With warm, arterial waters
They will wash the magical lyrics
That seems senseless to them.

Volodymyr Bazylevs'kyi¹

The year 1933 was marked by the *slov'iany*'s literary sterility and intellectual malaise.² It was also when the most prominent cultural figures, residents of *Budynok Slovo*, were arrested. Their arrest was a part of the mass operation designed by the secret police under the code name UVO (Ukrainian Military Organization).³ Fundamentally ill-suited to the Kremlin's politics, writers and actors were arrested as members of the anti-Soviet nationalist organization UVO, and most of them were indicted on the basis of Article 54 of the Criminal Code of the UKrSSR, whose paragraphs provided very broad and vague definitions of crimes.⁴

As a rule, the suspects were charged with crimes under two or three sub-paragraphs of this Article. After preliminary investigation, the prisoners were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, forced labor or death by special meetings of "extraordinary" (or extra-judicial) state bodies that the regime had established in order to carry out its repressive measures against the population. These institutions included the NKVD Collegium, the Military

¹ See Volodymyr Bazylevs'kyi's selected poetry in *Literaturna Ukraina*, 24 November 2011.

² Sokil, 112-16.

³ For details, see Olga Bertelsen and Myroslav Shkandrij, "The Secret Police and the Campaign against Galicians in Soviet Ukraine, 1929-34," *Nationalities Papers*, under review.

⁴ For details about 14 sub-paragraphs of Article 54, see Dave Obee, "Researching Stalin's Victims," *FEEFHS Journal*, vol. X (2002): 17, available at <http://feefhs.org/journal/10/obee.pdf> (accessed 11 January 2011).

Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court, committees, troikas, or the OGPU/NKVD Special Board (*osoboe soveshchanie*) in Moscow.⁵

After being sentenced for crimes against the state, the prisoners fell under the jurisdiction of the Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps—the Gulag. By early 1934 the total number of inmates in the Gulag was 510,307 people.⁶ As a subdivision of the NKVD, the Gulag administration sent the prisoners to various labor camps, fulfilling camp norms and needs for labor. The writers were assigned to heavy physical labor and exposed to inhumane living conditions. They cut trees, built roads and worked in hazardous and harmful gold and silver mines.⁷ *Paiky* (food rations) were minimal, and those prisoners who received no help from relatives were doomed to starvation and physical exhaustion. A small percentage of Ukrainian intellectuals were provided an opportunity to perform work closely related to their intellectual and professional abilities and skills. The majority, however, were routinely denounced by NKVD provocateurs and informers for their criticism of the punitive organs or Soviet power, and were shot in the late

⁵ For more on these institutions, see Simon Wolin and Robert M. Slusser, eds., *The Soviet Secret Police* (New York: Frederic A. Praeger Publisher, 1957), 8, 86, 150; Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Institution Press, 2002); Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans. V. Stalko (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004); Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repressions in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 42-44, 84-85, 155- 56, 282.

⁶ Anne Applebaum, *GULAG: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 579. The number increased by 200,000 in 1934 (from 510,000 to 725,000). See Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 105.

⁷ As many scholars have shown, prisoners played a significant role in the economics of the Gulag. See, for instance, works by D. Nordlander, "Origins of a Gulag Capital: Magadan and Stalinist Control in the Early 1930s," *Slavic review* 57, no. 4 (1998): 791-812; N. Baron, "Conflict and Complicity: The Expansion of the Karelian Gulag, 1923-1933," *Cahiers du monde russe* 42, nos. 2-4 (2001): 615-47, and "Production and Terror: The Operation of the Karelian Gulag, 1933-39," *Cahiers du monde russe* 43, nos. 1 (2002): 139-79; A.D. Sakharov and M.I. Khlusov, eds., *Ekonomika GULAGA i ee rol' v razvitii strany: 1930-e gody. Sbornik dokumentov* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

1930s. The luckiest were punished by additional prison terms, confinement in isolators, reduction of rations, and increased norms for production.⁸

Christopher Joyce noted that during the Great Terror prisons and camps were swamped with new inmates which resulted in a rapid deterioration of living conditions.⁹ In Ukraine, and particularly in Kharkiv, this occurred much earlier, in 1932-33. In 1932, the secret police arrested 74,849 people in Ukraine, and a further 124,463 in 1933 (a total of 199,312 during these two years).¹⁰ During four years, from 1929 to 1933, the numbers of prisoners in the Kharkiv prison (BUPR) increased dramatically. The head of the Kharkiv BUPR systematically complained to the authorities that its capacity was exceeded by 100%, and asked the prosecutor to take proper measures to prevent epidemics and riots.¹¹

Since Ialovyi's arrest and Khvyl'ovyi's suicide, the residents of *Budynok Slovo* had lived "with baited breath." As noted in Chapter Four, Ialovyi's lengthy criminal file was fabricated in a thorough fashion, and his detailed confession contained denunciations of many *slov'iany*. The secret police fully prepared the grounds for further mass arrests in *Budynok Slovo*, a place of nationalist "pollution." The 1933 arrests provoked the residents to seek poison ampoules for the inevitable black day.¹² The arrest of the influential party leader and literary figure Andrii Richyts'kyi, a former

⁸ Christopher Joyce, "The Soviet Penal System and the Great Terror," in *Stalin's Terror Revisited*, ed. Melanie Ilic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 90-115, and Fainsod, 458-59. On convict labor and timber industry, see Peter H. Solomon, Jr., "Soviet Penal Policy, 1917-1934: A Reinterpretation," *Slavic Review* 39, no. 2 (1980): 208-09, 213.

⁹ Joyce, "The Soviet Penal System," 90.

¹⁰ Valerii Vasiliev, "The Great Terror in the Ukraine, 1936-38," in *Stalin's Terror Revisited*, ed. Melanie Ilic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 141.

¹¹ DAKhO, f.R845, op.8, spr.154, ark.81.

¹² Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knykhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:235.

member of the Ukrainian Central Rada and one of the founders of the Ukrainian Communist party (the UCP), became a harbinger of a communal horror that occurred immediately after Skrypnyk's suicide, and the chain of tragic events in *Budynok Slovo* in December 1933.¹³

A Scapegoat: Andrii Richyts'kyi

Andrii Richyts'kyi was a former editor of *Chervonyi prapor*, the journal of the UKP,¹⁴ which severely criticized the politics of the KP(b)U that were thought to be dictated by the Russian Communist party.¹⁵ After the Comintern resolution of 1925 about the fusion of the UKP and the KP(b)U, Richyts'kyi was elected a member of the TsK KP(b)U. He also taught at the VUAMLIN¹⁶ and the Shevchenko Research Institute, and became a prolific scholar and writer. As observers noted, his Shevchenko seminars became very popular among graduate students: Richyts'kyi's sharp mind was capable of interesting generalizations and his lectures were noted for their freedom of spirit and their aspirations for an independent Ukraine.¹⁷ During the Literary Discussion he shared Skrypnyk's position and enthusiastically supported

¹³ Richyts'kyi's real name was Anatol' Pisots'kyi. HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.133.

¹⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.164. UKP refers to the Ukrainian Communist Party. The members were called *ukapisty*. They supported the idea of the national renaissance and the creation of a democratic Ukrainian People's Republic independent from Russia. Under severe pressure from the TsK KP(b)U and the GPU that constantly arrested its leaders, on 1 March 1925, the UKP was dissolved. Many *ukapisty* joined the ranks of the KP(b)U. See Ivan Maistrenko, "Ukrains'ka Komunistychna Partiiia," in *Entsyklopediia ukrainoznavstva*, ed. V. Kubiiiovych (New York: Molode zhyttia, 1954-89), 9:3366; Stephen Velychenko, *State Building in Revolutionary Ukraine: A Comparative Study of Governments and Bureaucrats, 1917-1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 3, 55-56, 172, 174, 186, 267-68.

¹⁵ For more on Richyts'kyi as a journalist, see Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia moho pokolinnia: Spohady uchasnyka revoliutsiinykh podii v Ukraini* (Edmonton, Canada: Kanads'kyi Instytut Ukrains'kykh Studii, Al'berts'kyi Universytet, 1985), 140.

¹⁶ VUAMLIN was a network of scientific research institutions in Ukraine created after the resolution of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U on 28 June 1931. It functioned in conjunction with the Communist Academy in Moscow, and in 1936 the institutions of the VUAMLIN joined the Ukrainian Academy of Science.

¹⁷ Kostiuk, 1:407-08.

Ukrainization. Hryhorii Kostiuk characterized Richyts'kyi as an individual who took the problems of the Ukrainian people and culture to heart, and this made him "dangerous to the party."¹⁸ It is no wonder that after Skrypnyk's suicide, the GPU immediately arrested Richyts'kyi as a nationalist deviationist and Skrypnyk's adherent.

For the GPU, Richyts'kyi's past as an independentist and his membership in the Ukrainian Central Rada outweighed his Communist loyalties. His criticism of Volobuiev's ideas that advocated an economic development of the UkrSSR that would be independent of Russia, was ignored by the party and did not contribute to his image as a loyal Communist, as it should have done.¹⁹ Richyts'kyi's active participation in denouncing *shumskism* and *khvyliovism* also meant little. He had been placed on the GPU black list since the early 1920s for his vigorous criticism of Ukrainian communists who, in Richyts'kyi's view, were an obedient instrument in the hands of the RCP.



Andrii Richyts'kyi, the early 1930s.²⁰

¹⁸ Kostiuk, 1:402.

¹⁹ See A. Richyts'kyi's article "Do problemy likvidatsii perezhytkiv kolonial'nosti ta natsionalizmu (Vidpovid' Mykhailu Volobuevu)" in *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy* no. 2 (1928): 74-93, and no. 3 (1928): 64-83.

²⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.8.

In December 1932, he was sent as a TsK party representative to the village Novo-Chervone (Arbuzyns'kyi region, Odesa oblast') to supervise grain procurements.²¹ Careful scrutiny of his criminal file reveals that he was falsely accused by the GPU of being a sadist who through violence extracted grain and other foodstuffs from the peasants.²² In truth, a local brigade of party activists implemented the terror, beat people, stripped them, and took them into the fields, together with their children, where the activists kept them for hours in the snow. Forcing women to surrender their hidden grain, the activists placed them in barrels and rolled them all over the village. The huts of those who resisted the procurements were destroyed.²³ According to "witnesses," Richyts'kyi ordered mass arrests of the peasants, and kept them imprisoned in inhumane conditions. Allegedly, under his "leadership," several families committed collective suicides.²⁴ Interestingly, when the plan of grain procurements was fulfilled, and Richyts'kyi returned to Kharkiv, on 8 September 1933 he was accused of counterrevolution in the countryside and arrested by the GPU in *Budynok Slovo*.

The incriminating items confiscated during Richyts'kyi's arrest constituted a collection of the newspaper *Dilo* published in Lviv in 1929-30, a revolver and a set of secret documents of the TsK KP(b)U. Importantly, the existence, as well as the presence, of Richyts'kyi's family (his wife Teofila and their two children Mavr and Teofil) was ignored by the GPU: the agent

²¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.165.

²² See rehabilitation materials of Richyts'kyi's case in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10.

²³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.166.

²⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.166-67.

expropriated a bank book for his savings account. His neighbor, the writer Oleksa Slisarenko, witnessed the arrest.²⁵

On 10 September Richyts'kyi wrote a protest to the Politburo of the KP(b)U, in which he rejected all accusations of the heinous crimes he had supposedly committed. However, the GPU continued to interrogate him, pressing him to denounce *halychany*, primarily those who worked in Kharkiv in cultural institutions.²⁶ Richyts'kyi responded that it was time to end this farce (*trahikomedii*).²⁷ In his letter to Balyts'kyi, he said he was puzzled by the GPU's claim about his counterrevolutionary UVO links: "I cannot even understand where the GPU is seeing ANY links of this sort in Ukraine."²⁸

Through the efforts of the interrogators Pustovoitov, Bordon and others, incriminating depositions against Richyts'kyi were collected from many representatives of the intelligentsia who were arrested as UVO "members." In his 8 June 1933 deposition, Ialovyi, described in detail the UVO meetings in which Richyts'kyi participated and actively prepared a military coup against the Soviet government.²⁹ Other UVO "members," *halychany* Vikul, Badan-Iavorenko, Levyts'kyi, Mazurenko, Khrystovyi, Repa, Cherniak, Hrytsai, Ozers'kyi, Kyiko-Shelest, and Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi, also claimed that Richyts'kyi was one of the leaders of the UVO.³⁰

The criminal file of Mykhailo Avdienko, a high official in the Ukrainian People's Commissariat that dealt with Soviet collective farms,

²⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.7, ark.5-5zv.

²⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.7, ark.48-50.

²⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.7, ark.50.

²⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.7, ark.51.

²⁹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2048, ark.18-64.

³⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.7, ark.63-72.

confirms that all these individuals were rehabilitated in the late 1950s. Moreover, Avdienko himself, whose case the GPU linked to Richyts'kyi's, never admitted his guilt and rejected all accusations and depositions by the UVO "members." Nevertheless, Avdienko was shot in 1937 in a labor camp where he had been exiled for 10 years. The behavior of the accused during interrogation did not affect the outcome—their fates had been decided before the investigative process began.³¹

The "scapegoat plan" designed by the secret organs was implemented within seven months. On 27 March 1934, the Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Court in the UkrSSR sentenced Richyts'kyi to death for his membership in the UVO. He, it was claimed, used a trip to Odesa oblast' to undermine Soviet power in the countryside.³² To create an illusion of the scrupulous preliminary investigation, and to eliminate other witnesses of the crimes in Odesa oblast', the Session sentenced six other people to various terms in labor camps.³³ Despite persistent denial of his personal involvement in the crimes in Arbuzyns'kyi region, Richyts'kyi was executed on 25 April 1934 at 9 P.M. in the Kharkiv prison in the presence of the highest GPU officials in Ukraine.³⁴

The most fascinating thing about Richyts'kyi's criminal case is timing. The party had to blame local officials for the famine of 1932-33 and to "expose" their mishandling of the collectivization campaign. Richyts'kyi, a member of the TsK KP(b)U, was a perfect candidate for the role of a scapegoat. Moreover, the "trial" was conducted in the village Arbuzivka in

³¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2048, ark.116-37. Rehabilitation of the UVO "members" occurred posthumously.

³² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.191.

³³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.7, ark.156.

³⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.191zv.,196; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.8, ark.79.

Odesa oblast', to which the accused were convoyed. 42 victims of collectivization were invited to attend the trial to confirm the violent tactics employed by Richyts'kyi in collecting grain from the peasants.³⁵ The importance of this trial for the state is confirmed by the presence of Zynovii Katsnel'son, Balyts'kyi's assistant, who arrived at the trial.³⁶

The need for this public trial is quite obvious. Its publicity helped the state reach several goals: first, the center diverted the blame from itself for millions of deaths in the Ukrainian countryside in 1932-33; second, the GPU exposed the "real" criminals who starved the peasantry in Ukraine; and, third, the Ukrainian peasants were appeased by "urgent" measures that helped investigate the crimes and punished the guilty. Richyts'kyi was introduced to the starving peasants, who were half alive and on the verge of insanity, as the one who should be blamed for collectivization and unrealistic plans for grain procurement, and they confirmed his crimes.

Richyts'kyi's wife Teofila Kravchenko and his two children were evicted from *Budynok Slovo*.³⁷ She had difficulties finding employment. After she was hired by the DVU, Hryhorii Shtoke was reprimanded by the party purge commission for losing his vigilance and hiring an enemy.³⁸

In 1933, the GPU worked at an extraordinary pace in Ukraine. The process of fabricating charges against those arrested or still to be arrested was organized efficiently, and suspects were "encouraged" to name as many "accomplices" as possible in order to provide the secret police with a sufficient amount of "evidence" and grounds to arrest another group of

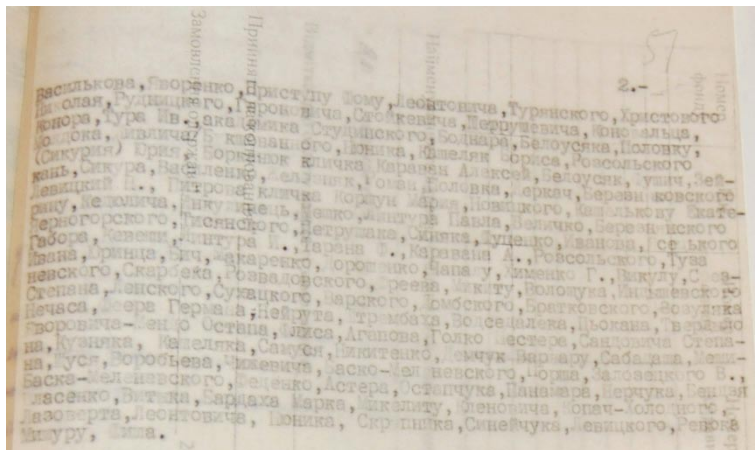
³⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.8, ark.43-43zv.

³⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.8, ark.42.

³⁷ See Richyts'kyi's 16 April 1934 letter of complaint to the Politburo KP(b)U in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.8 (no page number is provided).

³⁸ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.27.

compromised individuals. The number of UVO “members” named during an interrogation sometimes reached several dozen, and hundreds of individuals were alleged to have planned the overthrow of the Soviet regime. The lists of these individuals that were signed by suspects ran to several pages long, and were prepared in advance by the secret police, as rehabilitation materials have shown two decades later.³⁹ Indeed, one could only marvel at the memory required to recall so many names. Gradually, lists of Ukrainian “nationalists” were expanded, and Richyts’kyi “found himself” in a much bigger company of terrorists and counterrevolutionaries.



The professor of world history Badan-Iavorenko’s deposition: a partial list of the UVO “members.”⁴⁰

The rehabilitation certificates are especially revealing because they summarize and visually present lists of those who were next in line.⁴¹

Depositions (false or real) of those who were already in GPU custody

³⁹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1063, t.2, ark.27 (1955); HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.108-09,111 (1956); HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69251fp, t.10, ark.56-57 (1959). Besides self-denunciations and false depositions made by the *slov’iany*, the GPU had another source—the GPU’s secret agents (*seksoty*) who regularly composed lists of Ukrainian “nationalists”—new candidates for arrest. Among the *seksoty* were representatives of the intelligentsia Bilen’kyi-Berezyns’kyi, Shtein, Iurynets’, Borodchak, Onyshchuk and Karbonenko who were recruited by the Soviet secret organs in the late 1920s-early 1930s. See also Mykola Hrushevs’kyi’s deposition about his practices in interrogation rooms—HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69860fp, t.8, ark.88 (12 August 1937).

⁴⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2583, ark.51.

⁴¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2583, ark.22-30,33,43-45,50-51.

provided sufficient grounds for the subsequent arrest of those who were identified as Ukrainian nationalists and who were involved in activities that undermined the regime. Moreover, to secure the legitimacy of a suspect's deposition, the GPU generally strove to obtain compromising testimonies from several suspects who "in unison" named the same individuals. This scheme was rather primitive, but because it was designed by the heads of investigative departments there were no doubts among rank-and-file investigators that the cases built on this principle would encounter any resistance from their supervisors.⁴²



The teacher of the Kharkiv military school Hryhorii Kossak's deposition: a partial list of individuals who were allegedly members of the UVO.⁴³

⁴² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1063, t.2, ark.26.

⁴³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2583, ark.23-28.

Richyts'kyi did not survive Stalin's terror; a few others did and testified about what was happening in interrogation rooms in the 1930s. For instance, according to the testimony of the writer and *slov'ianyn* Ostap Vyshnia who survived the Gulag, during the interrogation process he was provided with lists of individuals whom he was "requested" to include in his deposition. Vyshnia's interrogator Bordon beat him and applied various methods of psychological pressure to ensure that he did so.⁴⁴ As a result, Vyshnia signed his confession and included in his testimony those Ukrainian intellectuals that were on Bordon's lists and who, he claimed, were UVO members.⁴⁵

The disappearance of their neighbors encouraged the *slov'iany* to search for ways to escape arrest. Volodymyr Sosiura, for instance, wrote a poem "The Defeat" which, as he claimed later, was aimed at "nationalists" Ialovyi, Richyts'kyi and Vyshnia.⁴⁶ Fear penetrated the very essence of the writers' existence and spilled out onto the pages of their art. In 1933 their everyday choice was between moral principles or social sanity, conformism and sycophancy. *Budynok Slovo* became a site where even the most faithful and powerful Bolsheviks felt helpless and doomed. One of them was Serhii Pylypenko, the founder of the cooperative "Slovo."

⁴⁴ **Heorhii Bordon** (1905-1937) worked in the SPV (the NKVD in Kharkiv oblast') until April 1935. He was fired because he was not a party member. However, in February 1936, the secret organs found him a job as a plenipotentiary of the special sector in the State Security Administration (the NKVD in the UkrSSR.) In 1937, he was appointed a plenipotentiary of the 3rd department in the State Security Administration of the NKVD in the UkrSSR but on 17 July 1937 he was arrested. He was sentenced to death on 7 September 1937 and was executed in Kyiv. See Vadym Zolotar'ov, *CHEKA-DPU-NKVS na Kharkivshchyni: Liudy ta Doli. 1919-1941* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2003), 393.

⁴⁵ TsDAHOU, f.263, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.18-18zv.

⁴⁶ Ivan Dziuba, *Z krynnytsi lit* (Kyiv: KMA, 2006), 1:588.

Serhii Pylypenko

Serhii Pylypenko's arrest made it crystal clear to the writers that no one was immune, even influential party members and faithful Bolsheviks. By the time of Pylypenko's arrest, the Shevchenko Research Institute was completely destroyed: its leadership was dismissed and repressed, and most faculty members were arrested. The convenient location of the Institute (near the main headquarters of the GPU) facilitated the efficient work of the secret police. Often the arrested members of the Institute were walked by two guards from their place of work to their final destination—the Kharkiv GPU prison. Some time before his arrest, Pylypenko was dismissed from his position as director of the Institute and excluded from the party. Everyone understood that it was a matter of time before the GPU visited Pylypenko in his apartment to fulfill the formalities—the search of the apartment and arrest.⁴⁷ The GPU began to investigate Pylypenko two months before his arrest. The 1955 rehabilitation process revealed that the secret police opened an operational file (*papka-formuliar*) for Pylypenko on 3 October 1933.⁴⁸ This file was marked under number 16703, and it would be reasonable to assume that by October 1933, there were approximately 17,000 individuals, almost certainly representatives of the intelligentsia in Ukraine who were “investigated” because of the fictional crimes they committed.

GPU agents came to apartment 20 on 29 November 1933, accompanied by the janitor Petymko.⁴⁹ Pylypenko's arrest was not sanctioned by the prosecutor, and was conducted on the basis of a resolution signed by

⁴⁷ Kostiuk, 1:412-13.

⁴⁸ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228 fp, t.2, ark.46.

⁴⁹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.4. For more on Petymko, see Chapter Two.

Proskuriakov, Sherstov and Dolinskii.⁵⁰ The document stated that Pylypenko was in charge of a terrorist nationalist organization that planned to assassinate the head of the Radnarkom Vlas Chubar.⁵¹

It took the GPU about three weeks to obtain Pylypenko's confession. On 19 December 1933, he testified that he was a member of the UVO, and he, Dosvitnii and Vyshnia indeed considered assassinating Chubar. According to Pylypenko, the last two also planned the assassination of Postyshev.⁵² As has been demonstrated in Chapter Three, the methods of the Kharkiv GPU helped break the accused rather quickly. Family connections and sensitivities were effectively exploited by GPU agents to extract the confession of a suspect. In Pylypenko's case, his family circumstances were advantageous for Proskuriakov who happened to be Pylypenko's interrogator. Pylypenko had four close relatives, all females (his wife Tatiana Kardinalowska, two little daughters—eight-year-old Esta and four-year-old Mirtala, and his sister who lived in Kharkiv). Likely, this factor was used to manipulate him. The 21-22 December 1933 minutes of the interrogation reveal that Pylypenko not only named Khvyl'ovyi, Ozers'kyi and Ialovyi as conscious nationalists but also testified that they all agreed to employ "individual" terror against Soviet power. Vyshnia was supposed to assassinate Postyshev, and Pylypenko—

⁵⁰ **Aleksandr Sherstov** (1904-1936) was an assistant to the head of the 2nd department, and since 1934 worked as head of the secret-political sector (SPV) of the GPU/UGB NKVD in the UkrSSR. See Iurii Shapoval, *Poliuvannia na Val'dshnepa: Rozsekrechenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 242. **Semen Dolinskii-Glasberg** (1896-1938) was the head of the 2nd department (SPV) of the GPU in 1931. Since July 1934, he was in charge of the 2nd department in the Administration of the State Security (SPV). In 1935, he was appointed an assistant to head of the Administration of the State Security (SPV). In 1936 he was transferred to Dnipropetrivs'k as an assistant to head of the NKVD of the Dnipropetrivs'k oblast'. The secret organs arrested him on 5 August 1937. He was shot in February 1938. See Iurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko and Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abris, 1997), 463.

⁵¹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark. 5. Radnarkom is the acronym for *Rada Narodnykh Komisariv*, the Council of People's Commissars.

⁵² TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.8.

Chubar.⁵³ On 2 January 1934, Pylypenko revealed many other names of the *slov'iany* who allegedly participated in the conspiracy.⁵⁴

To pressure Pylypenko, the GPU employed several denunciations, allegedly made by his neighbors and colleagues, Gzhyts'kyi, Demchuk, Atamaniuk, Marfievych, Ialovyi, Strukhmanchuk, Vikul, Hrytsai, Dosvitnii and Volobuev.⁵⁵ Twenty pages of testimonies and two meetings with Pylypenko, likely fabricated by the GPU, proved to be sufficient for sentencing him to death. In their letter to the prosecutor, Proskuriakov, Dolinskii and Kozel'skii advocated applying to Pylypenko the highest degree of punishment. The assistant to the GPU prosecutor in the UkrSSR Krainii approved the petition.⁵⁶ On 3 March 1934, the OGPU Collegium ordered Pylypenko's execution, although its exact time and day, as well as the place of his burial, remain unknown.⁵⁷

Pylypenko occupied several important positions in the literary establishment and cultural institutions and was no small figure in the party. As his 1954 rehabilitation materials revealed, Pylypenko had been interrogated by the head of the GPU Balyts'kyi and the heads of secret departments Aleksandrovskii and Kozel'skii. Moreover, during these meetings, the Secretary of the Kharkiv Obkom of the KP(b)U Postyshev was also present.⁵⁸

⁵³ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.17,22.

⁵⁴ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.33-34.

⁵⁵ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.46-7.

⁵⁶ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.90. **Boris Kozel'skii** (Bernard Golovanivskii) (1902-1936) worked for the Ukrainian GPU from 1925. In 1933 he was appointed the interim head of the SPV of the Kharkiv GPU. In 1934 he became head of the SPV in the State Security Administration of the NKVD (UkrSSR). He committed suicide on 2 January 1936 in Kyiv. See Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar'ov, 490-91

⁵⁷ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.92.

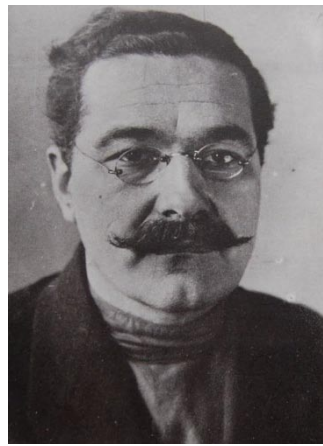
⁵⁸ TsDAHOU, f.263, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.180-86. Balyts'kyi and Postyshev enjoyed interrogating the arrested and were often present during interrogations. See Oleksandr Rubl'ov, *Zakhidnoukrains'ka intelihientsia u zahal'nonatsional'nykh politychnykh ta kul'turnykh protestakh (1914-1939)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy, NANU, 2004), 381, 395.

Postyshev was a frequent guest in the cellars of the GPU and was personally involved in many cases of Ukrainian “nationalists.”⁵⁹

Needless to say, Pylypenko’s confession was obtained through severe physical and mental tortures.⁶⁰ Pylypenko’s wife Kardinalowska who was allowed to see her husband in prison (but only in the presence of the prosecutor) mentioned several telling details that pointed toward physical torture applied to her husband in prison. She stated that many people talked about torture in the Kharkiv GPU prison, but what she saw with her own eyes—the thin, exhausted and morose appearance of her husband—only confirmed her fears.⁶¹



Serhii Pylypenko, 1920.⁶²



Serhii Pylypenko.⁶³

After Pylypenko’s arrest, the residents of the Writers’ Home knew there were no untouchables in *Budynok Slovo*. Some began, fearfully and

⁵⁹ Postyshev publicly revealed his detailed knowledge about what Hryhorii Epik said and wrote during the preliminary investigation. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter Seven.

⁶⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.48570fp, t.7, ark.255-56,340.

⁶¹ Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmariska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004), 162-63.

⁶² TsDAMLIMU, f.897, op.1, spr.7, l. ark.4.

⁶³ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.31.

obediently, to await their turn. Some were in panic, selling private possessions and frantically seeking hiding places.

The “Decemberists” of 1933

7 December 1933 was a tragic day for two families in *Budynok Slovo*—the Gzhyts’kyis and the Desniak-Vasylenkos. By 1933, Volodymyr Gzhyts’kyi had become a famous writer, and his novel *Chorne ozero* (*The Black Lake*) published in 1929 was favorably received by the writers in various republics. But Gzhyts’kyi’s Galician origin compromised him in the eyes of the Soviet regime (see Chapter Three), as did his service in the Ukrainian Galician Army (the UGA) before 1919, which was interpreted as an insidious influence which shaped his independentist’s mindset. Gzhyts’kyi’s membership in the literary organization “Zakhidna Ukraina” that was formed in the late 1920s and had more than 30 Galician writers and artists exacerbated



Volodymyr Gzhyts’kyi,
the late 1920s.⁶⁴



Volodymyr Gzhyts’kyi in
his study, 1971.⁶⁵

the GPU’s hostile attitude toward him.⁶⁶ In 1933 the GPU instigated a series of critical essays published in the Ukrainian press that denounced Gzhyts’kyi’s

⁶⁴ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.47, ark.4.

⁶⁵ This image can be found in Dmytro Chub, *Liudy velykoho sertsia: statyi, rozvidky, spohady* (Mel’born, Avstraliia: V-vo “Lastivka,” 1981), 173.

novels and his vision of the relationships among national minorities. He was accused of nationalist deviations, particularly in his novel *Chorne ozero*.⁶⁷ Gzhyts'kyi like many other *slov'iany* attempted to rewrite the novel according to the principles of *partiinist'* in literature that were promoted by the party.⁶⁸ However, this did not help him avoid arrest. Nothing could divert it—Gzhyts'kyi had been on the GPU black list since the late 1920s.

In the Kharkiv GPU prison, Gzhyts'kyi, like so many other prisoners, was psychologically crushed in three weeks. On 26 December, he confessed that he was a member of the UVO and belonged to its Kharkiv chapter led by Pylypenko.⁶⁹ Evidently, Pylypenko's deposition about Gzhyts'kyi's "crimes" had served as the pretext for the latter's arrest. Gzhyts'kyi's interrogator was Nikolai Grushevskii who "worked" with many Ukrainian writers.⁷⁰ According to Gzhyts'kyi's July 1955 rehabilitation testimony, during preliminary investigations Grushevskii did not beat the writer but exhausted him with day and night interrogations, regularly threatening to shoot him in the interrogation room if he did not sign the minutes of the interrogation.⁷¹ Gzhyts'kyi confessed that after some time in prison he was unable to tolerate the brutality

⁶⁶ Among the members of "Zakhidna Ukraina" were also Dmytro Zahul, Vasyl' Bobyns'kyi, Antin Shmyhel'skyi, Ahata Turchyns'ka and others. They maintained ties with Myroslav Irchan who later moved to Soviet Ukraine, and with Iaroslav Halan, Petro Kozlaniuk, Stepan Tudor, Oleksandr Havryliuk and other revolutionary writers who lived abroad. See Semen Shakhovs'kyi, "Volodymyr Gzhyts'kyi i ioho proza," in Volodymyr Gzhyts'kyi, *Tvory* (Kyiv: "Dnipro," 1974), 1:7.

⁶⁷ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6218, ark.139.

⁶⁸ The novel has several versions. After surviving the Gulag, in 1956 he again rewrote the novel and published it. See Shakhovs'kyi, 10. One literary critic noted: "The saddest part is that Ghyts'kyi himself believes that his last version is better than the original text of *Chorne ozero* that he produced in the 1920s."

⁶⁹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1063, ark.21-22.

⁷⁰ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.93,95-96. In late July 1937, **Nikolai Grushevskii** was arrested and accused of membership in an anti-Soviet Trotskyite organization and fabrication of interrogation and search protocols. He had no formal education and was in charge of the secret department of the UGB NKVD in Ukraine. At the moment of his arrest, he worked in the UNKVD of the Donetsk oblast'. Hrushevs'kyi was sentenced to death on 7 September 1937.

⁷¹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.74zv.

and pressure to which Grushevskii subjected him, and signed all protocols, naming the *slov'iany* Dosvitnii, Vyshnia, Andrii Paniv, Volodymyr Dukyn, Vasyl' Desniak, Andrii Holovko, Ivan Kyrylenko and Ivan Senchenko as UVO members.⁷²

Many Galicians also fell victim to Gzhyts'kyi's depositions. Among them were Myroslav Irchan, Ivan Tkachuk, Mykhailo Kachaniuk, Mechyslav Hasko, Iosyp Hirniak, Dmytro Zahul, Vasyl' Atamaniuk, and Mykhailo Kozorys.⁷³ They were all arrested as UVO "members." Grushevskii himself wrote Gzhyts'kyi's depositions that described in detail the plan to assassinate Chubar. According to Grushevskii's fiction, Gzhyts'kyi, Dosvitnii, Vyshnia and Shtanhei had conceived the assassination and would have implemented it if the GPU had not forestalled their crime by arresting all active members of the UVO.⁷⁴ Gzhyts'kyi, intimidated and frightened, confirmed his preliminary investigation deposition before the OGPU troika which sentenced him to 10 years in prison.⁷⁵

Although Gzhyts'kyi's degree in agricultural sciences saved him from being shot like most Ukrainian intellectuals on 3 November 1937, the state had no intention of releasing him because of his "nationalist" past. In 1946 he received another term of 4 years in labor camps for conducting anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation. Throughout his incarceration he was employed as a

⁷² TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.11zv.,75; DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1063, ark.33-36.

⁷³ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.1, ark.47-8.

⁷⁴ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.75.

⁷⁵ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.74.

specialist in agriculture in special settlements, and his knowledge was beneficial to the Gulag system.⁷⁶

Like many families in the 1930s, the Gzhyts'kyi family was destroyed by the system. Gzhyts'kyi never returned to Kharkiv: as a former prisoner, he was forbidden to live in big cities.⁷⁷ As the wife of a Ukrainian nationalist, Gzhyts'kyi's wife Mariia was evicted from *Budynok Slovo*. She found herself in the town of Izium in the Kharkiv oblast'. Although Gzhyts'kyi did not maintain personal contacts with her, he sent Maria some money that helped her survive.⁷⁸

Only in the 1960s, did Gzhyts'kyi return to his literary career. He was released in 1956 and resided in Lviv.⁷⁹ He never returned to Kharkiv, but it became the center of many of his novels, several of which were autobiographical. Gzhyts'kyi's attitude toward the city of his youth was ambivalent. The desire of his main characters to blend into the city's landscape alternates with a complete rejection of the spiritual and intellectual space of the place. The indecisiveness, vagueness and often contradictory nature of perceptions of Kharkiv's urban space marked Gzhyts'kyi's late works.⁸⁰ Moreover, Gzhyts'kyi's traumatized memory produced an explicitly positive image of the place where he was born as a writer, and at the same

⁷⁶ Gzhyts'kyi describes this in his novel *Night and Day* which has been translated into English. On special settlements, see Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷⁷ HDA SBU f.9, spr.617, ark.266-77. According to the NKVD secret instruction no. 0143-1929 approved by L. Beria, the former political prisoners were prohibited to settle in many cities of the Soviet Union (so-called *mista-minusky*), as well as in certain oblasts and borderline regions.

⁷⁸ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.75zv. Gzhyts'kyi died in 19 December 1973.

⁷⁹ Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vydannia zhurnalu "Berezil", 2002), 541-42.

⁸⁰ I. Voloshchuk, "Topos mista v romani 'Velyki nadii' V. Gzhyts'koho," *Visnyk LNU imeni Tarasa Shevchenka* 6 (217), ch.I (2011): 21.

time—an implicitly negative place that influenced the inner core of his characters and shaped his fate.⁸¹

In December 1933, the plenipotentiary of the secret department of the Kharkiv GPU Grushevskii was extraordinarily busy. He worked as an interrogator on several cases simultaneously. Among them was the case of the *slov'ianyn* Vasyl' Desniak-Vasylenko who was arrested on the same night as Gzhyts'kyi. It is likely that the arrest of two residents of *Budynok Slovo* who lived in the same fifth entrance (Gzhyts'kyi lived on the first floor in apartment 52, and Desniak resided on the third floor in apartment 60) was a matter of convenience for GPU agents. As many other *slov'iany*, Desniak was arrested without the prosecutor's sanction in the presence of the commandant of *Budynok Slovo* Litvinenko, and the document about his arrest was signed by three people—the Kharkiv GPU officials Grushevskii, Sherstov and Dolinskii.⁸² Desniak was accused of anti-Soviet conspiracy and membership in the UVO. The search lasted until morning, and the most incriminating evidence of his crime that was confiscated was a revolver with two spare magazines, 15 bullets, and his correspondence.⁸³

Desniak was a Ukrainian literary critic, journalist and scholar. In the cooperative “Slovo,” he was a party secretary, and also worked in the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.⁸⁴ He published pro-Soviet articles and maintained firm Bolshevik positions. The formal pretext for Desniak's arrest was Ialovyi's denunciation. Ialovyi claimed that Desniak as a UVO member

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.1-3.

⁸³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.6.

⁸⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.95.

had recruited members for the counterrevolutionary organization among the faculty members and students in the university where he worked.⁸⁵

Desniak's 10 December 1933 confession follows the typical scheme that was designed by the secret police. Curiously, the first page of this document (page 12 in the criminal file) was apparently written by Desniak—in Ukrainian. The remaining pages (13 to 95) are written in Russian, and the handwriting significantly differs from that on page 12 which provokes doubts about the authenticity of Desniak's detailed deposition. Desniak confessed that his views were shaped under the influence of political parties, and he could be considered a "Ukrainian nationalist and a radical *esser* [SR]."⁸⁶ Desniak's self-denunciation left no opportunity for him to avoid a severe verdict. He also claimed that he was an active participant in the Ukrainian Borot'bist party, and Matvii Iavors'kyi had recruited him into the UVO. In all, the leitmotif of the confession is that the Ukrainian literary circles were frustrated with national party politics and government attitudes toward the Ukrainian culture, and therefore, their activities were aimed at resisting the status quo.⁸⁷ The GPU expected him to denounce other *slov'iany*, and the names of Ivan Lakyza, Samiilo Shchupak, Oleksa Slisarenko, Mykhailo Semenko, Mykola Bazhan and Iurii Ianovs'kyi were written into the scenario of conspiracy.⁸⁸

Desniak's criminal file reveals an interesting biographical detail that certainly was of great interest to the GPU. Desniak's wife was a niece of the Ukrainian historian and academician Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi. Desniak's

⁸⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.8.

⁸⁶ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.13. *Essery* refers to members of the SR party (the party of Socialist Revolutionaries), a major political party in early 20th century Russia.

⁸⁷ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.31.

⁸⁸ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.35zv.-36.

deposition (or the interrogator Grushevskii's fiction⁸⁹) illustrates the degree of Desniak's hatred toward the scholar Hrushevs'kyi. It is unclear whether Desniak was sincere about this, or if this narrative had been constructed deliberately to affirm his Soviet position. The writer lamented that he had insufficiently criticized Hrushevs'kyi's works and his political views.⁹⁰ To amplify his pro-Soviet attitudes, Desniak mocked Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's "history" of Ukrainian national liberation and Volodymyr Vynnychenko's "history" and his four volume work *The Rejuvenation of the Nation*, and diminished their worth by putting both of these histories in quotation marks in the text. Perhaps once in the interrogation room, Desniak realized that a pro-Soviet stance might soften his verdict.⁹¹

Desniak's criminal file reveals a stark dissonance between the pro-Bolshevik position exhibited in his essays over the years and his arrest as a Ukrainian nationalist. The interrogator Grushevskii creatively explained (through Desniak's confession) this dissonance. Supposedly, the UVO members (Iavors'kyi, Desniak and others) agreed to publish negative critical articles against Ukrainian intellectuals who earned a reputation as national deviationists in order to camouflage their own nationalist essence and to avoid being accused of Ukrainian nationalism.⁹² This crafty plan of the *uvisty* was "exposed" by Grushevskii, and the text of interrogation protocols was approved by his supervisor.

Moreover, the creative interrogator wrote that Iavors'kyi and Desniak were in complete control of the admission process to the Academy of Science,

⁸⁹ The shared last name of Desniak's interrogator Nikolai Grushevskii and the Ukrainian historian and scholar Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi is totally accidental.

⁹⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.37zv.-38.

⁹¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.39-40 zv.

⁹² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.45-6.

and only individuals with a strong Ukrainian identity were admitted there as graduate students. The activity of the UVO members was aimed at the creation of a cultural institution—the Ukrainian Academy of Science—that was nationally oriented and independent from Russia. Their future plans allegedly included Ukraine’s political and economic break from the RSFSR. Desniak signed these statements, hoping that Grushevskii would help him save his life, as the latter promised.⁹³

On 24 February 1934, according to the decision of the GPU Collegium troika in the UkrSSR, Desniak was sentenced to 5 years of exile in Kazakhstan. However, in Desniak’s case the secret police executed the routine scenario of “conversion” for Ukrainian nationalists. In Ural’sk (Kazakhstan) where Desniak served his term, on 24 June 1938 he was arrested and accused of being a German spy, although no evidence was provided. On 19 October 1938, according to the decision of the UNKVD troika in Alma-Ata oblast’, Desniak was sentenced to death. The verdict was implemented on 20 October 1938.⁹⁴

During the period from 1956-1961, all people who had been mentioned as Desniak’s accomplices were rehabilitated. Moreover, the rehabilitation commission learned that Desniak had never been mentioned in Iavors’kyi’s criminal file, the person who allegedly recruited Desniak to the UVO.⁹⁵ On 23 January 1965, Desniak was rehabilitated as the victim of a fabricated criminal case against him.⁹⁶

⁹³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.50-51zv.

⁹⁴ DAKhO, f.R 6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.109,130zv.,186.

⁹⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.202.

⁹⁶ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1875, ark.206-08.

A week after the arrests of Gzhyts'kyi and Desniak, on 15 December 1933, the secret police arrested the *slov'ianyn* and Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Panchenko.⁹⁷ Oles' Dosvitnii was next in line, Khvyl'ovyi's closest friend and a former member of VAPLITE, a literary association that had by then become for the state synonymous with nationalist heresy and ideological transgression.

Oles' Dosvitnii

In the 1920s, cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and European states had not yet ceased. Professional gatherings and conferences in Europe were popular among the writers. The *slov'iany* made trips abroad rather frequently where they were closely observed by the secret police. Whereever the *slov'iany* traveled—Vienna or Prague, Berlin or Venice—GPU agents followed them and wrote thorough reports to their supervisors about meetings attended and individuals contacted. The Ukrainian writer Oles' Dosvitnii came under special scrutiny because he was among the few *slov'iany* who before the revolution had lived in the United States of America.⁹⁸ Moreover, although in 1918 he returned to Ukraine and worked for the Bolsheviks and the Red Army, he spent some time in Eastern Galicia and Bukovyna—in Western Ukraine—which in the eyes of the Soviet state stigmatized him as a Ukrainian nationalist.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1804, ark.3, 99-100,118,121. In March 1933, Panchenko was exiled to Kazakhstan for 5 years but in June 1938 his case was reopened, and he was executed on 19 October 1938 as a Ukrainian nationalist, German and Polish spy. For more on Panchenko, see Olga Bertelsen, "Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Mykhailo Panchenko and Cinema: Dissimilar Fates," unpublished manuscript.

⁹⁸ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.1, ark.14. Oles' Dosvitnii was a pen name of O.F. Skryp'al'-Mishchenko.

⁹⁹ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.1, ark.33.



Oles' Dosvitnii in San-Francisco (U.S.A.), 1917.¹⁰⁰

Dosvitnii exacerbated the Soviet government's suspicion of his supposed nationalism during the SVU trial in 1929. He, together with his friends Khvyl'ovyi, Ialovyi, and Kulish, dared to publicly express doubts about the legitimacy of GPU accusations against prominent Ukrainian intellectuals. They even went to the Central Committee to enquire about GPU actions related to this case. They asked Balyts'kyi to explain and to provide evidence of crimes committed by the members of the SVU.¹⁰¹ The GPU had never forgotten these writers' distrust.

In January 1930, when Dosvitnii and his family moved to *Budynok Slovo* and three years before his arrest, Dosvitnii wrote in his autobiography: "Now I am 39 years old, I have two daughters and I am absolutely certain that we will build socialism."¹⁰² The same document contains another statement made by the dedicated builder of socialism Dosvitnii, which the GPU found incredibly useful in fabricating a criminal case against him. Dosvitnii wrote: "Do not have any doubts that I mastered the use of a shotgun, machineguns of

¹⁰⁰ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.9.

¹⁰¹ Kostiuk, 1:279.

¹⁰² TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.7.

all sorts and grenades better than the writing skill.”¹⁰³ The passionate builder of socialism conceived a novel about collectivization in 1933, and wrote a poem “Partisans” that became a libretto for Vasylii Smekalin’s opera. Vsevolod Meerhol’d was interested in staging this piece in Moscow but the GPU prepared another scenario for Dosvitnii.¹⁰⁴

On 30 August 1933, writing to the Central Committee, Dosvitnii complained that he did not understand how one could consider his novel *Kvartsyt (Quartzite)* harmful. He noted that in one of the critical essays in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, some author claimed that through this novel, Dosvitnii tried to justify *vaplitanstvo* and *khvyliovism*. Moreover, Dosvitnii stated that Khvyliia had read the novel, and he, Dosvitnii, made revisions to the novel according to Khvyliia’s comments. He suggested that these attacks against him were mere harassment, or a misunderstanding. He noted that after his completion of the party assignment to help fulfill bread procurements in the countryside, he would like to make an appearance before the Central Committee to discuss this painful issue.¹⁰⁵ However, as Dziuba noted, this “polemic was completed by *chekists*.”¹⁰⁶ On 19 December 1933, Dosvitnii was arrested as a member of the UVO and accused of anti-Soviet conspiracy.

¹⁰³ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.7.

¹⁰⁴ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.19,65.

¹⁰⁵ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6216, ark.134-137.

¹⁰⁶ Dziuba, 1:280.



Oles' Dosvitnii—standing, far right, 1925.¹⁰⁷

Dosvitnii is mentioned in nearly all criminal files of those who were accused of membership in the UVO. The GPU pressed him to sign a confession that he, together with Vyshnia, Gzhyts'kyi, Volodymyr Shtanhei and others, planned the assassination of Chubar, the head of the Ukrainian Radnarkom.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, the assassins change from deposition to deposition. Dosvitnii himself confessed that he was supposed to assassinate Postyshev.¹⁰⁹ A month earlier, Mykhailo Datskiv who in 1926 was the director of Les' Kurbas's theatre "Berezil'" testified that Dosvitnii recruited the Ukrainian theatre director Les' Kurbas into the UVO.¹¹⁰ But according to Datskiv, he, Kurbas, and Hirniak formed a terrorist group that was supposed to assassinate Postyshev.¹¹¹ The interrogator Grushevskii likely left his imprint in Datskiv's criminal file, but simultaneously "investigating" Dosvitnii, Grushevskii overlooked an elementary requirement of consistency in both criminal cases. The supposed participants in the plot are different, and their

¹⁰⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.798, op.2, spr.74, ark.1.

¹⁰⁸ Ivan Drach et al., eds., *Ostannia adresa* (Kyiv: Sfera, 1998), 2:256.

¹⁰⁹ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2a, ark.1.

¹¹⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2582, t.1, ark.19. See *Ostannia adresa*, 2: 259.

¹¹¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2582, t.1, ark.21,23-25.

interactions had been left unexamined in both criminal files. However, the interrogators' sloppy work had been accepted by their supervisors, Dolinskii and Kozel'skii.¹¹² Dosvitnii was sentenced to death, while Datskiv received 10 years in labor camps.¹¹³

Grushevskii's efforts to broaden the circle of unreliable writers, many of whom lived in *Budynok Slovo*, received full attention of the investigator. The contradictory and illogical depositions of the arrested tightened many *slov'iany* in a firm knot while in reality many rarely communicated with one another.¹¹⁴ However, the interrogators produced the narrative of a nationalist conspiracy without any consideration of the social and human bonds (or their absence), that existed among Ukrainian intellectuals. According to many depositions, enemies or friends, they all worked together in an underground political organization, regularly met, and their mutual dislike for each other was never an obstacle in their close interactions. The *slov'iany* who were still free and who could confirm the absence of contacts between Gzhyts'kyi and Dosvitnii had never been invited for questioning. In fact, they were themselves candidates for arrest. The accusations were built exclusively on the depositions of those who were never intended to be released. In his rehabilitation certificate, the KGB official Arkhypovych who examined many criminal files where Dosvitnii had been mentioned admitted that his case was a complete fabrication. The contradictory nature of the materials of the preliminary investigation constituted the basis for his conclusion.¹¹⁵

¹¹² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2582, t.1, ark.83.

¹¹³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.2582, t.1, ark.84.

¹¹⁴ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.5, p.24, ark. 1.

¹¹⁵ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2a, ark.1.

In 1955, when Dosvitnii's case was re-investigated, his wife Maria Kurs'ka was shown the minutes of two interrogations—26 December 1933 and 14 January 1934, in which Dosvitnii denounced himself and his friends. Kurs'ka confirmed that both protocols had Dosvitnii's handwriting.¹¹⁶ There is evidence of his psychiatric disorder during preliminary investigation, a result of severe beatings, and the GPU records suggest that Dosvitnii might have died in Grushevskii's office from torture on 9 June 1934 before his execution.¹¹⁷

As a common practice, after the arrest of her husband, Kurs'ka with her two little daughters had been evicted from *Budynok Slovo*, and eventually the family found itself in Moscow. In 1934, Kurs'ka was excluded from the party for maintaining contact with Dosvitnii (she was bringing him parcels while he was in prison).¹¹⁸ On 31 May 1956, Kurs'ka received a notification from the TsK of the Communist Party in Ukraine that her husband had been rehabilitated on 18 May 1956.¹¹⁹ But the Soviet authorities continued to lie about his death. Kurs'ka received a certificate, which stated that Dosvitnii “died” in 1942 from a heart attack.¹²⁰ Moreover, cynically, on 7 June 1955, the rehabilitation commission in Kyiv (Kondrat'iev) wrote to the Military Prosecutor of the Moscow Garrison S.A. Smirnov and asked him to interrogate Kurs'ka, who was still living in Moscow, to get answers to questions that were crucial to the KGB: first, where did the interrogator

¹¹⁶ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.14 zv.

¹¹⁷ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.3,11; TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.132. Grushevskii's sister Halyna Fedorivna shared this information with Kurs'ka, whose girls were her students at school.

¹¹⁸ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.62. See also TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.2,7.

¹¹⁹ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.25.

¹²⁰ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.2, ark.28.

Grushevskii's sister live who could testify about the tortures of Dosvitnii in prison by Grushevskii; second, had Kurs'ka saved the search protocol (if she had it was to be confiscated from her); third, where did Gzhyts'kyi's wife reside (she apparently had a letter about Gzhyts'kyi's tortures in prison, and Kurs'ka claimed that she saw the letter); fourth, who else, besides Gzhyts'kyi's wife, knew about any details of this case; and finally, did Kurs'ka have specific evidence about her husband being physically tortured?¹²¹

Obviously, the atmosphere of secrecy and minimal publicity about the tortures as a routine practice in the GPU prison was equally important for the secret agency in the late 1950s as it had been in the 1930s. The extent of illegality was reduced during the Khrushchev Thaw, yet the inclination to operate employing the same patterns remained a trademark of the Soviet secret police. Kondrat'iev's request to confiscate from relatives of the *slov'iany* evidence of physical torture that had been employed in the Kharkiv GPU in the 1930s appears to be a transparent cover-up operation aimed at avoiding criminal responsibility of the agency that continued its traditions even after Stalin's death.

The talks and rumors in *Budynok Slovo* about the GPU inmates' horrible experiences cultivated a strong determination among the writers: they were not going to fall victim to the barbarity of the Kharkiv GPU agents. Many thought of suicide and prepared themselves accordingly.¹²²

¹²¹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.83-4.

¹²² Kostiuk, 1:235.

Ostap Vyshnia and Les' Kurbas

The very mention of these two names suggested all-Union and even international fame. Ostap Vyshnia (the pen name of Pavlo Hubenko) was a Ukrainian writer who became famous because of his short humorous stories that criticized harmful manifestations of bourgeois art, literature and life in general. The objects and themes of his satirical articles gradually expanded and embraced many social vices, from bureaucratic behaviors of state officials to free love. His language of expression was inventive, and his essays were witty and amusing. Through his publications in the press, Vyshnia won popular love and respect even in the most distant villages of Ukraine and many other Soviet republics.¹²³

Les' Kurbas was an innovative theatre director whose original manner of expression impressed even sophisticated spectators in many European countries. He created a theatre-laboratory "Berezil" which became the most celebrated theatre in Ukraine (first based in Kyiv, it moved to Kharkiv in 1926). Kurbas became one of the first people in Ukraine to be granted the title of People's Artist (*narodnyi artyst*).¹²⁴ Similar to the artist Vasilii Kandinsky, Kurbas emphasized the significance of the unconscious in art. He was strongly influenced by Marxism and the Marxist idea (which he understood as one of individual liberation), and this served Kurbas as an inspiration and condition of personal artistic liberation. But the bureaucratization of cultural institutions, growing artistic conformism and the attacks against his creative art by proletarians provoked by the state frustrated Kurbas to the point that he allowed himself to engage in severe public criticism of those representatives

¹²³ Kost' Hubenko, "Pro brata," in *Pro Ostapa Vyshniu: Spogady*, eds. V.O. Hubenko-Masliuchenko, and A.F. Zhuravs'kyi (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1989), 75.

¹²⁴ Serhii Shevchenko, "Silu natsii ne mogut ubit' nikakie dekrety," *Den'*, 30 October 2005.

of the masses who were clearly “hired” by the state to compromise Kurbas as an artist and as a citizen.

New archival evidence, particularly the minutes of Kurbas’s public “crucifixion” at city party meetings in the early 1930s, reveals long exhausting battles he led against those factory workers who claimed they did not understand Kurbas’s unconscious impulses, the foundation of his creative art.¹²⁵ By party order, the workers invited to these meetings rejected Kurbas’s productions and complex form of art, demanding “easy” to understand performances. The discrepancy between the enormous popular success of Kurbas’s productions and the public “tribunals” that admonished him as a director triggered his frustration with party bureaucrats who, as Shkandrij noted, “manipulated the press and public, planting attacks and negative reviews” about Kurbas’s art.¹²⁶

Despite the differences in their genre, their form of creative art and even in their personalities, by 1933 Vyshnia and Kurbas were both perceived as Ukrainian nationalists. There was a common trend that united them in the eyes of the state: they both were residents of *Budynok Slovo*, a symbol of freedom and seditious thinking. Their free spirit and artistic creativity confirmed their membership in the club of nationalists.

In the early 1930s, the political atmosphere in Ukraine stimulated a proliferation of press articles that portrayed Vyshnia as a nationalist and a wrecker. The authors of critical articles argued that Vyshnia’s popularity could be explained by popular bad literary taste and the low cultural level of the

¹²⁵ See DAKhO, f. P5, op.1, spr.65. On the influence of the unconscious in art, see also Boris Groys, “The Art of Totality” in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, eds. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003), 103-4.

¹²⁶ Personal correspondence with Myroslav Shkandrij (May, 2012).

masses that the writer encouraged and perpetuated. The rationale was that during the difficult time of socialist construction Vyshnia's literature demoralized people: the people needed "serious literature," not humor and laughter. Vyshnia's political and civil dignity and pride were wounded. He retorted: "Why should we build a new life crying?"¹²⁷ However, the underlying reason for attacks against Vyshnia was that his art was "deeply national," as Iurii Smolych noted, and the GPU sensed it.¹²⁸ The secret police had begun investigating him as a Ukrainian nationalist in 1924: *papka-formuliar* grew rapidly. He was routinely observed until 4 January 1955 when the secret police stopped processing him and the file was sent to the archives.¹²⁹

Similarly, the tension between Kurbas and the authorities developed gradually and in 1933 reached its apogee. In the 1920s, the party had established a practice of regular reports by the creative intelligentsia to the City Council in Kharkiv.¹³⁰ Kurbas was to report about the ideological, political and economic conditions of the theatre in the presence of the workers of Kharkiv factories and cultural organizations, writers and party officials at meetings arranged by the Kharkiv Party Secretariat.¹³¹ The Secretariat also created a special Commission of Art within the Sector of Narkomosvita which could provide an ideological evaluation of cultural products, such as a new novel or a new theatre production.¹³² The workers who were invited to these meetings routinely criticized "Berezil" for its excessive creativity and

¹²⁷ Fedir Makivchuk, "Velykyi humoryst moiymy ochyma i moiym sertsem," in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs'kyi, 35.

¹²⁸ Iurii Smolych, "Nezrivniannyi," in Hubenko-Masliuchenko and Zhuravs'kyi, 167.

¹²⁹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.45.

¹³⁰ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.65.

¹³¹ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.65, ark.14.

¹³² DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.65, ark.15.

“counter-revolutionary” vision.¹³³ The Secretariat managed to find workers who were displeased with Kurbas’s productions. It is more than likely that a careful selection process had produced these workers, who had been coached and instructed about “proper” behavior at the meetings. Of course, they were aware of the targets that the party had established in advance.

The party was also dissatisfied with the Ukrainian writers who wrote for the theatre. Mykola Kulish, Kurbas’s best friend, talented playwright and *slov’ianyn*, was systematically attacked for diminishing the role of the proletariat and casting the Soviet power functionaries as idiots in his plays.¹³⁴ Kurbas courageously defended Kulish, and categorically disagreed with the idea that Kulish had to make further changes to his work. At one party meeting, Kurbas lost his temper and suggested that the whole scandal around Kulish’s work and Kurbas’s interpretations occurred because spectators “failed to bring their brains to the theatre.”¹³⁵

The attacks on Kurbas and Kulish resulted in a party resolution that proposed inviting representatives of factories to participate in the creation of theatre performances, as well as in the theatre’s financial meetings. It was decreed that letters would be sent to all cultural organizations to inform them about this innovative practice—the penetration of Ukrainian culture by the working masses. Kurbas was frustrated with this state of affairs and qualified such an approach as nonsense.¹³⁶ The degree of Kurbas’s suffering as a director and actor who had to bend under state interventions and to allow

¹³³ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.65, ark.138.

¹³⁴ *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 2 (1928): 149. See also a series of publications about the debates on Kurbas’s performance *Narodnyi Malakhii* in *Literatura i mystetsvo*, 8 June 1929, 22 June 1929, 7 September 1929; on Kulish’s explanations, see DAKhO, f.R2755, op.1, spr.39, ark.205-06.

¹³⁵ DAKhO, f.R2755, op.1, spr.39, ark.206.

¹³⁶ DAKhO, f.P5, op.1, spr.65, ark.138.

amateurs in the theatre was tremendous and had lethal consequences for his soul, to use the Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Slaboshpyts'kyi's metaphor.¹³⁷

In the state's view, "Berezil'" had estranged itself from the working masses, and proletarian art as such, which contradicted the scheme of building a new proletarian culture. The attacks on "Berezil'" intensified and reached their zenith in 1933.¹³⁸ Some *slov'iany* publically denounced Kurbas. The head of the VUSPP Ivan Mykytenko argued that Kurbas's activities were harmful for theatre development in Ukraine. The literary critic Samiilo Shchupak believed that Kurbas's attitude was arrogant toward the proletariat and its culture. The poet Leonid Pervomais'kyi also characterized Kurbas's artistic approach as "petty bourgeois and nationalist."¹³⁹ Some actors of the theatre contributed to the harassment of Kurbas, those who were intimidated by the majority of party leaders hostile to Kurbas, and those who did not believe in his genius.¹⁴⁰ In an atmosphere of hostility and instability, Kurbas began to doubt his theoretical views. He publically admitted their contradictory nature. He was confused, and his senses failed to help him identify who was his friend, and who was his enemy.¹⁴¹

In October 1933, newspapers published a resolution of Ukraine's People's Commissar of Education about the theatre "Berezil'." It stated that the theatre did not live up to the lofty tasks of Ukrainian Soviet art, because

¹³⁷ Mykhailo Slaboshpyts'kyi, "Vazhlyva? (druhoriadna?) diiova osoba posttotalitarnoho suspil'stva: Pohliad na suchasnu prozu," *Literaturna Ukraina*, 10 November 2011, p. 4.

¹³⁸ DAKhO, f.P69, op.1, spr.107, ark.10.

¹³⁹ Les' Taniuk, "Talan i talant Lesia Kurbas," in *Reabilitovani istorieiu: Kharkivs'ka oblast'*, eds. P.T. Tron'ko et al. (Kharkiv: Oryhinal, 2005), 1:127-28. See also Roman Cherkashyn and Iuliia Fomina, *My-berezil'tsi: Teatral'ni spohady-rozdumy* (Kyiv: Akta, 2008), 66-7, 99, 100.

¹⁴⁰ Cherkashyn and Fomina, 88.

¹⁴¹ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.5305, ark.13-23; Nelli Korniienko, *Rezhysiorskoie iskusstvo Lesia Kurbas. Rekonstruktsiia (1887-1937)* (Kiev: Gosudarstvennyi tsentr teatral'nogo iskusstva imeni Lesia Kurbas, 2005), 325.

Kurbas pushed the theatre toward Ukrainian nationalism.¹⁴² The Secretary of the Narkomosvita Khvyliia signed the order to dismiss Kurbas from the position of chief-director of the theatre “Berezil’.” The title of People’s Artist was of course also taken away from him. In November 1933, reporting to the party at the Joint Plenum of the TsK and TsKK KP(b)U, Postyshev stated that one of the achievements in combating Ukrainian nationalism was the dismissal of Kurbas, an “evil genius,” who led “Berezil’” to a “political and artistic dead end.”¹⁴³

Vyshnia and Kurbas were arrested on the same day—26 December 1933 but in different places. Vyshnia was arrested in *Budynok Slovo*, and Kurbas—in Moscow where he was directing *King Lear* (starring Solomon Mikhoels) at the GOSET, *Gosudarstvennyi evreiskii teatr* (State Jewish Theatre).¹⁴⁴ But both ended up in the Kharkiv GPU prison.

For the janitor Petymko, this was another sleepless night, like many other nights in December of 1933. Some residents noted that Petymko completely neglected his responsibilities as a janitor. The explanation was simple. His working hours shifted, and the nature of his work became rather monotonous: during the daytime he was sleeping, and at night he served as a witness during lengthy searches and arrests of the *slov’iany*.¹⁴⁵

Vyshnia and Kurbas were accused of membership in the UVO, of a conspiracy to assassinate Postyshev, Chubar and Balyts’kyi, and of organizing

¹⁴² *Literaturnaya Gazeta* 10 October 1933, p.4.

¹⁴³ See Postyshev’s speech at the November 1933 Joint Plenum of the TsK and TsKK KP(b)U “Radiants’ka Ukraina—nepokhytnyi forpost velykoho SRSR,” *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no. 8-9 (1933): 256.

¹⁴⁴ Taniuk in Tron’ko, 128. See also Matveii Geizer, *Mikhoels* (Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, 2004), 181. For more details on Mikhoels’s diary and rehearsals with Kurbas, see Korniienko, 359-73.

¹⁴⁵ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, ark. 3. Petymko was a witness during Vyshnia’s arrest.

a military uprising to overthrow the Soviet regime.¹⁴⁶ Very shortly after the arrest, Vyshnia confessed to these charges, denounced his colleagues and signed all the protocols.¹⁴⁷ In the custody of the Moscow secret police, Kurbas had been denying criminal charges against him for two months.¹⁴⁸ In February 1934, he was convoyed to Kharkiv where after two weeks he wrote his confession.¹⁴⁹

We will never know what methods were applied to Kurbas in prison. Kurbas's criminal file reveals that two GPU operatives worked with Kurbas—the associates of the SPV Gol'dman and Sokolov.¹⁵⁰ Sherstov and Dolinskii also signed the documents related to Kurbas's criminal case. Interestingly, Pera Gol'dman was a woman who created informational certificates on many Ukrainian literary figures and was among a few in the secret police who survived the Great Terror.¹⁵¹

On 3 April 1934, the assistant to Kharkiv prosecutor Krainii asked Kurbas whether he had complaints about the GPU treatment toward him during the preliminary investigation, and whether anyone forced him to confess. Kurbas answered: "Absolutely none. At all stages, the attitude was rather tactful and extraordinarily polite."¹⁵² Moreover, Kurbas stated that now he felt "rejuvenated, similar to a hysteric who was successfully treated by Dr.

¹⁴⁶ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, ark. 10, 10zv.

¹⁴⁷ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t.2, ark.18 zv.,41. As mentioned above, Vyshnia was tortured by his interrogator Bordon.

¹⁴⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.74.

¹⁴⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.31,34.

¹⁵⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.35,51.

¹⁵¹ **Pera Gol'dman** (1901-?) had been working in the SPV within the State Security Administration of the NKVD in Kharkiv since 1932. She had a long career in the secret organs, and was dismissed only after the war in 1946. Her further fate is unknown (from the private archive of Vadym Zolotar'ov). In the 1930s, **Issak Sokolov-Sheinis** (1900-?) worked in the SPV of the GPU in the UkrSSR (Kyiv, Kharkiv and Dnipropetrov'sk). In 1938, he was appointed the assistant to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in the Belorussian SSR. In 1939, he was dismissed from the organs. In 1956, he had been residing in Kyiv as a retiree of the Ministry of State Security. See Shapoval, Prystaiko, and Zolotar'ov, 551-52.

¹⁵² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.61.

Freud.”¹⁵³ The Ukrainian historian Volodymyr V’iatrovych has noted that Kurbas’s answers to Krainii seemed “zombie-like,” and were far from the truth.¹⁵⁴ Professional work as a theatre director in the labor camps healed Kurbas’s morbid state of mind to some extent, and he returned to his normal psychological state and logical judgments, if this was possible at all there for a person of intellect and culture.¹⁵⁵ However, according to the scholar Natalia Kuziakina, in the camps Kurbas attempted to commit suicide.¹⁵⁶

Importantly, the criminal files of the *slov’iany* share one remarkable detail. Almost all arrested suspects claimed under interrogation that *Budynok Slovo* and its apartments served as a meeting place for the members of the nationalist organization UVO which ultimately incriminated all the residents of criminal counterrevolutionary activities, the writers and their family



Ostap Vyshnia.¹⁵⁷



Ostap Vyshnia, the 1950s.

¹⁵³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.66.

¹⁵⁴ Volodymyr V’iatrovych, *Istoriia z hryfom “Sekretno”* (Lviv: Tsentr doslidzhen’ vyzvol’noho rukhu, 2011), 56.

¹⁵⁵ Natalia Kuziakina, “Za Solovets’koiu mezheiu,” in V. Saenko, *Natalia Kuziakina: avtoportret, interv’iu, publikatsii riznykh lit, istoriia iikh retsenzii ta interpretatsii, memoria* (Drohobych: “Vidrodzhennia,” 2010), 346-53.

¹⁵⁶ Kuziakina, 349. According to Myroslav Irchan, Kurbas said: “I am more convinced than ever that we are subject to a gradual planned physical extermination... I am seriously thinking, for the first time in my life, whether it is worth it to continue this humiliating existence and by doing so to poison my own life and the lives of my family.” Quoted in Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains’ki Solovky* (Kyiv: “EksOb,” 2001), 63.

¹⁵⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.7.

members. The circle was closed, and the terror of the building proceeded into its chronic stage.

Vyshnia survived twice. His interrogator Bordon, and GPU Kharkiv officials Dolinskii and Kozel'skii sentenced Vyshnia to death.¹⁵⁸ But the Central Executive Committee in Moscow altered the verdict to 10 years in labor camps in the Komi ASSR.¹⁵⁹ Vyshnia would have been executed in the camps in 1938, when camp authorities investigated a nationalist conspiracy that resulted in thousands of deaths. However, while being transported from Kozhva to Chib'ia for additional investigation, Vyshnia fell ill with pneumonia. The guard dumped him in one of the camp hospitals, "to die or to recover."¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Yezhov was replaced by Beria, and the Great Terror of 1937-38 ended. Vyshnia who was doomed to be executed in Chib'ia recovered and survived.¹⁶¹



Les' Kurbas, the 1920s.



Les' Kurbas during the preliminary investigation, 28 December 1933, Kharkiv.

¹⁵⁸ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, ark.44.

¹⁵⁹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, ark.45.

¹⁶⁰ Kostiuk, 1:390.

¹⁶¹ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228fp, t 2, ark.43.

On 9 April 1934, Kurbas was sentenced to 5 years in prison in Kazakhstan which for the other prisoners seemed like a verdict equivalent to treatment at a resort or an acquittal. For some reason, the secret police sent him to the BBK (to the town of Medvezh'egorsk), and eventually he ended up in the Solovky.¹⁶² As a *halychanyn* and independent thinker, Kurbas had little chance of surviving in the Gulag. On the basis of several denunciation reports and Ezhov's 1937 infamous order no. 00447 which stated that 10,000 people in the camps had to be shot, the UNKVD *troika* in Leningrad oblast' sentenced Kurbas to death.¹⁶³ He was executed in Sandarmokh on 3 November 1937 like many other *slov'iany*.¹⁶⁴ The exact location of his remains in Sandarmokh is unknown but his symbolic grave is in Kharkiv cemetery no.13, where his wife Valentyna Chystiakova and his mother Vanda Kurbas, both actresses of the theatre "Berezil'," are buried. Kurbas was rehabilitated on 19 April 1957.¹⁶⁵

Kurbas's wife Chystiakova was neither repressed nor evicted from *Budynok Slovo*. Moreover, the secret police never searched their apartment. In her 1956 letter to the General Prosecutor of the USSR Rudenko, Chystiakova sadly noted that this tactic provided grounds for her to believe that the accusations against her husband were not serious, or even false.¹⁶⁶ Kurbas's fate was predetermined and additional formalities seemed unnecessary.

Ironically, in 1968 a KGB associate was instructed to study Kurbas's criminal

¹⁶² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.69-70. Taniuk in Tron'ko, 1:132.

¹⁶³ On Ezhov's order, see Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 170. Between October 1937 and February 1938 more than 1,800 Solovky inmates were shot. Ukrainian, as well as Polish, Russian, Jewish, Udmurtian, Georgian, Cherkesian and Korean, "nationalists" were executed according to Section I (points 4 and 5) of Ezhov's order. See the text of the order in A.I. Kokurin and N.V. Petrov, eds., *Gulag (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1918-1960* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo "Materik," 2002), 97.

¹⁶⁴ *Ostannia adresa*, 2:77.

¹⁶⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.168-69.

¹⁶⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.94-95. *Ostannia adresa*, 2:77-78.

file to familiarize himself with “the foundations of the secret intelligence service” within the framework of “*chekist* advanced studies.”¹⁶⁷ Almost forty years after the acts of repression, the work of *chekists* in the 1930s still served as an example of excellence for their successors.¹⁶⁸

As individual histories of the *slov'iany* demonstrate, fear as an element of their lived experience in *Budynok Slovo* inevitably was transferred to a different setting—prison cells and interrogation rooms. But this feeling was skewed by the various personalities of the *slov'iany*, and manifested itself in symptoms that were polar opposites. For some, fear grew to an unbearable size and volume, and paralyzed the will. For others, it was transformed into stoicism. Richyts'kyi's stoic behavior was not adopted by everyone. Most were driven by fear, perpetrating acts of betrayal. Their confessions to mythical crimes might free them from prison and prolong their lives.

After the elimination of the most talented and independent artists such as Khvyl'ovyi, Vyshnia and Kurbas by the secret police, the *slov'iany* wanted simply to live. The mother of the American literary radical Max Eastman wrote once to him: “Conformity is beautiful until it requires a sacrifice of principle,—then it is disfiguring.”¹⁶⁹ But for the writers, conformity in art and their “disfigured” literary talent were no longer a concern. The fear of losing life discharged other fears from their minds—the fear of losing dignity and principles, and the fear of an intellectually and morally handicapped existence.

¹⁶⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.181-82.

¹⁶⁸ The supervisor of a KGB associate advised him to pay special attention to Kurbas's 10 March 1934 deposition, in which he confessed to the crimes he committed against the Soviet state. The supervisor emphasized that the file would be extremely instructive for his upbringing as a young *chekist*. In his view, through studying Kurbas's confession, a widespread fallacy that the “KGB organs had repressed only innocent people in the 1930s” would become crystal clear for his student. HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75608fp, ark.182.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 31.

The esthetics and culture of the building in which the writers lived, the state's attitudes toward the intellectual elite, and problems of a financial and personal nature were all interwoven, which drew them as a community into a stupor. Moreover, they realized that there were no sympathizers, empathizers or supporters who would protect them or alleviate the terror.

The physical removal of the *slov'iany* constituted a disciplinary measure the state chose to apply in order to clarify the rules of existence in Soviet space to any other literary practitioners who might serve as propagandists of Soviet culture and institutions. There were "too many Ukrainians," as the top party leadership in Moscow suggested, and the work could be optimized by the reduction of the number of cultural workers, especially when some of them were ideologically troubling for the center and obscured the path to the radiant future.¹⁷⁰

Importantly, the arrests of the most popular intellectuals had not scandalized Ukrainian society or its conscience in the 1930s. Just the opposite, many accepted the confessions of the "enemies" at face value.¹⁷¹ People were made to believe that the most dangerous elements, concealed enemies of the socialist state, were finally neutralized, and they celebrated the fact. A slave psychology cultivated by the state, multiplied by fear of being imprisoned, manifested itself at purging meetings and on the pages of Ukrainian periodicals. As the Serbian film director Emir Kusturica perceptively

¹⁷⁰ See the 25 February 1956 Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Party Congress, available at "Modern History Sourcebook," <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html> (accessed 4 September 2011).

¹⁷¹ Lidiia Tretyakova's unpublished diary contains an extensive discussion about popular beliefs regarding "the enemies of the people."

commented on popular compliance in societies, “freedom is always difficult; slavery is always easy.”¹⁷²

On 26 October 1934, the head of Holovlit (Glavlit) Tkach, issued resolution no. 187 that ordered all regional branches to immediately extract from book stores, libraries and schools individual and collective publications written by Ukrainian “nationalists.”¹⁷³ Although all *slov’iany* who were repressed during Stalin’s reign were rehabilitated posthumously, the fate of their works was tragic and their return to readers was thorny and dramatic.

In the 1950s, after careful re-investigation of criminal cases linked to the UVO, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR concluded that the UVO, as well as criminal cases of those who were accused of membership in this organization, was a complete fabrication by Soviet secret organs.¹⁷⁴ Despite the official acknowledgement of criminal activities committed by the secret police against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, in the 1960s the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Ukraine Andrii Skaba announced: “We rehabilitated people but not their ideas!”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² See Kusturica’s 13 December 2011 interview, available at <http://style.rbc.ru/person/2011/12/13/162875.shtml> (accessed 29 January 2012).

¹⁷³ DAKhO, f.P2, op.1, spr.217, ark.21. See also the text of the document in Tron’ko, *Reabilitovani istorieiu*, 2:108.

¹⁷⁴ I.S. Shemshuchenko, O.M. Myronenko and V.I. Prystaiko, *Zhertvy represii. Represii 20-kh—pochatku 50-kh rokiv v Ukraini* (Kyiv: Iurinform, 1993), 183.

¹⁷⁵ Taniuk in Tron’ko, 1:123.

Chapter Seven

Unnecessary Bloodstained Confessions: The Repressions of 1934

The whole concept of civic courage becomes meaningless in the era of Stalin, for it is not an act of courage to throw yourself under a truck.

Adam B. Ulam¹

The Spatiality of the Terror

The terror of 1933 reduced the residents of *Budynok Slovo* to submissive, desperate individuals who focused on solving the tasks of daily life, and were no longer devoted primarily to constructing a new Ukrainian culture. Some *slov'iany* succumbed to authority, living their lives quietly and in isolation, and hoping in this way to avoid repression; others became accomplices of the regime. The American scholar Adam B. Ulam has noted that “the temptation to avoid becoming victims by becoming accomplices was irresistible.”² The hope of being spared from repression competed with a sense of doom and helplessness in the face of the ubiquitous state and its punitive apparatus. Desensitized to their neighbor’s suffering, some *slov'iany* justified state violence, believing blindly that the new nation was beset with enemies and spies—an attitude cultivated in them through terror. False confessions appeared credible to many, and fictitious accusations seemed convincing. As Kostiuk has noted, the souls of the *slov'iany* appeared to have been “utterly possessed by the NKVD.”³

¹ Adam B. Ulam, “The Price of Sanity” in *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World*, ed. G.R. Urban (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 115.

² Ulam in Urban, 101.

³ Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knykhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:336, 458, 462.

What has been termed “planned inconsistencies” and “the element of surprise” in the work of the GPU/NKVD produced a state of permanent uncertainty that disoriented people: no one was certain whether he or she was a target or a potential survivor.⁴ Social behavior conformed to a simple principle, “to see nothing where nothing was supposed to be seen and hear nothing where nothing was supposed to be heard”—a strategy aimed at protecting the individual from frightening realities.⁵ As Orlando Figes has posited, resignation or passivity (packing a bag for camps in advance or looking the other way during the arrest of neighbors) was one of the most emblematic features of mass terror.⁶

The state implemented terror, mobilizing people by ideological propaganda. The favorite bugbear in these years was appealing to its citizens to be vigilant in fighting Ukrainian nationalism. For Soviet leaders, ideology was the “only title to legitimacy.”⁷ Curiously, malignant tendencies, such as local nationalism and the bureaucratization of the local elite, which were officially criticized in the republic and labeled by the state as counterrevolutionary, emanated from the center—from the party and government officials in Moscow. However, filtered through the ideological lens of *raison d'état*, the hypocrisy was obscured in the popular mind. The ideological justification of terror appealed for popular assistance in institutionalizing and legitimizing the status quo.

Beyond state ideological propaganda, the *slov'iany* were also spatially entangled in irreversibly compromising personal or professional relationships

⁴ Ulam in Urban, 132.

⁵ Ulam in Urban, 138.

⁶ Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 242.

⁷ Urban, *Stalinism*, 263.

with their fellow writers and neighbors who were arrested. Their “nationalist” past and professional interactions with the accused served as the evidence of criminal activity that was routinely used by the secret police against the *slov’iany*. They learned to adjust their deformed and elastic consciences to the new circumstances and settings. In 1934 they began to confess to planning assassinations not only of local party leaders but also of Stalin himself.⁸

Importantly, denunciations became a spatially attached phenomenon—their major production occurred in the GPU/NKVD prison through coercion and force. More than sufficient materials were “produced” by those who had been arrested to apprehend a fresh group of writers. Moreover, the principle of spatial “encapsulation” broke people psychologically before they found themselves in prison. The secret police encircled the residents and isolated them from the external world and from each other through economic measures and a fear for their lives.⁹

Intriguingly, at a certain point the information about the center’s plan to conduct mass operations in Ukraine and to cleanse the republic of “nationalists” leaked through the chief assistant to the general prosecutor Antin Prykhod’ko who regularly informed the Kharkiv intelligentsia about the political “winds” and moods that emanated from Moscow. The key messengers were Khvyl’ovyi and Sokolians’kyi.¹⁰ Prykhod’ko had warned them that early arrests of *halychany* in Ukraine were just a prelude. The GPU had been planning mass arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals nationwide, and the

⁸ AU SBUKHO, spr.021551, t.1, ark.17-29.

⁹ As has been explained in previous chapters, in 1932-33, the writers had been gradually cut off from publishing their works, translating other writers’ works and had difficulty making ends meet. For a discussion about isolation and suppression as tools of control in the Stalinist system, see Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959), 282

¹⁰ AU SBUKHO, spr.021551, t.1, ark.85-86.

community in *Budynok Slovo* would suffer the most. However, in May 1933 Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide, and in December 1933 Ivan Sokolians'kyi was arrested, as well as Prykhod'ko.¹¹ The transmission of information about maneuvering in Moscow, planned operations in Ukraine and the move against local nationalism was interrupted and virtually ceased, leaving the *slov'iany* in complete darkness.

As noted earlier, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the centerpieces of preliminary investigations were denunciations and confessions. In 1934, confessions were no longer deemed crucial to the interrogators. The absence of confessions had no effect on the final verdict, as we will see.

In 1934 *Budynok Slovo* remained the main focus of the search for nationalists. The place determined the nature and degree of guilt, and the specifics of their punishment. The building and its residents (“nationalists,” “Borot'bists” and “counterrevolutionaries”) became a “fatal brand,” using Shapoval's term, and their transgressions and misdeeds were perceived by the secret police as not an individual but a collective affair.¹²

Stalin's speech at the January 1934 XVII Congress of the VKP(b), known as the “Congress of Victors,” officially justified and legitimized mass repressions of Ukrainians, and presaged further mass killings. Stalin proclaimed:

There are debates about which deviation constitutes the main danger, Great Russian nationalism or local nationalism. Under existing conditions—these debates are useless. The deviation against which one has stopped fighting presents the most danger...Not so long ago in Ukraine, the gravitation toward Ukrainian nationalism was not the main danger, but as soon as we stopped fighting against it and allowed it

¹¹ For more on Prykhod'ko, see Vasyl' Marochko and Götz Hillig, *Represovani pedahohy Ukrainy: zhertvy politychnoho teroru (1929-1941)* (Kyiv: Vyd. Naukovyi svit, 2003), 6-8, 29, 148, 164; DAKhO, f.R6452, op.2, spr.320, ark.176-77; DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.1064, t.2, ark.12.

¹² Iurii Shapoval, “Fatal'nyi brend,” *Den'*, 19 February 2005.

to grow to the point that it blended with interventionists, this deviation became the chief danger.¹³

In early February, Stalin made a decision to reorganize the OGPU and to create a Union-wide agency with republican branches. After painful debates, on 10 July 1934, the Central Executive Committee of the USSR finally approved the reorganization of the OGPU into the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD).¹⁴ The open struggle for power between Balyts'kyi and Genrikh Yagoda resulted in the appointment of Yagoda as the new head of the NKVD.¹⁵ Balyts'kyi's defeat for the prestigious position of the head of the NKVD in Moscow prompted him to double his zeal in eliminating "nationalists" in the republic.

Oleksa Slisarenko: Temporary Surrender

The UVO was a truly "stretchable" organization, to which the NKVD added "members" incessantly in 1933 and 1934.¹⁶ The 29 April 1934 arrest of the Ukrainian writer and the former chief editor of the largest private publishing house "Knyhospilka" Oleksa Slisarenko was inevitable. He was linked to symbolists and futurists, and in the 1920s he had been an active member of the literary associations "Hart" and VAPLITE.¹⁷ In 1927, he wrote an acutely critical letter to Maxim Gorky, a response to Gorky's insulting

¹³ I. Stalin, *Stat'i i rechi ob Ukrainie* (Moskva: Partizdat, 1936), 223.

¹⁴ On the reorganization of the OGPU in 1934, see Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 151-57.

¹⁵ Iurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko and Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abris, 1997), 60, 63.

¹⁶ Shapoval, "Fatal'nyi brend."

¹⁷ For details on Slisarenko, see V.H. Donchyk, ed., *Istoriia Ukrain's'koi literatury XX stolittia* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1994), 1:587-95; Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992), 20, 42, 91-3, 107-08, 152-4. On Ukrainian futurism, see Halyna Chernych, "Do istorii ukrains'koho futurizmu," *Radians'ke literaturoznavstvo* no. 8 (1989): 54-63.

letter about the possible translation of his novel *Mother* into Ukrainian. Slisarenko's response did not go unnoticed in Moscow. His novels *Plantatsii* (*Plantations*), 1925 and *Bunt* (*Rebellion*), 1928 irritated the authorities because in the former, Slisarenko romanticized a "powerful peasant force," and in the latter, the writer depicted a rebellion against the authorities initiated by the students of an agricultural school. Soviet literary critics accused Slisarenko of revising Marxist ideas about the decisive forces of the proletarian revolution.¹⁸

The Kharkiv GPU prison "hospitably" welcomed another *slov'ianyn*. On 25 May 1934, after the customary three weeks of physical and mental abuse, Slisarenko wrote a confession addressed to his interrogator Bordon.¹⁹ The writer stated that he was a member of a counterrevolutionary organization which planned the demise of the Soviet regime and "the establishment of the fascist dictatorship in Ukraine."²⁰ Clearly, a man who was committed to the struggle for state sovereignty in Ukraine would hardly have characterized his noble mission as a "fascist" one. The adjective qualifying the term "dictatorship" was likely suggested or written by Bordon, who was also responsible for the boundless self-criticism and self-indictment allegedly written by Slisarenko. To expedite Slisarenko's demoralization and to extract his confession, Bordon arranged a meeting between Dosvitnii and Slisarenko. At this encounter, Slisarenko's friend and neighbor Dosvitnii confirmed Slisarenko's membership in the UVO, which broke the latter's spirit and

¹⁸ See Mykhailo Naienko's analysis of Slisarenko's works in *Khudozhnia literatura Ukrainy: Vid mifiv do modenoï real'nosti* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy tsentr "Prosvita," 2008), 793-95.

¹⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.021958, ark.38-40; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546 fp, t.5, ark.332.

²⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.021958, ark.38.

prompted him to confess.²¹ In doing so, he denounced the *slov'iany* Mykola Bazhan, Maik Iohansen, Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi, Hryhorii Epik, Petro Panch, Valerian Polishchuk, Arkadii Liubchenko, Mykola Kulish, Hordii Kotsiuba and Mykhailo Dolengo, and testified that they planned assassinations of party and secret police leaders. Slisarenko also explained his nationalist behavior as a protest against the famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine and Soviet collectivization policies that changed his “Soviet positions” and orientation.²²

However, Slisarenko's awakening occurred when Bordon least expected it—after two months of preliminary investigation. Slisarenko's stubbornness hindered the progress of the preliminary investigation. Slisarenko was kept in prison about a year before his trial, but in this time Bordon failed to break him. Meanwhile, the Soviet government issued the infamous 1 December 1934 law “About the procedure of preliminary investigation of cases connected to the preparation and implementation of terrorist acts.”²³ This law was specifically designed for recalcitrant inmates like Slisarenko, and Bordon could expedite it without any problems. But he was famous for his desire to humiliate the arrested and to accomplish their complete moral, intellectual and physical destruction.

Bordon was unable to achieve this: Slisarenko denied his depositions during his trial on 19 March 1935, which was held by the Military Tribunal of

²¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.021958, ark.38-39.

²² AU SBUKhO, spr.021958, ark.40.

²³ See the text of the TsIK resolution in A.I. Kokurin and N.V. Petrov, eds. *Gulag (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1918-1960* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo “Materik,” 2002), 95. On 1 December 1934, the day Sergei Kirov, a prominent Bolshevik and the head of the Party organization in Leningrad, was murdered, the Presidium of TsIK signed the resolution about procedural rules in criminal cases that considered terrorist activities against party and government leaders. According to this resolution, a new term was established for investigating each criminal case—10 days. In addition, trials should be conducted without the prosecutor and defense, and the accused could not appeal or challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court. Verdicts sentencing the accused to death had to be implemented immediately after the trial.

the Ukrainian Military District. He claimed that he signed his first two protocols out of fear and under Bordon's pressure, and in them had confessed to crimes that he had never committed. Bordon, he claimed, was cruel, and often violent.²⁴ According to Slisarenko, Bordon threatened to shoot him on the spot, in the interrogation room, to poison him in his prison cell and to employ repression against his family.²⁵ Moreover, Slisarenko testified to the Tribunal that he was made to believe that his wife had died. He developed hallucinations, and under these circumstances he was given protocols to sign. He also pointed out that the dates of meetings that allegedly were held in *Budynok Slovo* by the members of the nationalist organization were false, and he could easily prove that he had never participated in them. These dates coincided with his father's funeral and professional errands that had taken him out of Kharkiv.²⁶

The court members also learned that Slisarenko's numerous requests for meetings with the military prosecutor and Balyts'kyi had gone unheard. Slisarenko also explained that his colleagues' depositions about his terrorist activities (those of Irchan, Pylypenko, Dosvitnii, Ialovyi, Cherniak, Mondok, Hirniak) made no sense to him, and he insisted that despite the fact that most were his neighbors in *Budynok Slovo*, his communication with them had been limited.²⁷ He declared that these testimonies were insinuations and lies, and they were extracted by force: people were frightened, intimidated and had like himself been morally broken.²⁸

²⁴ AU SBUKKhO, spr.021958, ark107.

²⁵ AU SBUKKhO, spr.021958, ark.106-07.

²⁶ AU SBUKKhO, spr.021958, ark.108.

²⁷ AU SBUKKhO, spr.021958, ark.107.

²⁸ AU SBUKKhO, spr.021958, ark107.



Oleksa Slisarenko.²⁹

The Tribunal ignored Slisarenko's explanations altogether, and charged him with membership in the UVO, and with organizational activities related to the alleged planned assassination of Postyshev.³⁰ He was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps and was exiled to the Solovky, but in October 1937 he was accused of nationalist activities in prison, and sentenced to death by the UNKVD *troika* in the Leningrad oblast'. Like many other *slov'iany*, he was shot by the GB captain Matveev in Sandarmokh on 3 November 1937.³¹

Evidently, the presence of the accused at their trials was a formality. Even a superficial analysis of the procedure of these trials suggests that the outcome was always preconceived by the members of dvoikas, troikas, and tribunals. The victims' revelations about the police's violent practices had no effect whatsoever on the prosecutor or trial members. In 1934, there were only two sentences passed in most cases—10 years in labor camps or the death penalty.

By 1934, the objectives and traditions of the GPU in Ukraine had been clearly delineated thanks to the efforts of Balyts'kyi who became a key figure

²⁹ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.38.

³⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.021958, ark.109.

³¹ Ivan Drach et al., eds., *Ostannia adresa* (Kyiv: Sfera, 1998), 2:100-01. Because of the writers O. Kopylenko's and I. Shovkoplias's request, Slisarenko's case was reinvestigated and he was rehabilitated on 19 December 1957.

in fighting Ukrainian nationalism. His speeches abounded with epithets, such as “Petliurite” “nationalist,” “wrecker,” and precisely under his leadership several mass operations against conspirators in the agricultural sector, underground political parties and among Ukrainian intellectuals were conducted by the secret police.³² At the XII Party Congress in Ukraine, in January 1934, Balyts’kyi emphasized that underground nationalist groups, including Borot’bists, remained active in Ukraine, a fact that required vigilance and further mobilization of efforts and resources available to the secret police.³³ Slisarenko became the first *slov’ianyn* to be arrested in Kharkiv which had ceased to be the Ukrainian capital. In March 1934, government offices, as well as the secret police departments, were moved to the new capital of Ukraine—Kyiv. The restructuring of state administration, as well the reorganization of its infrastructure, slightly decelerated the work of the GPU/NKVD. However, in just a few months, repression of the *slov’iany* and other “nationalist elements” recommenced with renewed force in response to Balyts’kyi’s call. November 1934 brought more tragedies to *Budynok Slovo*. The Galicians, the Krushel’nyts’kyi family, were arrested as Ukrainian nationalists and terrorists who planned to dethrone the Soviet regime.

The Krushel’nytskyi Family: The Fatal Misstep

On 5-6 November 1934, the secret police conducted a series of operations in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Moscow, arresting twenty-two prominent Ukrainian writers under the pretext of their alleged membership in the Association of Ukrainian Nationalists (the OUN), among whom were the

³² Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar’ov, 48-55.

³³ Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar’ov, 54-55.

slov'iany Antin, Ivan and Taras Krushel'nyts'ki. Significantly, here the OUN connotes not the well-known Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists that functioned in Western Ukraine but the Association of Ukrainian Nationalists (*Ob'iednannia ukrains'kykh natsionalistiv*), an organization that had been fabricated in the imaginations of the NKVD. The secret organs claimed that emissaries of the OUN in Western Ukraine infiltrated Soviet Ukraine for the purpose of organizing branches of this organization. They allegedly found support among the remnants of other nationalist organizations, such as the UVO and the Nationalist Borot'bist Organization and, according to the NKVD, created chapters in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Moscow. The conspirators allegedly planned terrorist acts against party and government leaders in the republic and in Moscow.³⁴

Antin Krushel'nytskyi was a Ukrainian writer, literary critic, teacher, a former minister of education in the UNR in 1919 and an editor. After the collapse of the UNR, he moved to Vienna, and returned to Galicia in 1925. But in May 1934, under pressure from the Polish authorities in Western Ukraine and encouraged by Ukrainization in the UkrSSR, he made a mistake which proved fatal for his family.³⁵ On 11 May he moved to Kharkiv to work for the national and cultural revival of Soviet Ukraine.³⁶ His sons Ostap (a journalist and film critic) and Bohdan (an economist and teacher) arrived in Kharkiv together with their parents. A third son Taras (a writer, musician and political figure) with his wife Stefa joined the family two months later. Antin's daughter Volodymyra (a doctor, writer and cultural figure) and his son Ivan (a

³⁴ TsDAMLIMU, f.798, op.1, spr.9, ark.32.

³⁵ See Krushel'nyts'ka, 63, 73.

³⁶ Ivan Dziuba, *Z krynytsi lit* (Kyiv: KMA, 2006), 1:221; L.I. Krushel'nyts'ka, *Rubaly lis... (Spohady halychanky)* (L'viv: Natsional'na akademiia nauk Ukrainy, L'vivs'ka naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanyka, 2001), 144.

poet, literary critic and artist) who settled first in Kharkiv in 1932 asked the family to join them, so their re-union was congenial and desirable for all family members.³⁷ In hindsight, this might have been a GPU trap to lure the family back to Soviet Ukraine.³⁸ One of the most active members of the cooperative “Slovo” Hryhorii Epik promised Antin that he and his family would eventually receive their own apartment in *Budynok Slovo*, but a temporary solution for the large Krushel’nytskyi family was found thanks to Vrazhlyvyi’s hospitality and the efforts of leaders in the cooperative “Slovo.”³⁹ The family was first placed in different apartments, and later several members of the family moved to Vrazhlyvyi’s three-room apartment. Here they found themselves in the heart of the fragmented and frightened literary community.⁴⁰

By the early 1930s, nearly 50-60,000 political immigrants from Western Ukraine, seduced by Soviet propaganda, had arrived to build a new socialist life in Soviet Ukraine. The Krushel’nytskyi family was among the last immigrants to the Soviet state which by 1934 had dramatically reduced contacts with Western Ukraine in anticipation of war. In 1934, among 128 applications to the USSR’s Lviv consulate, only 14 families received

³⁷ However, Larysa Krushel’nyts’ka suggested that her father Ivan’s letters from Soviet Ukraine, in which he asked the family to quickly move to Kharkiv, were falsified, and Ivan was surprised by this and noted that he had never written those letters. They were typed on a typewriter and had Ivan’s signature, apparently fabricated by the GPU. See Krushel’nyts’ka, 68, and Natalia Filipchuk and Oleksandr Bantyshev, “Rozstriliana mriia, abo iaku tsinu zaplatyv ministr osvity za pidtrymku novoi vlady,” *Holos Ukrainy*, 12 June 2010.

³⁸ Recent studies confirm that indeed the Soviet secret police undertook a number of operations to lure the Ukrainian intelligentsia to Soviet Ukraine. For instance, in 1923, I. Skuhar-Skvars’kyi was sent to Czechoslovakia to uncover the anti-Soviet activity of local Ukrainian immigrants and to persuade them to return to Soviet Ukraine. For details, see Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains’ki Solovky* (Kyiv: “EksOb,” 2001), 139.

³⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.39. **Vasyl’ Vrazhlyvyi** (a pen name for Vasyl’ Shtan’ko) was a Ukrainian writer, a member of the literary associations Pluh, VAPLITE and Prolitfront and the cooperative “Slovo.” He resided in apartment 54 in *Budynok Slovo*, and his home was open to many writers from Kharkiv and Kyiv.

⁴⁰ Krushel’nyts’ka, 67, 79, 80.

permission to immigrate, including the Krushel'nytskyis.⁴¹ They intended to settle in Soviet Ukraine permanently, and therefore brought all their material possessions with them, including Antin's extraordinarily large library and their home furnishings.



The Krushel'nyts'kyi Family. Sitting from left to right: Volodymyra, Taras, Maria, Larysa (Ivan's daughter) and Antin. Standing: Ostap, Halia (Ivan's wife), Ivan, Natalia (Bohdan's wife), Bohdan.

As Antin's granddaughter Larysa remembers, the family did not even have an opportunity to unpack their suitcases and to normalize their everyday life in *Budynok Slovo*.⁴² Five months after their arrival in Soviet Ukraine, apartment 54 was cleared of its residents. On the eve of the anniversary of the October Revolution, during the night of 5-6 November 1934, Antin and his two older sons Ivan and Taras were arrested, and transported to Kyiv to be tried together with other writers who were accused of Ukrainian nationalism and membership in the OUN.⁴³

⁴¹ Filipchuk and Bantyshev, "Rozstriliana mriia;" Olga Bertelsen and Myroslav Shkandrij, "The Secret Police and the Campaign against Galicians in Soviet Ukraine, 1929-34," *Nationalities Papers*, under review.

⁴² Krushel'nyts'ka, 81.

⁴³ TsDAMLIMU, f.798, op.1, spr.9, ark.28.

Taras admitted his guilt, Ivan did not, but they were hastily shot on 17 December 1934, soon after Kirov's murder, three days after the verdict was signed by the "itinerant session" (*vyiizdna sesia*) of the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court led by Ul'rikh.⁴⁴ 29-year-old Ivan and 25-year-old Taras were shot together with the famous Ukrainian writers Hryhorii Kosynka, Dmytro Fal'kivs'kyi, Oleksa Vlyz'ko, and Kost' Burevii (in total 28 people).⁴⁵ Interestingly, Vlyz'ko was accused of membership in the OUN, and active participation in various meetings. It would be difficult to imagine him an active participant or speaker because at the age of 13 he lost his ability to hear and speak as a complication of an infectious disease.⁴⁶ Bohdan, Ostap and Volodymyra were arrested a month later—in December 1934, and together with their father, were sent to Solovky. None of them returned alive.⁴⁷

Ivan's daughter, six-year-old Larysa, together with her two aunts, was taken to Kursk and later to Lviv where she miraculously survived the terror. As Larysa wrote later, "the large Krushel'nyts'kyi family factually ceased to exist."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See *Pravda*, 18 December 1934; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.90-91; TsDAMLIMU, f.798, op.1, spr.9, ark.34-35; TsDAMLIMU, f.98, op.1, spr.9, ark.36-37.

⁴⁵ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 44. The total number of the accused was 37; 28 of them were shot. Interestingly, the majority of those people who were shot in Kyiv had been initially accused of membership in the UVO. See Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar'ov, 57.

⁴⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69860fp, t.8, ark.274zv. For details on Vlyz'ko, see Mykhailo Slaboshpyts'kyi, *Ven'iamin literaturnoi sim'ii: Oleksa Vlyz'ko ta inshi* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo "Taroslaviv val," 2008), 248. Vlyz'ko's interrogator Hryner tortured him, using electric shock; like many others, Vlyz'ko signed self-indicting protocols. Tragically, one of the last of Vlyz'ko's poems was entitled "To my *chekist* friend." See HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69860fp, t.8, ark.295.

⁴⁷ Ostap Krushel'nyts'kyi was Antin's youngest son. They were arrested as OUN members, and were shot in Sandarmokh in 1937. See *Ostannia adresa*, 1:40, 174, 190, 2: 275; 3: 44, 291-95, 377.

⁴⁸ Ivhen Sverstiuk, "Dramatychni spohady halychanky. Trahediia rodyny Krushel'nyts'kykh," *Nasha vira*, no. 5, 2002; Krushel'nyts'ka, 92, 124.

Antin's case was handled by Bordon who applied to him a set of standard methods of pressure exercised on other *slov'iany*.⁴⁹ Bordon accused Antin of leadership in the OUN, an organization that like many others, as we have seen, had been entirely concocted in the GPU offices. Antin allegedly planned to demolish the Soviet regime through a chain of terrorist acts against party and government leaders.⁵⁰ The 56-year-old Antin initially believed that his arrest was a terrible mistake which would be resolved very quickly.⁵¹ However, the investigation of other OUN "members" gained momentum, and Antin was soon convoyed to Kyiv. His case was assigned to Grushevskii and Sokolov, famous for their ability to break a suspect's will.⁵²

After two weeks of investigation, on 28 November 1934, Antin confessed that he had come to Soviet Ukraine to conduct counterrevolutionary activity for the OUN, although he denied his children's membership in the organization.⁵³ On 5 December 1934, he claimed that he personally had recruited the *slov'iany* Kulish and Epik to the OUN.⁵⁴ Grushevskii and Sokolov were not interested in Antin's denunciation of his children. Their names had been mentioned in depositions of other *halychany*, such as Iulian Bachyns'kyi (a journalist and political figure) and Roman Skazyns'kyi (a journalist and editor of the Natsmenschvydav Publishing House). One of those who also testified against the family—including Antin, Volodymyra, Taras and Ivan—was Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi, a provocateur and GPU agent.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ For details about Bordon's methods of work, see Chapter Six.

⁵⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44987fp, ark.1-5. See also TsDAMLIMU, f.798, op.1, spr.9, ark.29.

⁵¹ See Krushel'nyts'kyi's first 15 November 1934 interrogation protocol in HDA SBU, f.6, spr. 44987fp.

⁵² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.93. For details about Sokolov, see the section about Kurbas in Chapter Six.

⁵³ TsDAMLIMU, f.798, op.1, spr.9, ark.31.

⁵⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.3, ark.222-23.

⁵⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.2, ark.126,128.

Besides their alleged membership in the OUN, the most “powerful evidence” against Antin’s children was their origin. For instance, Volodymyra was accused of being the daughter of the former “Petliurite Minister of Education,” which ultimately confirmed her guilt in the eyes of the NKVD.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, after the arrests of her entire family, the wife of Antin, Maria Krushel’nyts’ka, became fatally ill, and on 28 August 1935, she died entirely alone in one of Kharkiv’s hospitals. Her grave was destroyed by the Soviets, like many other graves of Ukrainian intellectuals and political figures, including Mykola Khvyl’ovyi.⁵⁷

The re-union of other members of the family occurred in Sandarmokh posthumously. As the “leader” of the OUN, Antin was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps, and along with many Ukrainian intellectuals, he was convoyed to Solovky. Bohdan, Ostap and Volodymyra denied the accusations against them but nevertheless were sentenced to five years in prison camps.⁵⁸ Volodymyra was transferred from the White Sea-Baltic camp to Solovky on 27 May 1935 where she had the opportunity to see her father.⁵⁹ Following a verdict of the NKVD *troika* in the Leningrad oblast’, Antin was shot on 23 October 1937, and Bohdan, Ostap and Volodymyra—on 3 November 1937, as Ukrainian nationalists.⁶⁰

Antin Krushel’nyts’kyi’s criminal file contains an interesting operational note, which confirms enduring beliefs and speculations of scholars about the fate of “evidence” confiscated by the secret police during arrests.

⁵⁶ *Ostannia adresa*, 3:291.

⁵⁷ See Chapter Five.

⁵⁸ *Ostannia adresa*, 1:40, 3:293-94.

⁵⁹ Volodymyra worked as a doctor in Solovky. See *Ostannia adresa*, 2:270, and Semen Pidhainyi, *Ukrains’ka intelihentsia na Solovkakh: Nedostriliani* (Kyiv: KMA, 2008), 85-86.

⁶⁰ *Ostannia adresa*, 1:174, 188, 190.

The NKVD expropriated books, documents, correspondence and other personal papers that belonged to the suspects. Among them were poems, plays and novels that had never been published. Rumors in subsequent decades held that they were preserved in the archives of the secret police. However, many witnesses testified that before the Nazi troops occupied Kharkiv, black smoke had been hovering over the GPU building for days—the secret police had been burning its archives.⁶¹ The 16 June 1941 operational note in Krushel'nyts'kyi's file revealed that the secret police had indeed kept 13 notebooks of Krushel'nyts'kyi's novel *Motherland* written in Ukrainian. The note also stated that on 4 June 1941 the notebooks had been burned, likely in anticipation of the German invasion. Similar acts of vandalism are evident in archive and library copies of publications produced in the 1920-30s: Antin Krushel'nyts'kyi's forewords and articles have been cut out from journals with scissors and his name thoroughly crossed out with black ink by Soviet censors.⁶²

GPU/NKVD documents demonstrate that the arrests of the Krushel'nyts'kyi family were an operation thoroughly prepared by the secret police. The fabrication of this case was instigated and supervised by the head of the 2nd secret department Dolinskii and the head of the SPV in the Kharkiv oblast' Govlich.⁶³ Three members of this family were strategically arrested on

⁶¹ Kharkiv was occupied by German troops on 24 October 1941 which lasted (with brief intervals) until 23 August 1943. See Smolych, 2:144.

⁶² Oleksa Piddubniak, "Do istorii iuvileinoho vydannia u 1929 r. povisti Mykhaila Kotsiubyns'koho *Tini zabutykh predkiv*," available at <http://piddubnyak.blogspot.com/2008/08/1929.html> (accessed 27 February 2012).

⁶³ In 1931, **Mark Govlich** (also Markus Hovbinder) (1902-1938) was the head of the SPV in Dnipropetrovsk. In August 1934, he was appointed the head of the SPV in Kharkiv oblast'. In January 1937, he became an assistant to the head of the 4th department of the State Security Administration of the NKVD in the UkrSSR, but in September 1937 he was sent to Amursk oblast'. On 29 July 1938, he was arrested, and in September 1938—sentenced to death and

the same night in *Budynok Slovo*, which saved the secret police time and additional resources. Three others were hunted down one by one in various places—they were on trips connected with their professional activities. The entire operation was completed efficiently and quickly within a month.

The Ukrainian scholar and dissident Ivhen Sverstiuk has noted that thanks to the scholar Larysa Krushel'nyts'ka's memoirs, knowledge about this tragedy has been publicized and broadly discussed. The Krushel'nyts'kyi's case exemplified the drama of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who had been moved by a feeling of duty to maintain national cultural traditions. Antin realized too late that his family had no chance for survival in Kharkiv, and perhaps never forgave himself for bringing his beloved wife and children to Kharkiv. Yet, he saved the lives of several prominent Ukrainian intellectuals from Galicia by discouraging them from emigrating to Soviet Ukraine.⁶⁴ Indeed, the members of the Krushel'nyts'kyi family who were educators and writers, whose excellent European education allowed them to master several languages and who had experienced life in Vienna, Prague and Lviv, embodied the best traditions and free spirit of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and these assets, including their origins, biographies and dispositions, made them political offenders in the eyes of the system.⁶⁵ For similar reasons, the

executed. See Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-DPU-NKVS na Kharkivshchyni: Liudy ta Doli. 1919-1941* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2003), 401-02, and Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar'ov, 58, 64.

⁶⁴ Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid' pro nespokii: deshcho z knyhy pro dvadtsiati i trydtsiati roky v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1968), 1:239-63; Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovidi pro nespokii nemaie kintsia: shche deshcho z dvadtsiatykh i trydtsiatykh rokiv v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1972), 3:169, 174. Among them was Iaroslav Halan. Halan first came to Soviet Ukraine only before the Second World War, and tried to find the traces of his missing wife.

⁶⁵ *Ostannia adresa*, 3:295. The members of the Krushel'nyts'kyi family were posthumously rehabilitated in the late 1950s. The interrogators Grushevskii and Pustovoitov who "investigated" their cases were accused of counterrevolutionary conspiracy in the secret organs and were shot in 1937.

slov'ianyn and *halychanyn* Valerian Polishchuk was destined to be the next victim of Stalin's terror.

Valerian Polishchuk: "An Artist with Nerves Stretched like Strings"⁶⁶

In 1924, the Ukrainian writer Valerian Polishchuk visited Moscow to receive his visa for his trip to Berlin. Vsevolod Meerkhol'd connected Polishchuk with Lev Trotsky through the Kremlin telephone line. Polishchuk wanted to talk with Trotsky about the "old Russian inertia related to Ukrainian culture, which Moscow inherited from tsarism." In his letter to his wife Elena Konukhes, Valerian complained that the line had been interrupted constantly and filled with foreign sounds. "Apparently, the GPU," wrote Polishchuk in his letter.⁶⁷

It seems likely that the secret police were listening to Polishchuk's conversation with Trotsky. What was even more probable is that his letter to his wife was subjected to perlustration, the oldest and most reliable method of surveillance employed by the secret organs. Naively, Polishchuk in his letter exposed not only himself as a person who was concerned about Ukrainian culture but also his colleagues, the *slov'iany* Tychyna and Dosvitnii, who, according to Polishchuk's description, "had more national complaints about the Russians" than he.⁶⁸ His "political physiognomy" therefore was established by the GPU quite early, and his further social and professional activities only confirmed their portrait of him as a Ukrainian nationalist.

⁶⁶ TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.9, ark.16. Polishchuk called the writers "artists, nervous and impressionable, with nerves stretched like strings."

⁶⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.9, ark.8.

⁶⁸ TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.9, ark.8zv.

Polishchuk's relationships with the *slov'iany* were complicated. Rebellious by nature, Valerian fought Khvyl'ovyi, Tychyna and others through his polemical articles. Verbal debates alternated with physical fights, for instance with Sosiura, although they were based on sexual jealousies.⁶⁹ In the 1920s, as leader of the literary association of constructivists "Avanhard," Polishchuk gathered similar rebels around him—the future *slov'iany* Leonid Chernov-Maloshyichenko and Raisa Troianker. They gained a reputation as "fellow traveler" writers, and the party establishment grew skeptical about their ideological dependability. After his arrest, during his first interrogations, Polishchuk reluctantly admitted that the association "Avanhard" had a counterrevolutionary essence and its publications facilitated a nationalist spirit among literati.⁷⁰

Polishchuk intensified the GPU's interest in him during the first Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow to which he was delegated as a Ukrainian writer. At the meeting of Soviet writers with Stalin, Polishchuk asked Stalin why Voronezh oblast' and a part of Kursk oblast', mostly inhabited by the Ukrainians, had not been included in the UkrSSR, a question that had been debated for some time between Skrypnyk and the Moscow leadership.⁷¹ Polishchuk did not receive any answer at the time. However, this question was thoroughly discussed later with his interrogator Proskuriakov when Polishchuk was imprisoned.⁷²

⁶⁹ See the memoirs of the *slov'ianyn* Stepan Kryzhaniv's'kyi, "Buntar," available at <http://donklass.com/arhiv/histdisk/memorial/education/write/polischuk/7.htm> (accessed 1 March 2012). On Sosiura's and Polishchuk's conflict, see Volodymyr Sosiura, *Tretia rota* (Kyiv: Ukrain's'kyi pys'mennyk, 1997).

⁷⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.4zv.-5.

⁷¹ On deliberations about the borders of the UkrSSR, see Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 155-60.

⁷² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.146.

Polishchuk was arrested on 5 December 1934 in the presence of the administrator of the *Budynok Slovo* Pavlo Lytvynenko, after Polishchuk wrote to the head of the culture department of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U Mykhailo Killeroh.⁷³ In this letter, Polishchuk complained that the state publishing houses “Radians’ka literatura” (Soviet Literature) and “LIM” refused to publish his prose because of its supposed “nationalist” content, and that he was no longer able to feed his family through his professional activity—for two months he had been selling his library.⁷⁴ The NKVD found a solution for Polishchuk’s hardships—he was accused of membership in the Anti-Soviet Borot’bist Organization, a newly fabricated case against Ukrainian nationalists.⁷⁵

Polishchuk was denounced by several individuals who attributed the most heinous crimes to him, including the attempted murder of Stalin.⁷⁶ The depositions of the journalist of the newspaper *Komunist* Mykola Liubchenko alleged that Polishchuk, as well as the other *slov’iany* Kulish and Epik who were arrested shortly after Valerian, were members of the Anti-Soviet Borot’bist Organization.⁷⁷ In depositions that we now know were false, Oleksa Slisarenko called Polishchuk the leader and “inspiration” of terroristic activities planned by the organization.⁷⁸ Vasyl’ Vrazhlyvyi confirmed Polishchuk’s membership in the organization, and revealed that Polishchuk reported to him that he saw Postyshev and Kosior in the middle of the night

⁷³ TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.12, ark.24-24zv. Killeroh was arrested on 5 September 1936 and accused of membership in the Ukrainian counterrevolutionary Trotskyite organization. See HDA SBU, f.6, spr.33260fp in two volumes; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.106.

⁷⁴ TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.12, ark.24, 24zv.

⁷⁵ *Istoriia Ukrainy. Entsyklopedychnyi slovnyk* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2008), 889.

⁷⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.3, ark.24.

⁷⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.2, ark.98.

⁷⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.2, ark.118-19; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.3, ark.119-20.

walking in Sumskaia Street, in the center of Kharkiv. According to Vrazhlyvyi, Polishchuk believed that this situation was a perfect setting for their assassination, and was surprised that they were not afraid to wander unguarded at night.⁷⁹ Similarly, Epik who was arrested shortly after Polishchuk claimed Polishchuk's leadership in the Kharkiv branch of the organization, and that he together with the *slov'iany* Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi and Vasyl' Vrazhlyvyi had prepared terrorist acts against the Ukrainian party leaders, which were to be implemented on the eve of the October holidays.⁸⁰ Epik went even further, and testified that Polishchuk recommended Levko Koval'ov as a reliable candidate for the assassination of Stalin in Moscow.⁸¹

After this statement, any struggle seemed to be a lost cause.

Polishchuk's confession and the depositions of his colleagues were sufficient evidence at the time to sentence Polishchuk to death. However, the interrogators of Epik and Polishchuk—Khaet and Proskuriakov—considered it necessary to prolong the torture of the *slov'iany* through *ochnye stavki* during which the intimidated writers often confirmed lies imposed on them by their interrogators.⁸² Khaet and Proskuriakov arranged meetings between Epik and

⁷⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.161,184,205-06,221.

⁸⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.24,33-34. The October holidays refer to the celebration of the anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917.

⁸¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.37.

⁸² For a definition of *ochnye stavki*, see Chapter Three (p. 135). In 1927, **Mykhailo Khaet** (1904-1956) worked in the Holovlit (Glavlit) as a censor in military publications. In 1931-38, he worked in the SPV of the GPU in the UkrSSR and the State Security Administration of the NKVD in the UkrSSR, and from 1938 to 1949 occupied leading positions in various departments of the State Security Administration. In January 1950 he was dismissed from the secret organs. He died in 1957, and ironically, his grave is just across from Epik's symbolic grave (and Epik's son's grave) in the Baikove cemetery in Kyiv. See Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, "Tevhen Pluzhnyi—'ubiennyi syn' narodu suvoroi doli," *Literaturna Ukraina*, 22 November 2012, p. 5. For a more detailed biography of Khaet, see Vadym Zolotar'ov's private archive. **Mykhailo Proskuriakov** played an active role in the successful completion of the UVO operation, and was among those who were rewarded by the Ukrainian GPU for investigating criminal cases (the 23 September 1933 order no. 452), according to Zolotar'ov's private archive. The details of his life during the Great Terror are not completely clear, and this requires additional research.

Polishchuk, and between the Kyiv poet Ievhen Pluzhnyk and Polishchuk.⁸³

Epik attacked Polishchuk and lied about a supposed conversation that had occurred between them in Epik's apartment in *Budynok Slovo* in early September 1934. Epik insisted that they discussed the need for "terrorist activity" and testified that Polishchuk had been in charge of the Kharkiv terrorist group. Polishchuk denied Epik's accusations and stated that the nature of his conversations with Epik had never been political but purely artistic and literary.⁸⁴ Pluzhnyk testified that Polishchuk was a member of a nationalist



Valerian Polishchuk.⁸⁵



Valerian Polishchuk in 1933, Kharkiv.⁸⁶

organization and wanted to take revenge on Moscow for Khvyl'ovyi's and Skrypnyk's deaths. Polishchuk defended himself and denied everything.⁸⁷

Polishchuk's transformation finally occurred in Kyiv where he was convoyed from the Kharkiv prison. On 8 January 1935, the interrogators finally broke his spirit. The tone of his depositions dramatically changed. "Looking back, I realized how much harm I did to the Soviet state," declared

⁸³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.77; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.28-30.

⁸⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.78-79.

⁸⁵ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.34.

⁸⁶ TsDAMLIMU, f.72, op.1, spr.18, ark.3.

⁸⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.82.

Polishchuk.⁸⁸ He continued, “Nationalism that was deeply rooted in me obscured my path to socialism.”⁸⁹ A lyric poet who established himself as such because of his original literary style and his command of the Ukrainian language, Polishchuk suddenly “revealed” himself as a crude primitive who used bureaucratic language, indeed socialist in content but very far from “national” in its form. In an awkward crude form, Polishchuk begged for forgiveness for his “formalistic behavior in Kharkiv during the preliminary investigation,” and stated that “only the investigation in Kyiv demonstrated to him the depth of the nationalist abyss into which he was falling.”⁹⁰

The interrogator Proskuriakov was pleased by this sudden turn of the investigative process. He immediately wrote a report to his supervisors, in which he characterized Polishchuk as a Ukrainian chauvinist, and noted that the journal “Avanhard” in which Polishchuk published his nationalist lampoons would be attached to his criminal file as evidence of his counterrevolutionary activities. Moreover, Proskuriakov suddenly discovered in himself the abilities of a literary critic, and provided a brief analysis of Polishchuk’s “vulgar pornographic” prose.⁹¹ Polishchuk’s notes (*bloknoty*) that were confiscated during his arrest, as well as his little telephone book, were also added to his file as evidence of his hostility to the regime and his connections with nationalists.⁹²

Very few cases were fabricated without the assistance of Bilen’kyi-Berezyns’kyi who denounced Polishchuk, as well as 17 other people who were

⁸⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.64.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.65.

⁹¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.68-69.

⁹² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.73.

tried together with Valerian.⁹³ By the middle of March 1935, in view of the overwhelming evidence (considering the prosecution's standards) of Polishchuk's guilt, further investigation of his case was considered inexpedient. Even his best friend and *slov'ianyn* Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi finally testified against him.⁹⁴

During the preliminary investigation, out of 17 people involved in the alleged Borot'bist conspiracy, only Koval'ov denied all charges and never made a confession to the imaginary plans to assassinate Stalin. Polishchuk admitted his guilt only partially.⁹⁵ He was among those who signed all protocols and fully repented for the crimes he allegedly committed, but denied the depositions of his colleagues. The Military Prosecutor Bazykin who in 1956 reinvestigated the case noted that in conjunction with this criminal case of 17 people, he reexamined more than 53 group criminal cases that contained the materials for more than 100 people. Many of them had been rehabilitated, and a great number of them never confessed to the crimes for which they were charged. According to Bazykin, the depositions are confusing and inconsistent, and as the interrogators assigned to these cases testified (Grushevskii, Bordon, Pustovoitov, Proskuriakov and others who were repressed and executed in 1937), the cases had been fabricated by them individually or collectively, and these actions had been encouraged and approved by their supervisors.⁹⁶ Even leaving aside an analysis of the interrogators' testimonies in 1937, as well as their role in fabricating criminal cases against Ukrainian intellectuals (this topic deserves a separate

⁹³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.2, ark.126,128; *Ostannia adresa*, 2:88.

⁹⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.302,308zv.,310,315,347.

⁹⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.84-85,104-07.

⁹⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.107.

investigation), it would be fair to suggest that the prosecution left no legal space for the suspects to resist the allegations. The absence of evidence and, in many cases, the absence of confessions were not obstacles to the prosecution finding their victims guilty and sentencing them to death, or to ten years in prison, a term that was equal to a death penalty in the severe climatic and political conditions of northern camps. However, the prosecution habitually worked toward the confession of the suspect to preserve the façade of legalism, and to make it easier to “find fresh inculpations,” as Robert Conquest has noted.⁹⁷

On 27-28 March 1935, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court sentenced Polishchuk to 10 years in labor camps,⁹⁸ but in Solovoky on 9 October 1937 the NKVD *troika* sentenced him to death for “maintaining counterrevolutionary positions and continuing spying terroristic activity.” Polishchuk was shot in Sandarmokh on 3 November 1937.⁹⁹

Following Polishchuk’s arrest, his family was evicted from *Budynok Slovo*, and his wife Elena with two children Marko and Liutsyna found shelter at her sister’s place in Moscow.¹⁰⁰ Through the efforts of Polishchuk’s family, on 31 November 1962, 25 years after his death, he was rehabilitated like many other *slov’iany*.¹⁰¹ Polishchuk’s wife Elena greatly contributed to the process of rehabilitating her husband, although her health was poor at the time. She testified before the commission and vigorously rejected all accusations against Polishchuk.

⁹⁷ Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 146.

⁹⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.98.

⁹⁹ *Ostannia adresa*, 2:89.

¹⁰⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.35-37.

¹⁰¹ *Ostannia adresa*, 2:90.

However, her testimony revealed some discrepancy between the content of Polishchuk's criminal case and Polishchuk's last words to his wife.¹⁰² During their meeting in prison, he claimed that he never signed any papers and never confessed to any crimes. Polishchuk also assured her that he was innocent and those who had denounced him and with whom he had had *ochnye stavki* could not "look him straight in his eye."¹⁰³ On this basis, the forging of Polishchuk's protocols, as well as his signature, without him being aware of this fact, seems very likely. The scenario of personal embarrassment about his moment of weakness when he denounced himself as a Ukrainian nationalist, and the unlikelihood that he would reveal this to his wife seems equally possible. Whatever the case might be, besides Koval'ov who had never accepted his guilt, Polishchuk was the only *slov'ianyn* among 17 people bound together in one criminal case who accepted his guilt only "partially," as the prosecution verdict stated. There are reasons to believe Elena's testimony, especially given the ability of the GPU to squeeze at least "partial" confessions out of the suspects. As Conquest suggested, obtaining full or "partial" confessions made NKVD operatives successful in the eyes of their supervisors; unsuccessful ones "had a short life-expectancy."¹⁰⁴

As has been shown, inconsistencies and approximations in fabricating cases were allowed and approved by the high officials in the secret police. The sloppiness that was manifested in Ialovy's case in 1933 grew into deliberate negligence and a new indifference in composing rough drafts of interrogation protocols by GPU agents. As the practice demonstrated, operational and investigative inconsistencies meant little in the final analysis of criminal files

¹⁰² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.44 zv.

¹⁰³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.40 zv.

¹⁰⁴ Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 147.

by their supervisors, as well as during the final stage of investigation—the trial. For instance, according to the former director of the Blakytnyi House Maksym Lebid’ who was arrested in December 1934, Polishchuk was denounced as a UVO member, although according to many other depositions, he was portrayed as a member of a new, freshly conceived by the secret organs, Ukrainian nationalist organization, the OUN.¹⁰⁵ However, this dissonance did not seem to be important in the final analysis of Polishchuk’s guilt. Lebid’s deposition had been added to Polishchuk’s criminal file as evidence proving Polishchuk’s guilt.

Moreover, in his earlier interrogation protocols, Epik (or his interrogators) claimed that Polishchuk was the leader of the nationalist organization but in his 19 January 1935 conversation with the prosecutor, Epik posited that among the leaders of the organization he knew only Mykola Kulish and Antin Krushel’nyts’kyi.¹⁰⁶ Vrazhlyvyi insisted that Polishchuk was just a member, and the leader was Epik.¹⁰⁷ Several days later, during *ochnaia stavka* with Valerian Pidmohyl’nyi, Epik returned to his previous story, and Polishchuk again “became” the leader of the organization.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, the GPU agents abandoned the idea of comparing these depositions with data obtained from the suspects who had been arrested earlier. But most ironically, the interrogators were no longer concerned about the logic and logistics of events and consistencies in people’s depositions even within one criminal file. The principle “anything goes” indeed worked, and was reinforced from above.

¹⁰⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.121.

¹⁰⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.170.

¹⁰⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.222, 233.

¹⁰⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.185.

Incongruously, attempts to justify and accommodate these inconsistencies were undertaken in 1955 when the rehabilitation campaign gained momentum. Despite the fact that some UVO “members” had already been rehabilitated and the fabricators of the UVO and other cases had been put in prison and shot in 1937, the plenipotentiary of the 1st department of the KGB Tkachenko composed a report, in which he narrated the history of the UVO in Soviet Ukraine. As he “discovered,” the UVO was eventually transformed into the OUN, and the members of this organization, the writers in Kharkiv, were active participants who even helped corrupt the Communist movement in Western Ukraine.¹⁰⁹ According to the “writers” from the secret police, the Anti-Soviet Borot’bist Organization gathered under its umbrella the remnants of the UVO and OUN, an attempt to consolidate all nationalist forces in Ukraine under the leadership of former Borot’bists. Interestingly, Tkachenko never mentioned that other than claims about the alleged membership of so many people in all these organizations and allegations about alleged anti-Soviet terrorist activities as described by the suspects, these criminal files contained no concrete evidence of the existence of these organizations. Ukrainian nationalism, as well as Borot’bism, was simply a “fatal brand,” repeating Shapoval’s terms, which determined the fate of Ukrainian intellectuals in the 1930s.¹¹⁰

The early December 1934 arrests swept away another cohort of talented Ukrainian writers in *Budynok Slovo*. On the basis of denunciations, the NKVD harvested six more writers and journalists in *Budynok Slovo*,

¹⁰⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.220-22. In reality, the UVO and the OUN organizations that functioned in Poland sought for cooperation of Ukrainian nationalists in Soviet Ukraine.

¹¹⁰ Shapoval, “Fatal’nyi brend.”

destroying their families and irreversibly changing the personal lives of their members. Among the arrested were Andrii Paniv, Volodymyr Shtanhei,



Andrii Paniv.



Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi.



Ivan Lakyza.



Mykola Kulish.



Vasyl' Vrazhlyvyi.

Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi, Mykola Kulish, Ivan Lakyza and Vasyl'

Vrazhlyvyi.¹¹¹ Each of these writers, “Decemberists of 1934,” deserves a

¹¹¹ For details about **Andrii Paniv**, see HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.151-64; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.49; TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.29; about **Volodymyr Shtanhei**—HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.165-78; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.66, 88-89; about **Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi**—HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.132-37; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.312; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.86-87; TsDAMLIMU, f.107, op.1, spr.28, ark.5; about **Mykola Kulish**—HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.87-89; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.3, ark.103,105,141; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.82-83; TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6218, ark.71; f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.24; about **Ivan Lakyza**—HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.3, ark.71; about **Vasyl' Vrazhlyvyi**—HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.120-26; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.5, ark.160-61,226-33; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.85-86,98. All were executed as Ukrainian nationalists during the Great Terror.

separate narrative. Their literary gifts and desire to serve Ukrainian culture, as well as their close connections with those who were arrested in 1933, made them guilty in the eyes of the secret police.

Growing from the GPU's reports, fictitious nationalist Ukrainian organizations mushroomed with extraordinary speed in the republic. According to a legend, some powerful GPU/NKVD leader suggested shutting all the doors and windows in *Budynok Slovo* to prevent the writers' escape, and, when the time was "right," arresting them all at once in order to save gasoline for the agency.¹¹² The definition of writers as artists "with nerves stretched like strings," provided by Polishchuk, acquired a second meaning in the context of relentless repressions. Hypersensitivity, and sophisticated and subtle understandings of realities that characterize artists no longer manifested themselves within the community of *Budynok Slovo*. These qualities were replaced by nervousness and paranoid fears of approaching death, feelings that overwhelmed the writers, ultimately affecting the spatial organization of their existence in many different ways. The behavioral change of the *slov'ianyn* Hryhorii Epik, who was arrested on the same night as Polishchuk, on 5 December 1934, when considered through the prism of a new space and attitudes toward him which confronted him after his arrest, reveals the limitations of human nature under coercion and torture.¹¹³

¹¹² Larysa Salimonovych, "Budynok 'Slovo' u Kharkovi. Trahediia 'rozstrilianoho vidrodzhennia,'" *Mystets'ka storinka*, available at <http://storinka-m.kiev.ua/article.php?id=171> (accessed 6 March 2012).

¹¹³ On personality theory, see Joseph Sonnenfeld, "Multidimensional Measurement of Environmental Personality," in *Spatial Choice and Spatial Behavior: Geographic Essays on the Analysis of Preferences and Perceptions*, ed. Reginald G. Golledge and Gerard Rushton (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 51-66.

Hryhorii Epik: A Return to Roots

The American behavioral geographer Joseph Sonnenfeld has argued that “personality implies behavior or a predisposition to behave” in a certain way under certain circumstances.¹¹⁴ He has insisted that individual attitudes, perceptions and values are validated through behavior, and precisely individual personalities stand in the way of the homogeneity of any population or community. True, the community of the writers had never been homogenous, although it had been conceived as such. The spectrum of individual personalities of the writers was broad which contributed to disagreements and even conflicts among them and resulted in gradual fragmentation of their community.

However, many behavioral psychologists would add another factor that might have facilitated their societal destruction, as well as the individual corruption and moral deterioration which was observed in prison. This factor might be seen as an “incongruity” between their beliefs and values, and social and political realities, including the values of their interrogators. This “incongruity” resulted in a chronic state of frustration that in turn produced behavioral change. When in prison the *slov’iany* encountered hostile attitudes toward them, uttered straightforwardly and bluntly, and upon learning information dissonant with their beliefs and values, they either changed them, or denied and discounted the integrity of this information.¹¹⁵

The painful choice of goals and actions that the *slov’iany* faced in prison was determined by their needs, and first of all, by the need for

¹¹⁴ Sonnenfeld, 53.

¹¹⁵ See C.I. Hovland et al., “Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Reactions to Communication and Attitude Change,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* no. 55 (1957): 244-252; M.J. Rosenberg et al., *Attitude Organization and Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

survival—the need to resist extinction.¹¹⁶ For some, individual survival was less important than for others. Martyrdom and personal beliefs and principles for which people were willing to die became a fact in the history of violence, terror and repression. However, the avoidance of suffering and pain, both physical and moral, certainly was a priority for the majority of the *slov'iany*.

Hryhorii Epik's story illustrates a personal tragedy of surrendering his beliefs and principles for the sake of survival, which ruined his internal core and produced extraordinary moral suffering for him. Frightening realities of a new place and space of his residence that drastically contrasted with his environment in *Budynok Slovo* forced him to accept and internalize new beliefs and values, previously foreign for him. This positioned him against the cultural and social standards of the community of writers. Skillfully manipulating public opinion, state propaganda reinforced and mythicized Epik's malicious image of not only a Ukrainian nationalist and a terrorist but also an image of an immoral human being. As a result, in memoir literature, Epik's image has been established as different from those of other *slov'iany*, as a deviation from the moral norm in the given landscape—*Budynok Slovo*. He has been ascribed a reputation as a traitor that was incompatible with the lofty aesthetics of the writers' community.

¹¹⁶ In this context, Maslow's concept of the hierarchy of needs seems to be helpful. In Maslow's view, a strong need or desire prescribes the mode of behavior and its ultimate goal. When the strongest body needs are satisfied (hunger and thirst), considerations of safety emerge. When those needs are addressed, the needs for emotional and spiritual comfort appear and so on. See A. H. Maslow, "A Dynamic Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* no. 50 (1943): 370-96; A. H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper, 1954).



Hryhorii Epik.

Yet, in the context of this research, little was found in Epik's behavior that could be considered substantively different or unusual. His behavior before and after arrest fell neatly into a common scheme of human behaviors exhibited under the pressure of state violence. An analysis of Epik's actions under interrogation and in the labor camps seems indicative of the commonalities in human reactions to physical and moral abuse rather than of non-typical responses to this sort of violence. Epik's life story illuminates the distortions of human personality and psyche under Stalinism which erased, or rather altered principles and ideals, and poisoned people's perceptions of each other.

Those who knew Epik remembered him as affectionately as a sincere, friendly and sensitive person, although it appears that Epik's contemporaries more favorably wrote about his personality than about his creative work.¹¹⁷ In 1930, Epik realized that it would be more sensible to avoid confrontations with the regime. For instance, in late December 1930, Epik escaped to Odesa's cardiological sanatorium under a false pretense to treat his myocarditis, although the true reason was a desire to avoid participating in the dramatic events related to the liquidation of the literary association

¹¹⁷Mykola Khvyli'ovyi, "Sotsiologichnyi ekvivalent" *triokh krytychnykh pohliadiv* (Kharkiv: Biblioteka zhurnala Vaplite no.4, 1927), 42; A.M. Lejtes and M.F Jasek, *Desiat' Rokiv Ukrajin's'koji Literaturny (1917-1927)*, *Bio-Bibliohrafichnyj Charkiv. 1928* (Munchen: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1986), 1:163-64; Kostiuk, 1:358.

“Prolitfront” instigated by the state, the association to which he belonged.¹¹⁸

He realized that the days of “Prolitfront” were numbered, and any affiliation with this group would complicate his further literary career. His life and literary work became more and more subjected to politics, and the populist expectations of his readers and the party began to dictate his literary agenda.

In 1931 and 1932, Epik wrote pro-Soviet proletarian novels *Persha Vesna* (*The First Spring*) about the collectivization campaign, and *Petro Romen*, a hymn to a new positive type of proletarian worker. The Moscow newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta* published an article that characterized *Petro Romen* as a significant work in an ideological and artistic sense. Epik was called a proletarian writer and an engine of the mass proletarian literary movement in Kharkiv.¹¹⁹

Yet, Epik entirely shared Khvyl’ovyi’s ideas about a separate path of Ukrainian culture, and his only hope was that Skrypnyk might be able to save the Ukrainian language and culture from russification.¹²⁰ The events of May and July 1933 when Khvyl’ovyi and Skrypnyk committed suicide broke Epik mentally and intellectually. By the time of his arrest, Epik realized that there was an abyss between the goals of the party leaders and the aspirations of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Intellectual autonomy in Soviet society was a chimera, and neither his professional skills nor political loyalty to the party were of great importance to the authorities. Intellectuals were a commodity that could be used in the ideological struggle against counterrevolutionaries and, after the task was completed, were to be thrown in the dustbin of history as nationalists and terrorists. In January 1934, about a year before Epik’s

¹¹⁸ Kostiuk, 1:269, 292, 357, 359.

¹¹⁹ *Literaturnaia gazeta* no. 18-19 (246-247), April 23, 1933, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Kostiuk, 1:358.

arrest, he told Kostiuk: “The situation, my friend, is simple: no matter what we write—they will beat us. Apparently, they do not care about our artistic works, they care about our lives.”¹²¹

Evidently, this was a painful confession to make for a person whose conscience had been co-opted and subdued by the privileges and fame that Soviet power had allowed him to enjoy for a decade. The last days Epik spent in *Budynok Slovo* before his arrest were days of personal crisis that might have led to his further moral degradation and mental deterioration. The arrests of his neighbors and the feeling of claustrophobia in *Budynok Slovo* might have destroyed him psychologically. Moreover, he could no longer function normally at work—he was the chief editor of the Publishing House “LIM,” and the political atmosphere in Ukraine paralyzed his everyday professional activities.¹²²

In the eyes of the secret police, Epik was compromised by his membership in VAPLITE and Prolitfront, and most importantly, by his friendship with Kulish and Khvyl’ovyi.¹²³ Interestingly, the NKVD resolution about Epik’s arrest was signed on 7 December 1934 in Kyiv but the Kharkiv NKVD arrested him two days before this without proper documentation, although Litvinenko and the writer Oleksandr Kopylenko were invited as witnesses during his arrest.¹²⁴ On 5 December 1934, Epik was convoyed to

¹²¹ Kostiuk, 1:362. Likely, Epik knew that he had been followed by GPU agents, and his apartment was under constant surveillance. Indeed, archival materials revealed that the secret police launched *papka-formuliar* for Epik long before his arrest. Today this file is preserved in the Moscow archives. See the reference to this in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.103.

¹²² Kostiuk, 1:496.

¹²³ Smolych, 1:72-73.

¹²⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.100-01.

Kyiv where other “members” of the Borot’bist organization were under preliminary investigation.¹²⁵

The NKVD records shed some light on Epik’s feelings of doom and the inevitability of arrest during these last days. The NKVD operative Luk’ianov who arrested Epik wrote in his report that Epik and his wife were very calm during the arrest, and apparently they had prepared for the arrest in advance. Epik’s wife Vira had sold his hunting gun and collected money others owed them. Epik told the agent that he had no hopes of being released any time soon, and according to Luk’ianov, “Vira smiled all the time” during the search.¹²⁶ Perhaps, she still cherished the hope of the imminent return of her husband.

After his arrest, Epik instantly confessed to his supposed membership in the Ukrainian nationalist organization and to counterrevolutionary activity.¹²⁷ He explained that his actions were a protest against state collectivization policies and its result—the famine of 1932-33.¹²⁸ He claimed that Ialovy, Khvyl’ovyi and Kulish inspired him to believe that Soviet power had to be demolished, since it constrained the political, economic and cultural development of Ukraine. But he named Kulish as the person who allegedly recruited him into the nationalist organization after Khvyl’ovyi committed suicide.¹²⁹ The interrogator Khaet also extracted from Epik depositions that cast the *slov’iany* Antin Krushel’nyts’kyi, Dosvitnii, Polishchuk, Kulish, Ianovs’kyi, Slisarenko, Vrazhlyvyi, Pidmohyl’nyi, Kopylenko, Senchenko, Paniv and Lakyza as Ukrainian nationalists and potential terrorists. Epik also

¹²⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.96, 97.

¹²⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.1, ark.100.

¹²⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.3-6; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.56.

¹²⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.11.

¹²⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.14.

denounced a number of writers from Kyiv (Kosynka, Pluzhnyk, Antonenko-Davydovych and Fal'kivs'kyi), and Moscow (Koval'ov), stating that they were members of the Kyiv and Moscow nationalist branches.¹³⁰ He claimed the organization had been seeking support from German fascists, and Antin Krushel'nyts'kyi was allegedly responsible for establishing these contacts through the German consulate in Ukraine.¹³¹ According to Epik, the members were planning the assassination of Stalin, an initiative that emanated from Kulish.¹³²

Epik's criminal file also includes excerpts from the interrogation protocols of Ialovyi, Cherniak, Demchuk, Chychkevych, Pylypenko, Ozers'kyi, Gzhyts'kyi, Tkachuk, Irchan, Slisarenko, Lebid', Fal'kivs'kyi and Burevoi that portrayed Epik as a conspirator and an active participant in preparing assassinations of Ukrainian party and NKVD leaders, as well as Stalin.¹³³ The circle of denunciation was closed, and the routine NKVD tactics ensured the arrest of the next group of the *slov'iany*. On 13 March 1935, Pustovoitov, Proskuriakov and Dolinskii ordered the destruction of Epik's correspondence, as well as his books that were confiscated during his arrest: evidently, it was deemed inexpedient either to keep them or to return them to his family.¹³⁴ Epik, like 15 other "members" of the alleged conspiracy, was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps, and spent several years in Solovky.¹³⁵ Yet, as we have seen, the NKVD continued to fabricate false denunciations against these putative Ukrainian nationalists even in the labor camps. Despite

¹³⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.24,32,33,61,88,177-80,202.

¹³¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.207-210.

¹³² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.49,179; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.58.

¹³³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.83-133.

¹³⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.6.

¹³⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.83-84,95-98.

his exemplary behavior, Epik was not an exception.¹³⁶ At the age of 36, he was sentenced to death and shot on 3 November 1937 in Sandarmokh by the GB captain Matveev.¹³⁷

On close scrutiny, the language of Epik's interrogation protocols provokes some doubts about the authenticity of his deposition. Semantically, some sentences are poorly constructed, and seem unlikely to have been the work of a professional writer. In his testimony to Khaet and the prosecutor, for example, Epik "used" such awkward expressions as "прошлое давило надо мной," "разделял мои националистические высказывания" and so on.¹³⁸ It is likely that Khaet had formulated this document for him some time before or after the interrogation.¹³⁹

Of course, at the time and many decades later evidence that Epik's testimonies had been fabricated was unknown, and the myth of his treachery remained unchallenged. One of the first, and most important, steps in scapegoating Epik was Postyshev's speech at the Plenum of the Ukrainian Union of Writers in summer 1935.¹⁴⁰ Following this event, Epik's image as a traitor has been solidly imbedded in the history of Stalin's repressions in Ukraine. Postyshev quoted Epik's letter to Balyts'kyi, in which the author allegedly recanted his terrorist and counterrevolutionary activity against the leaders of the Communist party, and demanded that the authorities shoot him and his accomplices, famous Ukrainian writers whom he called "murderers,"

¹³⁶ *Ostannia adresa*, 2:220.

¹³⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.8, ark.99. See also *Ostannia adresa*, 1:183.

¹³⁸ "Прошлое давило надо мной" literally means "my past has been pressing me." "Разделял мои националистические высказывания" can be translated as "[he] shared my nationalist statements." In Russian, these constructions sound awkward.

¹³⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.4, ark.166,172.

¹⁴⁰ Postyshev, Stalin's protégé, was sent to Kharkiv in 1933 as a replacement for the "toothless" Ukrainian party leaders to repair the results of collectivization and the famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine.

and whom he compared to “rabid dogs.”¹⁴¹ The credibility of Postyshev’s statement, as well as Epik’s behavior under arrest, remains questionable, although his behavior in labor camps was described as morally low which could be a consequence of the physical torture and mental pressure he had suffered during his interrogation.¹⁴² He had a young and beautiful wife, Vira Omel’chenko and a little son who might both have served as a lever for the NKVD to pressure Epik to surrender.¹⁴³

The stigmatized images and reputations of the writers pursued them even in the camps. What exacerbated Epik’s image as a “fallen person” in the eyes of his friends and colleagues was his behavior in Solovky. According to the accounts of Solovky inmates, including Semen Pidhainyi, Epik intentionally stayed away from the Ukrainians and befriended criminal elements. He was so delighted when the prison authorities declared him a shock worker that he began to write a novel about *chekists* who “saved the soul of an unfortunate counterrevolutionary.”¹⁴⁴ Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union did scholars recover the prison reports that verified Pidhainyi’s description. The agent characterized Epik as a faithful party member who did not lead any “unhealthy conversations” in Solovky.¹⁴⁵ The authorities even trusted him enough to be an editor of the Solovky newspaper, and granted him a free pass from the monastery, as Vasyl’ Mysyk stated.¹⁴⁶ Sadly, Epik

¹⁴¹ Kostiuk, 1:362-63, 483-84.

¹⁴² On Epik’s behavior in Solovky, see Pidhainyi, 83-84.

¹⁴³ Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers’ Home ‘Slovo:’ Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: “Homin Ukrainy,” 1966), 15; Kostiuk, 1:358, 363-64. Vira, like many other wives, was evicted from *Budynok Slovo*. After the war, she lost her son—he died young.

¹⁴⁴ Pidhainyi, 83.

¹⁴⁵ *Ostannia adresa*, 2:230.

¹⁴⁶ *Ostannia adresa*, 2:264.

internalized the oppression, fully accepted his own position as a powerless victim of terror, and surrendered his principles and human dignity.

A prisoner of Solovky, Ivan Kubrak, evaluated Epik's efforts at personal survival in the following manner:

In his stories, he [Epik] depicted the kulaks' characters schematically, hoping that he would be able to deceive Soviet power which defeated the kulaks in his stories. He believed that because of his stories' content he would be released, and would return to Ukraine. No way in hell. I am certain that Epik would return to us feeling guilty and would finally realize that he was mistaken in his trust of Soviet power. Soviet power neither forgives nor forgets anything.¹⁴⁷

Pidhainyi had confirmed that in Solovky the *slov'iany*, instead of simply admonishing Epik, despised him and preferred to avoid him. Intellectual isolation and moral degradation intensified Epik's suffering, and after two years in Solovky, shortly before he was executed, Epik begged the Ukrainian community to forgive him. His re-union and, most importantly, redemption occurred through a chain of painful compromises, risky actions and internal transformations: he refused to work, eliminated his contacts with criminals, and burned his short stories and the novel about the *chekists*.¹⁴⁸

Epik went further than other *slov'iany* in proving his loyalty to Soviet power, yet he was among many who signed protocols of interrogation fabricated by the GPU. Perhaps his literary activities and life circumstances would explain his extreme transformation under the Soviets. His life was a chain of adjustments designed to conform to the system. His trick with myocarditis was one of many, which helped little in repairing his compromised reputation in the late 1920s. On 8 March 1935, Epik wrote: "I love life so much that I do not want and I cannot believe in my death—the desire for life is so powerful in me that in principle I cannot believe in

¹⁴⁷ Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains'ki Solovky* (Kyiv: "EksOb," 2001), 100.

¹⁴⁸ Pidhainyi, 84.

death.”¹⁴⁹ This feeling encouraged his further adjustments to a new spatial existence in the camps. He composed his letters to his wife from Solovky but at the same time they were addressed to an invisible censor: “Our best friends...are Soviet power and its representatives” (13 April 1935); “I feel wonderful and so happy like never, [I am] in love with the mother Revolution in a such way that there is no and there won’t be any force that would be able to ruin my joy” (11 April 1935).¹⁵⁰ His overwhelming fear of death and an irresistible desire to live and to return to a normal comfortable life with his family in *Budynok Slovo* led him to another compromise. He decided to write in Russian. To persuade the authorities of his reforging, he wrote ten short stories in Russian—*Solovetskie raskazy* (*The Solovki Stories*).¹⁵¹

Encouraged by the news that his stories had been sent to Moscow, Epik was certain that he would be released ahead of schedule. “I will be with you and our little son, and will produce interesting and significant [literary] work,” he wrote on 19 April 1937.¹⁵² The “incongruity” between Epik’s expectations and realities, and the futility of his hopes and new beliefs provoked his awakening, although it occurred very belatedly. The fear of death enslaved his spirit, but the bondage lasted until humiliation in the camps became unbearable. Epik returned to his friends who silently welcomed him back to the space of dignity and ostensible internal freedom.

¹⁴⁹ Natalia Kuziakina, “Za Solovets’koiu mezheiu” in *Natalia Kuziakina: avtoportret, interv’iu, publikatsii riznykh lit, istoriia ikh retsenzii ta interpretatsii, memoria*, ed. V. Saenko (Drohobych, Kyiv, Odesa: VF “Vidrodzhennia,” 2010), 336.

¹⁵⁰ Kuziakina in Saenko, 337.

¹⁵¹ Vedeneev and Shevchenko, 100.

¹⁵² Kuziakina in Saenko, 339.

Displacement, “Prisonization,” and Social Exclusion

By 1934, culture and intellectual thought had been hijacked and abused by the institutionalized state terror, and those creative processes that still occurred in the place were reduced to a glimmer and de-humanized because of the conformity of their producers.¹⁵³ The dynamics of the repression made the writers realize that the battle for culture that they began in the 1920s was lost. In the 1930s, they were fighting for their lives. In 1934 the GPU/NKVD’s spatial fixation on *Budynok Slovo* turned into open war against the *slov’iany*, and transformed the interrogation rooms into sites of violence and manipulation on one hand, and resilience or capitulation on the other. Fabricated by the police, denunciations of the intelligentsia arrested prior to 1934 had been used as a formal pretext for future arrests. Biographical data that had been gathered by the GPU since the dawn of Soviet power in Ukraine were of great help in identifying Ukrainian “nationalists” and in preparing lists for their arrest. The magnitude of slipshod operational practices combined with the ease of the closure of preliminary investigations approved by the higher level of command—the interrogators’ supervisors—suggests the existence of a political agenda that emanated from the center to eliminate as quickly as possible the dissenting voices in Ukraine.

Importantly, by this time, several GPU operatives had gained expertise during at least a decade of investigating the Ukrainian literati, and they were considered experts in cultural affairs in Ukraine by their supervisors. Only they were assigned to work with Ukrainian intellectuals. By now, readers are familiar with their names—Bordon, Pustovoitov, Proskuriakov, Grushevskii,

¹⁵³ See Iurii Shevel’ov, “Mizh rokamy 1933 and 1941: Ukraina za Postysheva i Khrushchova,” in *Movoznavstvo*, ed. L. Masenko (Kyiv: KMA, 2009), 1:179-216.

Sokolov and others. Through surveillance of the building, the interrogators exhibited familiarity with its cultural atmosphere, and professional connections and friendship links, information that was used against the *slov'iany*. Of course the NKVD's interest in thoroughly examining those links was minimal. This was unnecessary. *A priori*, the *slov'iany* were put on the list of "nationalists" who were perceived as a group of confederates, friends and accomplices. Their confessions to "crimes" no longer played a crucial role either for the final outcome of the preliminary investigation, or for the future verdict that was prescribed in advance.

The past of its residents shaped the meaning of *Budynok Slovo* the secret police prescribed to it—it was not a home for people but a gathering place where nationalist conspiracies hatched. This repugnant meaning included aspirations and values of the Ukrainian intelligentsia that were merely identified as Ukrainian nationalism. Routine displacement of its residents, it was believed, would disrupt the sense of national belonging, which became the first step to a radical solution of regional nationalism.¹⁵⁴ The criminalization of *Budynok Slovo* socially immobilized the residents and deprived them of expectations and goals to which they aspired in the 1920s. Those who remembered the past grieved over their lost relatives; newcomers preferred private leisure, and avoided sharing common space, a "prerequisite for politics."¹⁵⁵ State power was not invisible or subtle—it was open, aggressive, violent and persistent in demanding loyalties to the center, shaping a new kind of *slov'iany* who had been chosen to survive.

¹⁵⁴ On cultural communities, identities, power and displacements, see Angelika Bammer, ed., *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

¹⁵⁵ Alexandra Kogl, *Strange Places: The Political Potentials and Perils of Everyday Spaces* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 135.

Those displaced who were separated from their families and each other were reunited in their last days and deaths. Their final journey to Solovky and then to Sandarmokh produced more uncertainties and questions for them: they were trying to understand why they, the most faithful Bolsheviks, were eliminated in Ukraine, a question that Khvyl'ovyi could not or would not answer.¹⁵⁶ In fact, nothing seemed clear and certain for them, neither their lives nor their deaths. The temporality of their hopes for art and life left them with the perception of life as a senseless and meaningless enterprise.

The British scholar Nick Flynn has reminded us that the social and psychological influence of incarceration and the transformations of the human mind in prison remain poorly understood.¹⁵⁷ This study illustrates the overwhelming trend of self-indictments among the *slov'iany* which are explained by unbearable tortures to which they were subjected by the secret police. Moreover, the dissemination of ideology continued in prison, and certain human personalities were predisposed to embrace and subscribe to a new ideology and new behavioral trends (Epik's case). New space imposed authority, and spatial and temporal constraints placed on the *slov'iany* limited their desires and opportunities for resistance. The arsenal of the interrogators' methods was inexhaustible. Beyond physical tortures, they used techniques, such as bullying, humiliation and deception, which often were sufficient to break the suspects. Some were able to overcome "privations and exercise self-determination," but most fell low morally and intellectually.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Kostiuk, 1:462.

¹⁵⁷ Nick Flynn, *Criminal Behavior in Context: Space, Place and Desistance from Crime* (New York: Willan Publishing, 2010), 100.

¹⁵⁸ Flynn, 101, 103; M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977).

However, besides personality, spatial factors and the longevity of exposure to state surveillance also played a significant role in human behavior in prison. The Krushel'nyts'kyi family exemplified this supposition: most family members rejected "prisonization" and had never confessed to crimes that were ascribed to them by NKVD agents.¹⁵⁹ They had no time to absorb an aesthetic and culture of fear and denunciations developed in *Budynok Slovo*, they were arrested too quickly, almost immediately after their immigration from Galicia.

Importantly, the punishments of the transgressors, Ukrainian "nationalists" in most cases, and their reformation and rehabilitation never accorded with the initial purpose of Soviet penal policy that was publicized and propagandized by the Soviet regime, social inclusion. Conversion had never occurred in labor camps, replaced instead by violent deaths. Most rehabilitation processes had been conducted posthumously as a formality and as a tribute to the prevailing political trends during the Khrushchev Thaw.

¹⁵⁹On "prisonization" ("the degree to which prisoners are 'invaded' by imprisonment at a deep psychological level—has a deleterious effect on behavior"), see D. Clemmer, *The Prison Community* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1940).

Chapter Eight

Repressions of 1935-1936: “Wrong” Places for Tea Ceremonies

Everything is a lie...

Ivan Vyrhan¹⁶⁰

Counter-Ukrainization in Progress

In 1936 Proskuriakov, the interrogator working on the group case of Ukrainian artists, known as the Boichukists, told Natalia Piasets'ka, the wife of Ivan Lipkovs'kyi, an artist and professor at the Kyiv Art Institute, that her husband's guilt lay in “drinking his tea somewhere, where he should not have it.”¹⁶¹ The residence of Lipkovs'kyi's teacher Mykhailo Boichuk was associated with crime and transgression, and a “wrong place to be” for many people. Boichuk once stated that a great wall, similar to the Great Wall of China (“a barrier even for birds”), should be erected between Russia and Ukraine so that Ukrainian culture would have an opportunity to develop. This statement reached the NKVD.¹⁶² Friends, colleagues and guests of the world-famous artist began to disappear one by one. The NKVD also arrested two of his closest friends and best students, Ivan Padalka and Vasyl' Sedliar, who happened to live in an equally dangerous place, *Budynok Slovo*.¹⁶³

The state evaluated places not only from a geopolitical perspective, but also from a cultural one, on the basis of its perceptions about ethnic coherence,

¹⁶⁰ Uttered on his death bed in 1975, these were the last words by the Ukrainian poet and *slov'ianyn* Ivan Vyrhan who survived the labor camps. From a private conversation with the Ukrainian poet and *slov'ianyn* Robert Tretyakov (1983, Kharkiv, Ukraine). In the Ukrainian language this statement translates as “Vse brekhnia...”

¹⁶¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.4. The Boichukists were artists who belonged to Boichuk's artistic school.

¹⁶² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.59.

¹⁶³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.4-5. Lipkovs'kyi perished in the Gulag, and on 10 December 1937 his wife Piasets'ka was exiled to labor camps for 8 years.

unity of residents and their susceptibility to nationalist propaganda. These perceptions of communities that occupied a given territory or place shaped the government's imagination about their inclination to resistance. The importance of this evaluation became clear to the Bolsheviks immediately after they took power in Ukraine, especially in the context of their attempts to collectivize the peasantry. The collectivization process and cultural construction in Ukraine were anything but a smooth integration of the region into the Union.¹⁶⁴ The state quickly developed coercive mechanisms and found ways to justify its violence to cope with nationalist tendencies in the countryside and in the cities. Despite the claims of building national culture, the state exhibited little interest in regional unity. On the contrary, through terror it fragmented the local population. "Nationalist" and "deviationist" groups were uncovered on what seemed like a daily basis by the secret police, creating the popular perception that Ukraine seethed with resistance and was "contaminated by enemies." Ukraine as a geographical place and cultural space, as any other region in the Soviet Union, helped the secret police to identify, to define and to exclude these "enemies."

The 1929-1934 mass operations against "nationalists" signaled a radical departure from the nationality policy proclaimed in 1923. Although popular or internal party discussions about Ukrainization had been forbidden, Postyshev in his speeches routinely returned to this question, arguing that "nationalists" after their defeat would choose the most convenient position for themselves: they would accuse Moscow of defeating Ukrainization and

¹⁶⁴ Valery Vasil'ev, "Vinnitsa Oblast," in *Centre-Local Relations in the Stalinist State, 1928-1941*, ed. E.A. Rees (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 168-79.

promoting counter-Ukrainization and russification in the republic.¹⁶⁵

Postyshev mocked and “unmasked” this “enemy” tactic. He admonished local party bosses for the failure of Ukrainization, accusing them of obstructing the center’s efforts to Ukrainize the republic. Yet, the center ordered the use of the Russian language in most, if not all, party and official documentation, which, it was claimed, was more accessible to the masses. The party suggested that Russian had become the international language of all progressive humanity, and people could now read the great works by Lenin and Stalin in the original.¹⁶⁶

This sharp public rearticulation of party policies which manifested itself in the rhetoric of public speeches, party orders and circulars came as no surprise to the the *slov’iany*. During the Literary Discussion (1925-28), they learned that a tremendous gap existed between the party’s words and deeds. Trapped spatially and mentally in their homes and local realities, many intellectuals tried to escape into art, laboring in the field of socialist realism.¹⁶⁷ Mikhail Epstein has noted that “in Soviet society, labor bec[ame] a form of escape from the freedom that importunately leaves one alone with oneself, with one’s conscience.”¹⁶⁸ The residents learned to compartmentalize reality; many worked hard to forget about the fate of their neighbors and to ignore the inevitably approaching tragedy of personal arrest.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ See the materials of the 17 October 1934 Joint Plenum of the Kyiv Party District Committee and the District Executive Committee, and Postyshev’s speech in P.P. Postyshev, *V bor’be za leninsko-stalinskuiu natsional’nuiu politiku na Ukraine* (Kiev: 1935), 103.

¹⁶⁶ Hennadii Efimenko, *Natsional’no-kul’turna polityka VKP(b) shchodo Radians’koi Ukrainy (1932-38)* (Kyiv: Natsional’na akademiia nauk Ukrainy, Instytut istorii Ukrainy, 2001), 42.

¹⁶⁷ Ivan Senchenko, *Opovidannia. Povisti. Spohady* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990), 553.

¹⁶⁸ Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, ed. David Gross and William M. Johnston, trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 167.

¹⁶⁹ On subjectivities of the *slov’iany*, see operational materials on Khvyl’ovyi in HDA SBU, f.11, spr.C-183.

Many redefined themselves as translators because they could not publish works of their own; some focused on teaching; and some continued to write about marvelous socialist achievements and crucify their colleagues for nationalist deviations.¹⁷⁰ Some did it routinely with visible enthusiasm; others—only when they felt threatened. Through intimidation and fear, the state facilitated disunity among the residents which precluded their resistance to terror. Fragmented and ideologically confused, the *slov'iany* shared the place of their residence not on the basis of common values, but on the basis of what Pitirim A. Sorokin would characterize as “spatial contiguous adjacency.”¹⁷¹

However, continuing to share the same professional space and physical place of residence, different groups of people assimilated new customs, new politics and norms of social conduct for the purpose they all shared—physical survival. Analyzing this sharing of the same space, Sorokin has pointedly stated:

...territorial proximity imposes upon the neighbors a set of common interests and makes them solidary within the limits of these interests, no matter how different they may be in other respects. Breathing the same air, absorbing the same sociocultural atmosphere, the interacting neighbors cannot fail to develop some similarities and common ways of behavior... Exposed to [the] same natural and social environment to which they have to adapt in order to live, individuals develop a community of interests imposed by their territorial adjacency.¹⁷²

For the majority, their art became their primary field of adjustment in the quest of survival. As a result, the period of 1935-1936 was characterized by mediocre literature in Ukraine, a product of the gradual assimilation and eventual homogenization of artists' mentalities with the corresponding and

¹⁷⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, ark.218-25. See the translator Anatolii Volkovich's account about professional activities and tactics of the *slov'iany*.

¹⁷¹ Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), 145.

¹⁷² Sorokin, 197.

inevitable leveling of their individualities.¹⁷³ Even the most independent and talented artists accepted what Theodor Adorno called the “infantile” socialist realism that had been proclaimed by the Soviet Union in 1934.¹⁷⁴ Rather than an approach or style, it was a “loathsome literary salad,” as Andrei Siniavsky defined it, which could hardly be called art.¹⁷⁵ The ideas that were supposed to emanate from the writers’ minds and human experiences were preliminarily chewed and digested by semi-literate party officials, and then regurgitated as prescriptions for art which, in its vulgarized and cliché-like form, appeared on the pages of the proletarian press.¹⁷⁶

However, literary impotence was not the only problem facing writers; large-scale political events exacerbated their inner instabilities and inadequacies. Between 1934 and 1937, as one scholar euphemistically noted, Sergei Kirov, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and Valerian Kuibyshev “departed the central leadership as a result of unusual deaths.”¹⁷⁷ Kirov was assassinated on 1 December 1934, Kuibyshev supposedly died of heart failure on 26 January 1935, and Ordzhonikidze committed suicide (as the public learned later) on 18 February 1937. These developments inspired imaginations and encouraged a

¹⁷³ For a discussion about this notion in the Ukrainian cultural context, and the detrimental influence of the Soviets’ control on artists, see Mykola Zhulyns’kyi, *Natsiia. Kul’tura. Literatura: Natsional’no-kul’turni mify ta ideino-estetychni poshuky Ukraïns’koi literatury* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2010); 116-126, 390-97; George G. Grabowicz, *Do istorii Ukraïns’koi literatury: Doslidzhennia, esei, polemika* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2003), 44-45; Oleh S. Ilnytzyk, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 41-53, 342-43; on similar influences in the Russian cultural context, see Epstein, *After the Future*, 205; Benedikt Sarnov, *Stalin i pisateli*, 4 vol. (Moskva: Eksmo, 2008-2011); Daniil Granin, *Prichudy moiei pamiaty: Kniga-razмышlenie* (Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf, MiM-Del’ta, 2009).

¹⁷⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, and trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge&Kegan Paul, 1984), 354.

¹⁷⁵ Andrei Siniavsky, *On Socialist Realism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 90-91.

¹⁷⁶ For instance, both Ukrainian party leaders Postyshev (before the revolution he was a textile worker), and Kosior (he worked as a metal worker) had a lower education. See Gerald M. Easter, *Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 42-43.

¹⁷⁷ Easter, 144.

great deal of speculation about who “ordered” the deaths.¹⁷⁸ Whatever the case might be, one might argue with certainty that the Soviet government thoroughly concealed the circumstances of their deaths, and Stalin used Kirov’s assassination as a pretext for intensifying repression, which was soon translated into further repression of the *slov’iany*.¹⁷⁹

The year 1935 was marked by a hunt for spies, such as Trotskyites, Zinovievites and concealed enemies who were former members of various political parties. The numbers of arrested in Ukraine superseded those of the arrested in any other Soviet republic.¹⁸⁰ In September 1936, Nikolai Ezhov was appointed head of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs. He was an advocate of radical methods in the struggle against regional administrations. Ezhov promoted a conspiracy theory in which the bread procurement crises of 1932, Kirov’s murder, and an intricate factional struggle among Ukrainian party leaders were constituent elements.¹⁸¹ Shortly after his appointment, another expert on Ukraine, Kaganovich, stated that “under Yezhov things are going well! He set to work firmly, in a Stalinist way.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Easter, 144.

¹⁷⁹ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 108-116, 150-65, 286. Today there is no comprehensive evidence either for the scenario of Stalin’s non-involvement in these three deaths, or for the scenario of his involvement. For more details about Kirov’s assassination, see A. Kirilina’s, Marc Jansen’s, Nikita Petrov’s, and Khlevniuk’s studies. See also Alexander Orlov’s discussion and Elizabeth Lermolo’s account (Lermolo met in prison Nikolaev’s ex-wife and Stalin’s aid who shared their knowledge with her about Kirov’s assassination). For details about the preliminary investigation of Nikolaev’s case, see Vadym Zolotar’ov, *Sekretno-politychnyi viddil DPU USSR: Spravy ta liudy* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007), 47-49.

¹⁸⁰ Valerii Vasiliev, “The Great Terror in the Ukraine, 1936-38,” in *Stalin’s Terror Revisited*, ed. Melanie Ilic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 142.

¹⁸¹ J. Arch Getty, and Oleg V. Naumov, *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin’s “Iron Fist”* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 1-13; Marc Jansen, and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin’s Loyal Executioner: People’s Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Institution Press, 2002), 53-54; Easter, 145.

¹⁸² Quoted in Jansen and Petrov, 55.

Yet things were not going well for the *slov'iany*. Since 1934, the composition of *Budynok Slovo* had changed, and because of constant arrests continued to do so. In 1934, some writers moved to Kyiv, the new capital of Ukraine, where “Rolit,” a building similar to “Slovo,” was built as an official writers’ residence. According to the new *slov'iany*n Teren’ Masenko, Ivan Kulyk, the head of the Union of Writers, brought a part of the *slov'iany* to Kyiv—those who were famous and whom Kulyk personally liked.¹⁸³ Life became extremely difficult for those who were left behind. Private publishing houses were eliminated, and the State Publishing House (DVU) was moved to the capital. Nina Cherednyk, the director of the DVU, sometimes came to Kharkiv but usually the city’s writers had to go to Kyiv to persuade the DVU to accept their work for publication.¹⁸⁴ Many writers and their families could hardly make ends meet.

Leonid Iukhvyd and Ivan Plakhtin, the new *slov'iany* who had moved into *Budynok Slovo* in the apartments of those who had been arrested, now led the Kharkiv chapter of the Union of Writers. To adhere to the party line and to demonstrate popular participation in Soviet cultural construction, they arranged regular purge meetings in the Union of Writers, to which they invited workers (“the masses”) who, together with official literary critics, harshly criticized the writers’ creative work.¹⁸⁵ The warm, generous and admiring attitudes that writers had experienced in the early twenties had by now been replaced by popular suspiciousness, distrust and irritation. Kharkiv became a “flattened social landscape,” where a lack of sympathy for human suffering

¹⁸³ Teren’ Masenko, *Roman pam’iati* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi Pys’mennyk, 1970), 78.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Senchenko, 570-71, 577. The second (unofficial) part of the meetings was usually a banquet with plenty of alcohol.

was commonplace. The close proximity and the omnipresence of death eradicated pity and produced friendships grounded in superficiality and insincerity.¹⁸⁶

Despite the stigma attached to the building, new writers immediately filled the apartments in *Budynok Slovo* that were vacated by the departure or arrest of previous residents. Among new residents were the young Teren' Masenko, Ivan Kaliannyk, Ivan Kovtun (Iurii Vukhnal'), Leonid Iukhvyd, and Stepan Kryzhanivs'kyi. Like no other place, *Budynok Slovo* embodied for them the elite club to which they aspired to belong.¹⁸⁷ As a repository of early hopes and good memories, the building continued to attract writers, despite their dark and pessimistic imaginings about the present and the future.¹⁸⁸

Through the press, the state discursively transformed *Budynok Slovo* into a reservoir of Ukrainian nationalism. Importantly, the place, the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian self-identification, not ethnic identity, determined the fate of the *slov'iany*. The state's demands for social purification reinforced the authority of the secret police, and the process of spatial mythmaking proceeded with increasing tempo throughout the second half of the 1930s. Because of the totalizing fear of repression, *Budynok Slovo* became neither a site of protest, nor active resistance. Its disputed territory was conquered without warfare, and the victors, the state and the secret police, adjusted the place to their needs, changing its aesthetics and purpose. State violence

¹⁸⁶ For more details about social landscapes under authoritarianism, see Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000), 19.

¹⁸⁷ Places are thought, admired, hated, "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined" by those whose lives come into direct or oblique contact with them. For more details, see Thomas F. Gieryn, "A Space for Place in Sociology," *Annual Review in Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000):465.

¹⁸⁸ On spatial identity, memory and imagination, see T.A. Donofrio, "Ground Zero and Place-Making Authority: The Conservative Metaphors in 9/11 Families' 'Take Back the Memorial' Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 2 (2010): 152.

divided the *slov'iany* and forced them to search for ways of survival not collectively, but individually.

The Russian Tolmachiov as a Ukrainian Nationalist

In October 1934 the purge commission discussed the political image of those who worked in the publishing house “LIM.” The commission scrupulously analyzed the decisions made by the LIM primary party cell and the behavior of its members.¹⁸⁹ The journalist and the *slov'ianyn* Hryhorii Piddubnyi-Tolmachiov was expelled from the party



Hryhorii Piddubnyi-Tolmachiov.

for a “series of nationalist errors” that he had allegedly made in his professional activities. Piddubnyi publicly complained about the decision that, he claimed, had been made in a totally authoritarian manner, without even providing him an opportunity to speak in his defense.¹⁹⁰

Piddubnyi’s actual transgression was his cooperation with the former Ukrainian government, the Directory, his membership in the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (SR), and his contacts with members of the

¹⁸⁹ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.1,22.

¹⁹⁰ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.111.

dissident wing of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine (KPZU) led by Roman Turians'kyi and Iosyp Vasyl'kiv.¹⁹¹ After his experience as a member in the Australian Socialist Party, Piddubnyi returned to Ukraine before the revolution and joined the Ukrainian SRs, and later the Directory, where he collaborated with Pavlo Khrystiuk and other members of the Central Committee. After the defeat of the UNR, Piddubnyi emigrated to Austria where he joined the Communist Party of Austria, and became an editor for the KPZU press.¹⁹² His subsequent break with the KPZU in 1923 meant little for the commission, and his past work in the West made him vulnerable during the massive campaign against Ukrainian nationalists in the thirties.¹⁹³

Like many others, Piddubnyi returned to Ukraine in 1926 and began to work for the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, which in the eyes of the state and the secret police was contaminated by nationalists and anti-Soviet elements. He was excluded from the party twice, in 1929 (after which his membership was renewed), and again in 1934.¹⁹⁴ The last exclusion became fatal for him. He forgetfully or conveniently did not update his biography, although this was demanded by party ethics.¹⁹⁵ The commission accused him of hiding his "counterrevolutionary past" and links to Galicians—Mykhailo

¹⁹¹ **Roman Turians'kyi (Kuz'ma)** was an active member of the KPZU, and stood against Soviet policies in Ukraine. He was excluded from the party but repented and went to work in Moscow. In February 1933 he was arrested as an UVO member, and sentenced to 5 years in labor camps. In February 1940 the case was reopened, and Turians'kyi was shot as a German and Polish spy in 1940. **Iosyp Krylyk-Vasyl'kiv**, head of the Holovlit, was arrested on 23 April 1933, and on 23 September 1933 was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps. For more details on the KPZU, see Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992), 116-25.

¹⁹² DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.23.

¹⁹³ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.189.

¹⁹⁴ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.23.

¹⁹⁵ Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, "Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Problems, Perspectives and Interpretations," in *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression*, eds. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 2.

Hrushevs'kyi in particular—and claimed that it could not trust a person who over three years had not provided a single critical essay about socialist construction in Ukraine.¹⁹⁶ “The charge of ‘silence’” as evidence of a crime and conspiracy against the state was broadly employed by purge commissions.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, Piddubnyi’s knowledge of English, German and French made him even more suspect.¹⁹⁸

Piddubnyi’s testimony on 5 October 1934 to the purge commission is a valuable document because it is recorded verbatim in a stenographic report. This testimony reveals the dismal atmosphere of the 1930s, and the unwavering popular interest in having an apartment in the elite and famous *Budynok Slovo*.

According to Piddubnyi, in June 1933 he contracted typhus and lay ill for three months. During this period, he lost his jobs in the publishing houses “LIM” and “Zakhidna Ukraina.” By late 1933, he recovered, although there were complications—he could not walk properly. Because Piddubnyi lived in *Budynok Slovo*, the cooperative “Slovo” kindly invited him to become the cooperative’s head. This was an opportunity for Piddubnyi to make some money in addition to his literary income.¹⁹⁹

In late November 1933, Piddubnyi received a letter (he did not specify from whom), in which the author insisted on being provided with an apartment in “Slovo.” The author also stated that if his request was not satisfied, he would submit materials on Piddubnyi to the purge commission.²⁰⁰ Piddubnyi

¹⁹⁶ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.24.

¹⁹⁷ Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 107, 124, 138.

¹⁹⁸ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.188.

¹⁹⁹ DAKhO, f. P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.192.

²⁰⁰ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.193.

publicized the letter at a meeting of the cooperative, and its board decided to pass the letter on to the Party Organizational Committee. In December 1933, *Budynok Slovo*, as we have seen, was shaken by arrests. Shortly after, Piddubnyi was informed by the LIM (he was still registered in its primary party cell) that he had been expelled from the party. The news came as a complete surprise to him. Members of the cell demanded that he surrender his membership card but Piddubnyi refused to do so. The LIM party leadership then wrote a report that Piddubnyi had been a member of various nationalist parties in the past, and conducted wrecking activity in the cooperative “Slovo.”²⁰¹ After Piddubnyi complained about these illegitimate actions to the Party Control Commission, his party membership was renewed, although a commission was created to evaluate Piddubnyi’s literary work. After 3 months of hard work, the commission concluded that his books and articles did not contain “nationalist deviations.”²⁰²

During the meeting of the purge commission, another *slov’ianyn*, Ivan Lakyza, insistently asked Piddubnyi who financed his trip abroad and how he sustained himself there for several months. Everyone in the commission believed that the Ukrainian government in exile supported Piddubnyi in Austria. Piddubnyi patiently explained that he made a living by publishing books and articles in various Ukrainian newspapers and journals. The commission interrogated Piddubnyi about his connections with “Western Ukraine,” and Gzhyts’kyi and Irchan in particular, who by this time had been arrested as Ukrainian nationalists and UVO members. Piddubnyi claimed that he did not have any personal relationship with either of them, although he had

²⁰¹ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.194.

²⁰² DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.195.

lived with Gzhyts'kyi in *Budynok Slovo*.²⁰³ Today it is difficult to verify Piddubnyi's claims. It is possible that he attempted to distance himself from "nationalists" in an attempt to save his politically correct image and to prevent his expulsion from the party, a tactic practiced by many.²⁰⁴

In the eyes of the commission, this "distancing" of course did not free him from responsibility to report to the proper agencies about Gzhyts'kyi's and Irchan's anti-Soviet stances as members of the association with which Piddubnyi maintained close professional relationships. According to the commission, Piddubnyi did not exist in isolation, and might have heard something negative about those two who later were arrested as Ukrainian nationalists. Wendy Z. Goldman aptly noted that the political culture at the time implied that "there were no penalties for writing a *zaiavlenie* [denunciation] without evidence, [but] not writing one at all could invite serious consequences."²⁰⁵ At the very least, Piddubnyi was guilty of not submitting his thoughts about "suspicious" individuals to the party or the NKVD.

Then the head of the commission asked Piddubnyi about his connections with Ialovy and other *slov'iany*: "What kind of relationship did you have with the nationalists that were arrested in your cooperative building, and who exactly were your friends, and why did you tell Senchenko that S. was arrested and that you were now afraid that you would also be arrested?" Piddubnyi confirmed that he saw Senchenko and shared with him the information that Dosvitnii and Panchenko were arrested, but denied saying that he anticipated his own arrest. Piddubnyi assured the commission that he

²⁰³ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.213.

²⁰⁴ On strategies of survival, see Goldman, 123.

²⁰⁵ Goldman, 30.

had no close relationship with any *slov'iany*; he just shared a place of residence with them.²⁰⁶ Employing standard interrogation practices, the head of the commission forced Piddubnyi to reveal his attitude toward VAPLITE, *shumkism* and Skrypnyk. Piddubnyi identified these phenomena as petty bourgeois and national deviations.²⁰⁷

During the discussion, his fellow writer and *slov'ianyn* Ievhen Kas'ianenko expressed concerns about Piddubnyi's political instability and doubts about his SR past. Other members supported Kas'ianenko and suggested that Piddubnyi's tortuous life was unclear to them, as were the motives of his prompt emigration from Kyiv abroad, three weeks before the Bolsheviks took over the city.²⁰⁸ For the commission, Piddubnyi's escape from Kyiv implied a reluctance to contribute to the Soviet cause, and his "leftist" position was only a cover-up for his spying and enmity toward the Soviet Union.

The *slov'ianyn* Ivan Mykytenko joined the chorus of the indictors and suggested that Piddubnyi contributed nothing to socialist culture, and the party organization could not trust him to fulfill any party task or responsibility. Moreover, "when according to the party directive, we were to help Communists from various organizations to reside in *Budynok Slovo* in the apartments of nationalists who had been arrested," Mykytenko continued, "there was no way to find Piddubnyi anywhere. . . . You were hiding in order not to fulfill the party directive on moving people to the building, people we need. We needed to consolidate forces for struggle [against nationalists], and in the cooperative some 'Communist' was sitting [and obstructing our efforts].

²⁰⁶ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.215; DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.220, ark.18.

²⁰⁷ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.220, ark.19-21.

²⁰⁸ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.220, ark.27-30.

How can we allow him the privilege of being a Communist?...The face of Piddubnyi is facelessness,” concluded Mykytenko.²⁰⁹ The purge commission supported Mykytenko, and stated that Piddubnyi’s maneuvers as the chief of the cooperative “Slovo” were counterrevolutionary, and that he was a “class enemy.”²¹⁰

In his final statement, Piddubnyi emphasized that perhaps those who accused him of doing little for the writers who lived in the cellars had forgotten that he himself resided in the cellar of *Budynok Slovo* with three children, one of whom had tuberculosis. He regretted that he did not do more as a party member and a writer but he asked the committee not to diminish his revolutionary past.²¹¹

Piddubnyi hoped that the state would not dare touch him, a former tsarist political prisoner and revolutionary who personally knew comrade Artiom.²¹² However, approximately three months after Piddubnyi’s public humiliation at the purge meeting, on 15 January 1935 he was arrested as an UVO member. Kostiuk recalled that the arrests of the *slov’iany* one by one in late 1934 and early 1935, including that of Piddubnyi, distressed him: “What to do? Where to go? Where should one find a safe place? There was no answer.”²¹³ Piddubnyi’s wife Erna likely felt the same way, especially when

²⁰⁹ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.220, ark.34-35, 37.

²¹⁰ DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.220, ark.44.

²¹¹ Indeed, Piddubnyi lived in apartment 49 in one of those damp semi-cellar apartments, from the windows of which one could see only the feet of pedestrians. He and his wife Erna Tolmacheva had three children, 13-year-old daughter Kseniia, and two sons, 10-year-old Svetozar and 5-year-old Roland. See DAKhO, f. P20, op. 3, spr. 220, ark. 47-53; Gennadii Glazunov, “Sel’skii revoliutsioner: Grigorii Tolmachev-Poddubnyi i iego krestnyi put’,” *Den’* no. 6, 21 January 2006.

²¹² Artiom was a code name of the Russian revolutionary **Fiodor Andreevich Sergeev** (1883-1921), close friend of Sergei Kirov and Josef Stalin. Piddubnyi met Artiom in Australia where both immigrated before the revolution of 1917.

²¹³ Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:336, 460.

the GPU came to search the apartment two days later after the arrest of her husband. According to the secret police's documents, during a second search, in the presence of the commandant of the building Iakiv Fish and a militia member Ivan Bondarenko, the NKVD expropriated Piddubnyi's foreign passport, personal correspondence and photographs. Interestingly, during this search an NKVD operative brought back 130 rubles in cash, 28 rubles and 70 kopeks in checks (*oblihotsii*) and two keys from the apartment, for which Erna had to sign a receipt.²¹⁴ The NKVD returned the confiscated funds perhaps influenced by Piddubnyi's revolutionary past or because of his three children.

One month after Piddubnyi's arrest and before the closure of the preliminary investigation, the medical commission in the Kharkiv NKVD prison concluded that there were no health impediments to Piddubnyi's exile.²¹⁵ Piddubnyi's fate was sealed. Collecting indicting testimonies of Piddubnyi's "accomplices" was merely a technical matter.

According to the NKVD's scenario, Piddubnyi was recruited into the UVO by Fed' Bei in Prague and sent to Ukraine to prepare the assassinations of Postyshev and Balyts'kyi. Piddubnyi's interrogators, Bliok, Lisitskii, Iakushev and Kaminskii,²¹⁶ included in his file the depositions of supposedly

²¹⁴ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.6a.

²¹⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.8.

²¹⁶ Fed' Bei refers to **Fedir Bei-Orlovs'kyi** (1899-1938). He worked as a courier for the Ukrainian Central Rada, and was a personal guard of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi. In 1920 he became a member of the KPZU. Fed' Bei was recruited by the GPU in 1921. In 1933 he was arrested as a member of the UVO, sentenced to 10 years in labor camps, and was executed on 15 September 1938 as a Ukrainian nationalist. See Oleksandr Rubl'ov, *Zakhidnoukrains'ka intelligentsia [ZI] u zahal'nonatsional'nykh politychnykh ta kul'turnykh protestakh (1914-1939)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy, NANU, 2004), 149. **Bliok** was the interrogator in Ivan Bahrainyi's and Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi's cases. **Boris Lisitskii** worked for the NKVD Administration in Kharkiv oblast' since 23 February 1933. On 1 December 1935 he was promoted to the head of the third sector of the SPV. On 5 April 1937 he was transferred to Kyiv to work for the NKVD of the UkrSSR. See Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-DPU-NKVS na Kharkivshchyni: Liudy ta Doli. 1919-1941* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2003), 420. **Lavrentii Iakushev-Babkin** was an assistant to the head of the SPV in the Kharkiv operative sector of the GPU (since 3 April 1931). On 1 March 1934, he was promoted to the interim head of the SPV in the

active UVO members Oleksandr Badan-Iavorenko, Vasyl' Atamaniuk, Foma Prystupa, Mykhailo Chychkevych, Petro Demchuk, Petro Tymets'kyi and many others. Allegedly, Piddubnyi was a member of the Vienna UVO chapter and was sent to Ukraine to undermine the Soviet regime.²¹⁷ The language of the depositions reveals that they were not likely written by the accused.²¹⁸ It would be difficult to imagine that the arrested would complicate an unenviable position by using definitions such as “counterrevolutionary nests” (characterizing their places of meeting), or “anti-Soviet organization” (describing its goals, structure and functions). In other words, interrogation protocols appear to be composed not by an “insider” who was a part of the conspiracy and who would be interested in softening the language of definitions but by an “outsider” who expresses himself in the jargon of the institutional force and thereby reveals his critical attitude toward alleged concealed enemies of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, Piddubnyi's recalcitrance surprised his interrogators. He was questioned five times during the period from 19 January 1935 to 20 June 1935 but categorically rejected all accusations and characterized the depositions of his former colleagues as insinuations and fantasies.²¹⁹ Perhaps, paying tribute to Piddubnyi's revolutionary past and his connections with high party officials in Moscow, the Secret Political Department (SPV) surreptitiously decided to re-investigate the case despite the VTsIK 1

Administration of State Security of the NKVD in Kharkiv oblast'. **Iakiv Kaminskii** worked as an interim head of the NKVD Administration in Kharkiv oblast' from 28 August 1934 to 17 March 1937. See Iurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko and Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abris, 1997), 482, 578.

²¹⁷ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.9-53zv.

²¹⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.79. This is Volodymyr Iurynets's testimony about how he was forced to denounce Piddubnyi. Similar to Antin Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi, Iurynets' (professor and NKVD informer) systematically wrote false reports to the NKVD under pressure from Pustovoitov, Kozel'skii and Dolinskii.

²¹⁹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.54 zv.,56 zv.,58 zv.,60,61.

December 1934 resolution that required completion of preliminary investigations of terrorists within 10 days. However, the Military Prosecutor Perfil'iev learned about the SPV's decision. He was livid because of the SPV's attempt to ignore the principle of its subordination to the law. Perfil'iev personally supervised all cases involving "terrorist activity." He wrote a letter of complaint to the Ukrainian NKVD leadership. The logic of his rationale was striking. Perfil'iev insisted that Piddubnyi's case should be expedited according to the 1 December 1934 resolution, because any attempt to prove Piddubnyi's guilt would be problematic. It would require cross-examining those who could confirm Piddubnyi's membership in the UVO, but the problem was that all the "witnesses" had been already exiled to the North. Perfil'iev recommended that the resolution should be applied in Piddubnyi's case to avoid complicating matters. In addition, he reminded the SPV that in future it should consult with him directly instead of making inappropriate decisions about terrorists.²²⁰

Piddubnyi's verdict was immediately prepared in late June, and in early July 1935 it was sent to Moscow for approval by the Special Meeting of the NKVD in the USSR.²²¹ On 14 September 1935, Piddubnyi was sentenced to 5 years in labor camps. He ended up in Solovky, together with Kurbas, Kulish, the Krushel'nyts'kyi family and many other *slov'iany*.²²² He wrote three letters from Solovky, one to Postyshev in 1935, and two to Ezhov in 1936, in which he stated that people had libeled him.²²³ These letters were the cry of a disillusioned and crushed individual trying in the name of Soviet

²²⁰ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.68-75zv.

²²¹ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.88.

²²² DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.92-93; Glazunov, "Sel'skii revoliutsioner."

²²³ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.193-99,200.

justice to “recall” the names and actions of people who, he stated, were anti-Soviet and dangerous to the state. He desperately tried to align himself with the system of societal values, and the aesthetics of self-censorship and denunciation. The camp practice of “reforging” morally destroyed Piddubnyi. The energetic revolutionary and distinguished author turned into a sick, miserable, weeping human being. In his last letter, Piddubnyi shamelessly begged the authorities to convoy him to Leningrad to an eye clinic. Lime had gotten into his eye during his work in the camps, and he had been suffering from inflammation for three months. He developed an eye tumor and began to lose his vision. His letters remained unanswered.²²⁴ On 9 October 1937, the NKVD troika in Leningrad oblast’ sentenced Piddubnyi to death as a Ukrainian nationalist, and he was executed in Sandarmokh on 28 October 1937, as were many other *slov’iany*.²²⁵

Piddubnyi was rehabilitated posthumously on 27 November 1970, by which time only a few remembered that Piddubnyi was the author of 50 books and many articles. The Stefanyk Scientific Library in Lviv possesses a rare copy of Piddubnyi’s memoirs *Midiani zahravy* (Copper Skies), which he wrote in Australia and which were expropriated by the secret police from his apartment. This is a rare example of a work that survived after the repression of its author.²²⁶

²²⁴ See Piddubnyi’s 23 December 1936 letter in DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.200. In labor camps, lime was regularly used as a disinfectant to cover corpses in mass graves after mass executions.

²²⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.4, spr.2346, ark.182.

²²⁶ See Glazunov, “Sel’skii revoliutsioner.”

The Head of the Cooperative “Slovo” Petro Lisovyi

Petro Svashenko (Lisovyi) was one of the most popular journalists in Ukraine, and had a biography that could be considered politically expedient for the thirties. He was born to a peasant family. In 1919 he became a member of the VKP(b), and worked in Chernihiv and Nizhyn for the Soviet regime. He began to publish his essays in the newspapers *Selians'ka Pravda* and *Visti VUTsVK* in Chernihiv. After 1924 his short stories were published in various Ukrainian newspapers and journals, and as separate books. In 1923 he joined the literary association “Hart,” in which he met Blakytnyi, Khvyl'ovyi, Tychyna, Iohansen, Polishchuk and many other talented writers who in the middle of the twenties created the cooperative “Slovo.” In 1929 Lisovyi joined the literary association “VUSPP,” a group favored by the party, although Dosvitnii tried to persuade him to join “Prolitfront.” This clever political move helped Lisovyi become an assistant to the chief editor of the party newspaper *Visti VUTsVK*.²²⁷

During the July 1929-June 1930 purge in the primary party cell of *Visti*, Svashenko's origins became problematic for the commission conducting the purge: his father was identified as a *kurkul'*, and his service in the “Petliurite” cause compromised him in the eyes of the purge commission. Moreover, the commission learned that Svashenko served in the White and the UNR Armies, and from 1917-1919 was a member of the Borot'bist party and the Ukrainian SR party. He was excluded from the party for hiding these biographical details.²²⁸

²²⁷ Ivan Dziuba, *Z krynytsi lit* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim “Kyievo-Mohylians'ka akademiia,” 2006), 1:209; O.H. Musienko, ed., *Z poroha smerti: Pys'mennyky Ukrainy—zhertvy stalins'kykh represii* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991), 303-305.

²²⁸ DAKhO, f.P15, op.2, spr.26, ark.25.

Svashenko managed to restore his party membership, but not for long. A 27 December 1934 letter of denunciation by Horokhivs'kyi and Minchev to the NKVD operative Bliok launched a series of attacks on Svashenko.²²⁹ It



Petro Lisovyi.

appears likely that Bliok had ordered the party purge commission to eject Svashenko from the party as a Ukrainian nationalist and former Borot'bist. The plan was implemented in January 1935. Svashenko's neighbors and fellow writers from the party organization of the Union of Writers Volodymyr Kulyk and Ivan Kyrylenko facilitated the task. They wrote a letter that evaluated him negatively as a party member and as a writer.²³⁰ This evaluation induced the commission to further harass Svashenko: its members accused him of political passivity. They suggested that he had hid in the countryside from April to September 1933, and did nothing to combat the *kurkuls*.²³¹ Svashenko argued that neither the 1929 nor the 1935 party decisions were fair: he had taken such a long vacation with the permission of the Organizational Committee of the Union of Writers, *Visti* and the party organization.

²²⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.77.

²³⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.76zv.

²³¹ See the envelope with Svashenko's explanatory letters (without the archival number) in AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1.

Moreover, the Holovlit, Svashenko stated, had never withdrawn any of his works, and the label of “nationalist” seemed to be completely out of place.²³²

The harassment of Svashenko extended to his inner sphere, his home. After Piddubnyi was fired from the position because of “nationalist deviations,” Svashenko was elected head of the cooperative “Slovo.” He worked together with Itsyk Fefer, a Jewish writer who was responsible for ideological issues in the building as the cooperative’s *partorg*.²³³ On 15 December 1934, Svashenko wrote a letter of complaint to the cooperative’s party committee that had decided to disfranchise him and ultimately to dismiss him from his position for his irresponsibility as a party leader in the cooperative. Svashenko argued that he attempted to find reasonable solutions to all issues related to the elite apartments in *Budynok Slovo*, despite pressures from above and below.

His letter reveals that after the special revision commission of the Oblzhytlospilka identified “mild financial violations” in the cooperative “Slovo,” Svashenko raised the question of re-considering Litvinenko as the administrator of *Budynok Slovo*.²³⁴ With the support of other members of the cooperative, Svashenko wrote to the Party Committee in Dzerzhyns’kyi Region recommending a reliable party member who was interested in becoming the new chief. The Committee sent two people to the cooperative. However, as soon as they learned about the chief’s specific additional

²³² Ibid. See also Oleksii Poltorats’kyi’s account about Svashenko in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.174.

²³³ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, the envelope with Svashenko’s explanatory letters. *Partorg* refers to a “party organizer,” a person who was responsible for issues related to the moral and ideological condition of people in the collective, such as a primary party cell, a creative association, a factory, or a cooperative.

²³⁴ The Oblzhytlospilka refers to the District Residence Association, a state institution that supervised the residential fund in oblast’, including the activities of cooperatives.

responsibility to assist the NKVD's night arrests in the building, both immediately rejected the offer.²³⁵ Iakiv Fish on the other hand agreed, and Svashenko wanted to discuss the issue about firing Litvinenko at the All-Union Congress of Writers. Litvinenko complained to Fefer and the leadership of the cooperative that he had no place to live. Fish exchanged his old apartment for Litvinenko's apartment in *Budynok Slovo*, and the problem was solved.²³⁶

Svashenko provided another example of his hard work on evicting the *slov'iany* Slisarenko's wife Vyshnevs'ka from the building. He explained that often he and his fellow members on the cooperative's board were powerless in making a decision about the transfer of an apartment from an arrested writer to some other member of the Union of Writers who deserved this privilege as a distinguished cultural worker. This process, Svashenko stated, was not always smooth because some powerful party members regularly insisted that empty apartments be given to acquaintances who deserved the place more than anyone else.²³⁷

However, because of Svashenko's trouble with the party purge commission, the *slov'iany* treated Svashenko with disrespect, as if they knew that his fate was already sealed. The residents and potential residents were preoccupied with their own problems: the former were worried about their survival through this turmoil and hoped to keep their apartments; the latter craved entry into the elite cooperative in hopes of gaining the status of literary dignitaries. Both groups, mentally inert and ideologically ossified, considered the place a safe anchor, because they still believed it was a place of inclusion.

²³⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, the envelope with Svashenko's explanatory letters.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Svashenko was of course unaware that the most powerful organization, the NKVD, had collected several damning depositions against him from his fellow *sloviany* Pylypenko and Epik, and the evidence of his supposed crimes had been prepared two years prior to his arrest.²³⁸ But his premonition of an approaching catastrophe made him act.

Svashenko undertook several measures to prevent the inevitable. Hoping for help, he wrote letters to one of his acquaintances Sergei Bernshtein, a Russian linguist who lived in Moscow, and to the Party Control Commission within the Central Committee of the VKP(b).²³⁹ He even tried to escape to the North, and offered his services to a research station, in case they needed cadres. He received a response only from the North. In March 1935, the head of the cadre office informed him that the Northern Sea Communication Office would be able to use him in the Arctic region but only after he completed a special training course.²⁴⁰ Svashenko was running out of time.

He was arrested on 25 April 1935.²⁴¹ He and his family resided in apartment 40 on the first floor, which had formerly housed a kindergarten for the writers' children. The prestige of the building was so great that the value of each apartment had been inflated over the years, despite the repression of its residents. A little café, a laundry room and a kindergarten had been eliminated, and new residents, as they were assigned a higher status in

²³⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.162.

²³⁹ In 1926, Sergei Bernshtein (1880-1968) was rector of the Kharkiv Institute of People's Education (1926-1930), INO, and a member of the VUAN. He condemned the tempo of Ukrainization and asked to be released from his responsibilities as rector. See Rubliov, ZI, 110.

²⁴⁰ See the envelope with Svashenko's explanatory letters (without an archival number) in AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1.

²⁴¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.4-6.

literature and the arts, moved to these apartments. The location of the apartment made it easier for the NKVD operatives to remove Petro's extensive library, journals and various documents. The director of the building Iakiv Fish witnessed Svashenko's arrest and search, as did Svashenko's wife Anastasiia, his son Pavlo and daughter Olesia.²⁴² The details of the encounter between Svashenko and Fish, the former employer and his employee, are unknown. Today's employers could easily become tomorrow's arrested in *Budynok Slovo*.

Svashenko's first interrogation on 29 April 1935 was devoted to a discussion of the counterrevolutionary nature of his library. According to the interrogator Tsvetukhin, books about Ukrainization in the Kuban' region by various authors, including Svashenko, Lev Trotsky's books *1905* and *Literatura i revoliutsiia*, and works by Volodymyr Vynnychenko revealed Svashenko's nationalist views.²⁴³ Knowing that to argue with the organs would have negative consequences, Svashenko immediately agreed that his attitudes toward the sensitive topic of the Kuban' (both the territorial and linguistic aspects) were completely erroneous.²⁴⁴ After two weeks in the Kharkiv prison, on 19 May 1935, he also agreed with Tsvetukhin that the literary association "Hart" was a bourgeois nationalist group of writers, and his, Svashenko's, writings were the work of a nationalist which could be used by class enemies in their struggle against Soviet power.²⁴⁵

²⁴² AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.6-7.

²⁴³ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.10.

²⁴⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.12.

²⁴⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.27.

Further events developed precipitously. In late June 1935, despite the absence of any resistance on his part, the Kharkiv NKVD sent him to Kyiv.²⁴⁶ On 19 July 1935, almost three months after his arrest, Svashenko finally learned the essence of the charges against him. He was accused of membership in a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization. To his interrogator Haponov's laconic question "Do you accept these charges?" Svashenko not only provided an affirmative answer but offered details on the structure and membership of the organization. According to Petro, the writers Kas'ianenko, Panchenko, Poltorats'kyi, Semenko, Malovychko and Dykyi were also members of this organization (four of them were *slov'iany*), and allegedly "part of the all-national underground."²⁴⁷ Moreover, Svashenko emphasized that he became a nationalist under the influence of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's works, and his views had been solidified in Galicia during the First World War as a protest against the russification policies, and the complete destruction of Ukrainian culture conducted by Bobrinskii in Eastern Galicia.²⁴⁸

Svashenko also testified that *Budynok Slovo* and his own apartment, along with those of Kas'ianenko, Panchenko and Dykyi, served as gathering places for so-called "chetverki," meetings usually attended by four people. According to Svashenko, Kas'ianenko was the leader of the organization. He advocated cooperation with German fascism that would help Ukraine break

²⁴⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.38-39,41.

²⁴⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.42.

²⁴⁸ In August 1914, a part of Eastern Galicia occupied by Tsarist troops was under the patronage of the general-governor the Duke Georgii Bobrinskii. His policies in these territories were aimed at incorporating Eastern Galicia into the Russian Empire and pursuing russification and restructuring society according to imperial laws and rules. See AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.44.

from the USSR.²⁴⁹ Svashenko alleged that group discussions usually centered around collectivization policies in Ukraine and the inevitability of a peasant rebellion if these policies escalated. Dykyi's contributions to discussions were immense because he was always informed about the recent news on the national and cultural front, and according to Svashenko, he regularly warned *slov'iany* about coming arrests.²⁵⁰

Supposedly, responsibilities were strictly distributed among the members of the organization. Svashenko testified that the futurist and *slov'ianyn* Mykhailo Semenko maintained connections with the terrorists Shkurupii and Vlyz'ko, plotting assassinations; Kas'ianenko conducted subversive activities in the aviation industry; Poltorats'kyi implemented cooperation between Kyiv and Kharkiv chapters; Malovychko recruited new members in the writers' circles; and Svashenko himself traveled to the countryside and informed the organization about the peasants' moods.²⁵¹ Svashenko's self-indictment fully satisfied the NKVD, and on 2 August 1935 he signed his final confession and confirmed that his depositions were correct. In short, he "disarmed" (*rozzbroevsia*) and admitted his guilt before the state.²⁵²

The SPV's assistant head Dolinskii and the interrogator Haponov attached publications by the *slov'iany* who had been previously arrested, and books by Vynnychenko and Skrypnyk to Svashenko's file as evidence of his counterrevolution, and added two condemning testimonies, one allegedly made by Pylypenko on 29 May 1934, and the second by Epik on 15 February

²⁴⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.47-49.

²⁵⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.57-58.

²⁵¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.59-61.

²⁵² AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.64.

1935.²⁵³ Pylypenko's testimony is clearly fabricated, because by 3 March 1934, the secret police had completed the "investigation" of Pylypenko's case, and the OGPU Collegium had ordered Pylypenko's execution on that day. Although the exact time and day of his execution, as well as the place of his burial, remain unknown, the possibility of interrogating Pylypenko on 29 May 1934 after the closure of his case seems highly unlikely. Nevertheless, Dolinskii and Haponov concluded that the suspect was a member of an organization that was a logical extension of the UVO, OUN and Borot'bist "nationalist" organizations.²⁵⁴ On 27 March 1935 the Special Collegium of the district court in Kyiv sentenced Svashenko to 5 years in labor camps.²⁵⁵

For some unknown reason, the authorities neither repressed Petro's wife Anastasiia Pavlivna, nor his brother Semen Svashenko who became a famous film actor.²⁵⁶ In 1956, Anastasiia still lived in *Budynok Slovo* but from their apartment 40 she moved to apartment 36, formerly Arkadii Liubchenko's place. Svashenko's son Pavlo returned from the Second World War front handicapped. Anastasiia and their daughter Olesia survived the German occupation in Kharkiv, and, as Oleksii Poltorats'kyi testified, they preserved their dignity and integrity. During a rehabilitation process in the 1950s, Anastasiia claimed that her husband was an honest Soviet person, and exposed the secret police as a group of criminals who forced Petro to sign false

²⁵³ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.65,73,75.

²⁵⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.86.

²⁵⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.1, ark.103.

²⁵⁶ Like Dovzhenko, Semen Svashenko moved to Moscow after the war. His works in Dovzhenko's films *Zvenyhora*, *Arsenal* and *Zemlia* brought Semen world fame. He also worked with famous Russian film directors, such as Leonid Lukov, Serhii Gerasimov, Fiodor Bondarchuk, and the legendary Ukrainian film director and sculptor Ivan Kavaleridze. Svashenko's connections with Ukraine became weak, and he eventually abandoned them. He died in Moscow in 1967. Serhii Trymbach, "Vid zemli do neba: Veresnevi iuvilei Petra Masokhy ta Semena Svashenka," *Ukraina moloda* no.176, 22 September 2004.

depositions.²⁵⁷ They beat him and employed other illegal tools to make him confess. When in 1937 Anastasiia went to see Petro in the camps (Medvezh'ia Gora), he told her that the interrogators had threatened to repress and shoot all his family, including their children. He signed interrogation protocols and gave his word as a Communist that he would tell nothing to anyone. Anastasiia also testified that Petro asked her to conceal this fact from their children, and to raise them as faithful Soviet citizens.²⁵⁸

Questioned as witnesses during Svashenko's rehabilitation, the survivors of Stalin's repression characterized Svashenko as a conscientious and honest Communist and Soviet citizen. They were genuinely surprised and at a loss to explain the reasons for his arrest. The former *slov'ianyn* and writer Andrii Holovko characterized Svashenko as a mediocre writer but politically "mature" person.²⁵⁹ The writer Oleksii Poltorats'kyi shared Holovko's perceptions of Svashenko, and emphasized that in contrast to Mykhailo Semenko's "drunken" life, Svashenko was a good family-oriented person.²⁶⁰ Importantly, Poltorats'kyi continued, the *slov'iany* had never been connected on the basis of politics and nationalism, but maintained relationships on the basis of their literary tastes and interests.²⁶¹ The interim head of the Chief Administration on Protecting Military and State Secrets in the Press (Ukraine) Z. Berdychevs'kyi could not explain why the books of Lisovyi (Svashenko) had been destroyed in all public libraries. The Ukrainian Holovlit order no. 288 of 25 November 1938 had not provided reasons for such a decision.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.4,7; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.176.

²⁵⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.7.

²⁵⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.56,58.

²⁶⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.59,61,65.

²⁶¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.73.

²⁶² AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.94.

The fate of Svashenko in the labor camps is unknown. He never returned home. Likely he perished there, and he was rehabilitated twenty years later, on 17 October 1956 due to lack of evidence of his criminal activity against the state. Ironically, the Communist Party made a decision to restore Svashenko's honest name as a Communist only on 19 March 1990, almost forty years after his rehabilitation and a year before its own demise.²⁶³

The Boichukists Vasyl' Sedliar and Ivan Padalka

Ukraine produced a number of extraordinarily talented artists, such as Vasiliï Kandinskii, Kazimir Malevich, Oleksandr Murashko, Fedir Krychevs'kyi, and Vsevolod Maksymovych.²⁶⁴ Others included Mykhailo Boichuk and his students Vasyl' Sedliar and Ivan Padalka. They belonged to the Boichuk school whose members were known as the Monumentalists or Boichukists.²⁶⁵ Their creative manner was marked by "inventiveness and intellectual vitality," as well as by "technical proficiency and conceptual depth," features that found little appreciation among state officials.²⁶⁶ Moreover, Boichuk as a leader inspired his students to search for national roots in their art. Sedliar and Padalka embraced this idea, and contributed a great deal to the Ukrainian artistic renaissance, an art movement that was suspect to the NKVD. Despite their adjustments to the system, they could not

²⁶³ AU SBUKhO, spr.010318, t.2, ark.98,104, the last *arkush* that does not have a number.

²⁶⁴ Wilson, 135-36.

²⁶⁵ **Mykhailo Boichuk** (born in 1882 in the village Romanivka in Ternopil' region in Galicia), served in the Austrian army, before his arrest he was a professor in the Kyiv Art Institute. See HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.92. Monumentalism refers to a modernist avant-garde artistic trend that emerged in Ukraine in 1918, and was characterized by blending Ukrainian Byzantine and Early Renaissance styles. It was manifested in Boichuk's, Padalka's and Sedliar's art, such as frescoes, massive in size.

²⁶⁶ Shkandrij, *Modernists*, 102. On the Boichukists, see also Myroslava M. Mudrak, "The Graphic Arts: From Page Design to Theatre," in *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation*, ed. Irena R. Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 431-33, 440n38.

fully accommodate themselves within “massovism.” Their individual talents were too unique for a state that demanded unification and homogenization, and their art was perceived as nationalist, and ultimately, as anti-Soviet.²⁶⁷

In fact, the secret organs, encouraged by criticism of Boichukists in the press, found an imbalance between the “national” and the “socialist” in their art, one that favored the former. As Myroslav Shkandrij has noted, conceptually and stylistically their art was close to Khvyl’ovyi’s ideas and the goals of VAPLITE, and this particular similarity was sensed by the NKVD and treated as a potential threat to Soviet ideology.²⁶⁸ The art of the Boichukists was characterized as political heresy and counterrevolution, particularly because of its artistic appeal to the peasantry who in the early thirties were being sent by the NKVD to the North for resisting bread procurement quotas.

In conversation with Edward Strikha, Pablo Picasso noted that Diego Rivera was the first to identify Vasyl’ Sedliar as a great artist with a great future. Picasso considered himself the second to note the uniqueness of Sedliar’s talent, and Iakov Tugenhol’d as the third who expressed admiration for Sedliar’s distinctive artistic manner. Finally, Picasso continued, during the Exhibition of Ukrainian Graphic Art in Moscow, professor Sidorov admitted that Sedliar was the best artist in the USSR.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Ihor Bondar-Tereshchenko, *U zadzerkalli 1910-30-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009), 341.

²⁶⁸ Shkandrij, *Modernists*, 165-66; Myroslav Shkandrij, “Introduction: Mykola Khvylovy and the Literary Discussion,” in Mykola Khvylovy, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. and ed. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), 23-24.

²⁶⁹ *Literaturnyi iarmarok*, kn. 138 (September, 1929); Bondar-Tereshchenko, 323. **Diego Rivera** (1886-1957) was a prominent Mexican painter, famous for his frescoes. **Edward Strikha** was a penname of Kost’ Burevii (1888-1934), a Ukrainian poet, playwright and literary critic. **Iakov Tugenhol’d** (1892-1928) was a well-known and subtle Russian and Soviet art critic. **Aleksei Sidorov** (1891-1978) was a prominent art critic, professor, and member of the Academy of Science in the USSR.

Sedliar's career as an artist developed meteorically. In February 1919 he joined the Boichuk school of monumental art at the Ukrainian State Academy of Art in Kyiv, an event that shaped his artistic career and life. Some artists called him Boichuk's right hand because of the way he followed and defended Boichuk's artistic principles.²⁷⁰ In 1922 he was appointed director of the Artistic Ceramic Professional School in Mezhyhir'ia near Kyiv, to which he invited as guests and lecturers Les' Kurbas, Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Ostap Vyshnia, Volodymyr Sosiura, Iurii Ianovs'kyi, Oleksandr Kopylenko and other future *slov'iany*.²⁷¹ In the late twenties Sedliar agreed to move to Kharkiv. He reluctantly accepted an offer to work for the People's Commissariat of Education. From Sedliar's letters to Oksana Pavlenko we learn about his moral suffering because of the conformism demanded of him by external state pressure.²⁷² In 1933-1935, together with Mykhailo Boichuk, Ivan Padalka, Kyrylo Hvozdyk and Oksana Pavlenko, Sedliar completed the decoration of the Chervonozavods'kyi Theatre in Kharkiv. Their collectively executed frescos were still marked by their unique talents as "monumentalists," although the stamp of socialist realism bled through the large-scale works (20-40 square meters each) and bore witness to the artists' surrender to party demands. The pronounced figures of Lenin, Stalin and Postyshev were included in the fresco composition. Nevertheless, the

²⁷⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.56 zv.

²⁷¹ V.A. Voinalovych, "Provisnyk Ukrain's'koho renesansu," available at http://poltava-repres.narod.ru/statti/reab_ist/provisnyk.htm (accessed 18 September 2012).

²⁷² TsDAMLIMU, f.356, op.1, spr.273-74,276,282.

Boichukists' art was severely criticized for formalism and characterized as a "manifestation of fascist ideology on the cultural front."²⁷³

During these productive years, Sedliar and Padalka shared apartment 26 in *Budynok Slovo*.²⁷⁴ In 1932-33, when there were mass arrests in the building, they were especially nervous, and tried to spend most of their time away from home. Sedliar later stated that they were worried for their own lives, and extremely confused because innocent people, faithful Communists, had been arrested. Apparently, he continued, they had a defect in the eyes of the state: they were Ukrainians, and hence, suspects.²⁷⁵

Teaching at the Kharkiv Art Institute, Padalka also worked after 1933 as an art editor in the Publishing House "LIM." Sedliar also served as an illustrator for various publications in the early thirties (by Heo Shkurupii, Ivan Franko, Vladimir Maiakovskii, François Rabelais, Andrii Holovko and many others). Since 1933 the official press had regularly published critical articles that identified the Boichukists as nationalists and counterrevolutionaries, and after 1933 it still continued to cultivate this image.²⁷⁶ The Boichukists made several attempts to adjust their work to party demands and to repent. It is surprising that they were arrested only in late 1936. Yet, in this there must have been some logic. Katerina Clark emphasized that "textual authority became a major means of legitimization," and that "the Stalinist regime of the

²⁷³ Voinalovych, "Provisnyk Ukrain'skoho renesansu." For more details on Monumentalists, see Liudmyla Kovalska and Nelli Prystaliienko, *Mykhailo Boichuk and His School of Monumental Art*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (University of Alberta Press, 2001).

²⁷⁴ Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vudannia zhurnalu "Berezil'," 2002), 533.

²⁷⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.121-22.

²⁷⁶ Artur Rudzyts'kyi, "Iliustrator 'Kobzaria' Vasyl' Sedliar: Dolia maistra ta ioho tvoru," *Asotsiiatsiia ievropeis'kykh zhurnalistiv: Ukrain'ska sektsiia*, available at <http://www.aej.org.ua/History/1196.html> (accessed 21 September 2012).

1930s favored written texts.”²⁷⁷ Perhaps in the party’s view *words* were more powerful propaganda than *images*, and as a result the writers had been swept aside first by the repression.²⁷⁸

In 1935, when two Art Institutes in Kyiv and Kharkiv merged, Sedliar and Padalka accepted the offer of Andrii Khvyliia, the ideological chief on the cultural front in Soviet Ukraine, to return to teach in Kyiv. However, Sedliar enjoyed teaching at the Institute for only two weeks. Under Khvyliia’s pressure, he, once again, reluctantly took a position as secretary of the Organizational Party Committee at the Union of Artists.²⁷⁹

On 16 September 1936 Ivan Padalka was arrested. Sedliar expected to be arrested any moment; he even wrote a letter to Postyshev that was confiscated during his arrest.²⁸⁰ In the autumn of 1936, when Sedliar returned to Kyiv after his business trip, he learned that he had been excluded from the Organizational Party Committee, fired from the Kyiv Art Institute and evicted from his apartment. Apparently, feeling guilty for his vicious attack against Sedliar at the 1933 First Plenum of the Organizational Bureau of the Ukrainian Union of Artists for his formalist art,²⁸¹ Andrii Khvyliia persuaded Sedliar to return to Kharkiv in the middle of November 1936. Khvyliia secretly told Sedliar that in the NKVD Padalka testified about his (Padalka’s) alleged membership in a nationalist fascist organization. Khvyliia suggested that it would be sensible of Sedliar to disappear from Kyiv for a while. Sedliar

²⁷⁷ See Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 13-14.

²⁷⁸ On the importance of verbal phenomena in Stalinist culture, see Eric Naiman, “Introduction,” in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, eds. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003), xii.

²⁷⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.35-37.

²⁸⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.13zv.

²⁸¹ Rudzyts’kyi, “Iliustrator ‘Kobzaria.’”

urgently left the capital and resided in apartment 25 in *Budynok Slovo* in Kharkiv, Pavlo Khrystiuk's place of residence before his arrest.²⁸²

On 23 November 1936, the Kyiv NKVD operatives Gol'dman and Pustovoitov, and their supervisor Dolinskii signed the resolution that the artist Vasyl' Sedliar was an active participant of a nationalist fascist organization.²⁸³

On 26 November 1936, Sedliar was arrested in *Budynok Slovo* in the presence of Ivan Verhun (acting as the interim commandant of the building in the absence of Iakiv Fish), and was urgently convoyed to Kyiv for preliminary investigation.²⁸⁴

The minutes of the first interrogation dated 4 December 1936 began with Sedliar's full and complete capitulation before the interrogators:

Interrogators Proskuriakov and Grushevskii: What are you guilty of?

Sedliar: I am guilty of my active participation in a Ukrainian nationalist movement on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR; I was a member of a counterrevolutionary nationalist fascist group led by Boichuk, and occupied one of the leading positions in it.

Our counterrevolutionary group was a part of the entire counterrevolutionary Ukrainian arborescent fascist underground, a group which represents the basis for subversive work, conducted by German fascism and foreign counterrevolutionary centers in the USSR.

Interrogators Proskuriakov and Grushevskii: What was the main goal of your counterrevolutionary group and of the entire fascist underground in general?

Sedliar: Our main goal, the goal of all Ukrainian nationalist fascists, was the creation of an independent national Ukraine, a goal that could be implemented only through a forcible break of Ukraine from the USSR.²⁸⁵

Sedliar allegedly claimed that Boichuk was in charge of their terrorist fascist organization, and that he and Padalka were the organization's most active members.²⁸⁶ According to Sedliar, Padalka openly criticized Soviet power,

²⁸² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.10,54.

²⁸³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.1.

²⁸⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.11,13. In autumn 1940 Ivan Verhun (Ivan Vyrhan) was also arrested. He survived the Gulag, and resided in *Budynok Slovo* after WWII. Sedliar's official wife Vera Artiimovna Drazhevskaia resided in Moscow. Iefrosyn'ia Sedliar, Vasyl's mother, lived in Kharkiv, and his close friend the artist Oksana Pavlenko lived in Moscow. None of his relatives were present at the time of his arrest. See HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.14 zv.

²⁸⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.17.

²⁸⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.18.

especially its nationality policies.²⁸⁷ Sedliar testified that this organization was formed in early 1934 when a group of artists worked on fresco painting in the Chervonozavods'kyi Theatre in Kharkiv. He stated that Boichuk agitated the artists against Soviet power, which had destroyed the Ukrainian peasantry and intelligentsia, and as a result, the "Ukrainian culture and nation were dying."²⁸⁸ Later the artists Ievhen Kholostenko, Mykola Rokyts'kyi, Serhii Tomakh and Vasyl' Ovchynnykov were recruited into the organization.²⁸⁹ According to Sedliar, the chapters of the organization that recruited student youth functioned in Kyiv and Kharkiv.²⁹⁰

The NKVD was interested in incriminating as many Ukrainian artists and cultural figures as possible as anti-Soviet formalists and counter-revolutionaries. Sedliar's case prepared the ground for several arrests, including those of the artists Kyrylo Hvozdyk, Vasyl' Kas'ian and Mykhailo Derehus—members of the artistic association ARMU (1925-1932)—as part of a fascist organization.²⁹¹ Among those who were framed as nationalists was also Andrii Khvyliia.²⁹² To extract the maximum number of compromising details, the NKVD operative Gol'dman prolonged Sedliar's preliminary investigation four times (to 1 March 1937, 10 April 1937, 20 May 1937 and 1 June 1937).²⁹³

²⁸⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.80.

²⁸⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.22.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.24.

²⁹¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.18,22,33,34. ARMU refers to *Asotsiatsiia revoliutsiinykh mytstiv Ukrainy*—the Association of Revolutionary Artists of Ukraine. For a discussion about the ARMU, see Shkandrij, *Modernists*, 163-68.

²⁹² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.38,51-56.

²⁹³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.16.



Ivan Padalka.



Vasyl' Sedliar.²⁹⁴

Ochnye stavki served as the final unequivocal evidence of the artists' guilt. The 22 February 1937 *ochnaia stavka* between Sedliar and Padalka helped the secret police to indict Boichuk and several other artists and professors from the Kyiv Art Institute and the Union of Artists. Under the pressure applied by interrogators, both artists confirmed the NKVD theory of a nationalist conspiracy among artistic circles in Kharkiv and Kyiv.²⁹⁵

In his deposition Epik claimed that both artists were involved in criminal terrorist activities conducted by residents of *Budynok Slovo*. Sedliar confirmed the allegations and his links to the nationalists Mykhailo Ialovyi, Maksym Lebid' and Mike Iohansen.²⁹⁶ Mere affiliation with the *slov'iany* was an indication of guilt, and Sedliar's interrogators were fully satisfied with this minimal information. They did not proceed any further in establishing the nature of these relationships. Similarly, Padalka identified Epik, Lebid', Valerian Polishchuk and Slisarenko as members of the Ukrainian nationalist underground.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.296.

²⁹⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.108-12.

²⁹⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.143,152.

²⁹⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.154,159.

Boichuk was taken into custody on 25 November 1936, almost simultaneously with Sedliar. It took the NKVD about two weeks to match Boichuk's testimony with the depositions made by Sedliar and Padalka. The scenario written by the NKVD about the assassinations of Kosior and Postyshev linked Boichuk, Sedliar and Padalka in one nationalist group, and the theme of Boichuk's origin was extensively massaged in the minutes of the Boichukists' interrogations.²⁹⁸ Boichuk's nationalism of course emanated from his Galician upbringing, and Galicia was at the root of his convictions and subsequent transgressions.

The agency thoroughly purged the entire Kyiv Art Institute in the late thirties. Besides Boichuk, who was identified as "the leader" (*glavar'*), an "inveterate nationalist" (*makhrovyi natsionalist*), and a "fascist" in depositions of other Ukrainian intellectuals,²⁹⁹ the Galician Serhii Iakubovs'kyi, chair of the department at the Kyiv Art Institute and editing assistant of the journal *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, was also arrested as a member of the nationalist conspiracy. Under torture, Iakubovs'kyi confirmed the existence of the fascist organization in the institute, and the membership in it of Boichuk, Sedliar and Padalka.³⁰⁰ On 13 July 1937 the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR sentenced Boichuk, Sedliar and Padalka to death.³⁰¹ They were shot

²⁹⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.34.

²⁹⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.85,94,99-101. In his depositions to the secret police, Padalka claimed that Boichuk's wife Sof'ia Nelepyns'ka (a Pole) helped Boichuk to maintain conspiratorial connections with the Polish consulate in Kyiv. Also he supposedly received instructions from the German consulate that happened to be just across the street from his residence. In other words, the organization allegedly had internal and external (international) connections with possible financial support from those who were interested in eliminating Soviet power in Ukraine.

³⁰⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.243.

³⁰¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.264-65.

on that very day in Kyiv.³⁰² The three had been included in Stalin's 26 June 1937 list of those to be executed, a list that was also signed by Kaganovich and Voroshilov.³⁰³ The verdict prepared by the Collegium was a mere formality. The artists' fate had already been decided by Stalin two weeks prior to the court hearing.

However, their physical deaths seemed insufficient for the state. Their art had to be destroyed, a policy which was immediately implemented. Their frescoes in the Chervonozavods'kyi Theatre in Kharkiv were washed off and the walls were painted over, 75 of Sedliar's illustrations for Taras Shevchenko's book of poetry doomed the publication to complete annihilation. The entire circulation of 1933 was purged from libraries and burned, and their art work, where possible, was destroyed.³⁰⁴ Sedliar's works were cut, burned, or doused with acid. Only four of his works survived in the Ukrainian National Art Museum in Kyiv.³⁰⁵

In 1937 when the Boichukists' interrogator Nikolai Grushevskii was himself arrested, he testified that the case against these artists had been a complete fabrication.³⁰⁶ The GPU/NKVD carefully planned arrests, and the suspects had been identified far in advance. For instance, other people's depositions condemning Boichuk for his anti-Soviet activities were dated

³⁰² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.265,277; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.304; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.2-3,113. The artist Sof'ia Nelepyn's'ka, Boichuk's wife, was shot by the NKVD in Kyiv two days earlier, on 11 July 1937, but perhaps Mykhailo had never learned about this. Mariia Iakivna Pas'ko, Padalka's wife, was arrested as the wife of an enemy of the people, and spent 7 years in labor camps. See Ivan Senchenko, "Bulo kolys'," *Ukraina* no. 14 (1989): 20

³⁰³ See Stalin's lists on the official website of the "Memorial," available at <http://stalin.memo.ru/names/index.htm> (accessed 19 September 2012), or in AP RF, op.24, d.409, l.214.

³⁰⁴ Oleksa Pidluts'kyi, "Voskresinnia Vasylia Sedliara. Tvory rozstrilianoho khudozhnyka povertaiut'sia do ukraintsiiv," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia* no. 33, 5 September 2009. Only a small part of the first 1931 publication (that was sold out) of Shevchenko's *Kobzar* survived.

³⁰⁵ Kostiantyn Rodyk, "Leninism u mystetstvi: nizh ta sirchana kyslota," *Ukraina moloda* no. 170, 16 September 2009.

³⁰⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.62-65.

1931, five years prior to the artist's arrest. They are vague and contradictory but proved ample and satisfactory for NKVD officials in 1937.³⁰⁷ Antin Onishchuk, the *seksot* who fabricated evidence against this group of artists, as well as the interrogators who "investigated" their criminal cases, Grushevskii, Khaet, Proskuriakov and Pustovoitov, all perished during the Great Terror. They were accused of membership in an anti-Soviet organization that operated within the secret organs.³⁰⁸

Ethnically Diverse Ukrainian Nationalists

In early November 1936 Vazonov, the assistant to the district prosecutor, assigned to investigate special cases, signed the order to arrest a group of *slov'iany*: Ivan Kovtun (Iurii Vukhnal'), Oleksii Savyts'kyi (Iukhym Hedz' or Oles' Iasnyi), Ivan Kaliannykov (Ivan Kaliannnyk) and Samiilo Shchupak. All but Shchupak were arrested in *Budynok Slovo*. Shchupak, who in 1934 moved to Kyiv, resided in the Rolit building where he was arrested on 10 November 1936. Vasyl' Chechvians'kyi-Hubenko, Ostap Vyshnia's brother, was arrested together with them.³⁰⁹ They were accused of membership in a Ukrainian nationalist fascist organization and of terrorist activity against party members.

Vukhnal' and Savyts'kyi, both former members of "Pluh," wrote humorous short stories and feuilletons (*feuilleton*), a genre that became rather popular in the 1920s-30s but always remained suspect for the party

³⁰⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.268.

³⁰⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.269. For more on Onishchuk, see HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.2, ark.68-77.

³⁰⁹ For details about Chechvians'kyi, see Anatolii Sanzharovs'kyi, "Vasyl' Chechvians'kyi, abo navishcho Il'f i Petrov pryidzhaly do Kharkova," *Literaturna Ukraina*, 7 June 2012, p. 12.

establishment.³¹⁰ Vukhnal' was also a talented novelist, and Savyts'kyi was a gifted playwright. In the early thirties, a writer's sense of humor was treated as a political problem. In the party's view laughter and humor were counterproductive to the obligatory heroism, seriousness and grandiloquence required of cultural producers, features that were appropriate to the heroic time and place. Because of the severe criticism to which these two writers were subjected in 1933, and because of the famine and the arrests of the intelligentsia that silenced many *slov'iany*, both writers stopped writing, and published almost nothing during this period.³¹¹

With the exception of Shchupak, this group of the *slov'iany* were friends who lived in one place, spent time together, and worked for the same journals at different times of their literary career. For the NKVD, any form of grouping, personal or professional, posed the risk of a conspiracy. These close



Iurii Vukhnal'. Oleksii Savyts'kyi. Ivan Kaliannykov. Samiilo Shchupak.

human links and connections were used as a pretext for sweeping away those who did not seem to be a part of Soviet cultural construction. Despite the fact that among them were individuals of Russian (Piddubnyi, Kaliannyk) and

³¹⁰ On Vukhnal', see Chub, 235.

³¹¹ Dmytro Chub, *Liudy velykoho sertsia (statti, rozvidky, spohady)* (Mel'born, Avstralia: Vydavnytstvo "Lastivka," 1981), 240; and Volodymyr Polishchuk, 'Oleksii Savyts'kyi—Iukhym Hedz'—Oles'Iasnyi,' *Slovo i chas*, no. 12 (1999): 42.

Jewish (Shchupak) origin, for the secret police they all shared a Ukrainian identity by virtue of the space and place they shared (*Budynok Slovo*), the language they spoke (Ukrainian), and the art they produced (Ukrainian) .

Vukhnal made as many friends as he did enemies because of his epigrams and short stories, in which he mocked graphomaniacs who successfully adjusted themselves to party demands, and therefore were promoted by the authorities. His unforgettable character Sashko Indyk who bragged about his “red” inspiration, his peasant origin and talentless but optimistic poetry became the subject of severe criticism by official writers.³¹² Before Vukhnal’s arrest on 2-3 November 1936, he was excluded from the party as a nationalist and counterrevolutionary. During the search of his apartment, the NKVD operatives found in Vukhnal’s library “counterrevolutionary” publications by those *slov’iany* who had already been arrested by the secret police, which served to confirm his reputation. Paradoxically, instead of keeping these publications as evidence of Vukhnal’s political unreliability, the Kharkiv NKVD decided to burn his library.³¹³ This seemingly insignificant detail demonstrates that the decision about Vukhnal’s verdict likely had been made by this date, prior to the completion of the preliminary investigation and the court verdict, and therefore such evidence was no longer necessary.

Vukhnal’s 4 November 1936 interrogation minutes reveal the concerns of an open and sincere person who lamented the party appointed chief editors of leading Ukrainian journals who understood nothing about literature.

³¹² Iurii Vukhnal’, “Pohyb talant,” *Molodyi Bil’shovyk*, no. 9 (1926): 8.

³¹³ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, ark.17-19. The resolution was signed by the assistant to the head of the 3rd sector of the 4th department of the Kharkiv regional administration of the NKVD **Zamkov**, and the operatives of the 3rd sector of the 4th department **Antonov** and **Barakhman**.

Moreover, he also expressed concerns about the elimination of the best Ukrainian writers by the NKVD.³¹⁴ Ten days later, on 14 November 1936 Vukhnal's tone changed dramatically: he confessed that under the influence of Kulish, Epik, Chechvians'kyi and Valerian Polishchuk he became a member of a nationalist anti-Soviet group. It is noteworthy that all these individuals had been arrested. Vukhnal' knew about these arrests and his intentions seem transparent; he apparently did not want to blemish the reputation of those who were still free. These tactics made sense. The arrested often provided the NKVD with the names of individuals already dead, imprisoned or exiled. However, during the next interrogation, Vukhnal' denounced Mykhailo Semenko, Antin Dykyi, Ivan Plakhtin, a pilot named Makarov and professor Trehubov, people who were not in the custody of the NKVD.³¹⁵

On 3 February, under unknown circumstances, Vukhnal' again changed his story, and testified that as a member of the literary associations "Pluh," "Molodniak," and "Prolitfront," he was influenced by anti-Soviet propaganda published on the pages of these journals but he assertively stated that he had been divorced from his counterrevolutionary stance since 1935.³¹⁶ After this sudden turn in the preliminary investigation, the NKVD operative Lisitskii left Vukhnal' alone for approximately three-and-a-half months. There is no way to know what happened to Vukhnal' during this time in prison, whether he had been routinely abused or the interrogator Lisitskii simply forgot about him. Yet it is known that Vukhnal' was convoyed to Kyiv to the Luk'ianovs'ka prison.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.24-25.

³¹⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.35-36.

³¹⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.54-58.

³¹⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.227 zv.

The NKVD operative Akimov replaced Lisitskii in both cases (Vukhnal's and Kaliannyk's). Unsigned pages of interrogation minutes became a frequent phenomenon under Akimov, and could have been easily forged by the interrogator. At best, the signature of the arrested was on the last page of the minutes. On 13 May 1937, Akimov met Vukhnal' in the interrogation room with the statement: "You are continuing to resist. [We] strongly suggest that you should stop your disavowal."³¹⁸ Akimov informed Vukhnal' that his resistance made little sense because his guilt was confirmed by the depositions of Savyts'kyi and Chechvians'kyi. Moreover, these individuals claimed that Vukhnal' was also linked to a member of the Ukrainian nationalist underground Mykola Bazhan, the brother of his mistress.³¹⁹ Vukhnal' denied the insinuations.³²⁰

Importantly, the interrogators had no interest in cleansing the file to eliminate the evidence of their negligence, such as unsigned pages of protocols and illogical gaps during interrogations. They also failed to erase the traces of their concerted, visible efforts to emphasize Vukhnal's guilt, and their avoidance of including information that might reveal Vukhnal's innocence. For instance, Chechvians'kyi's depositions about regular meetings in Vukhnal's apartment and discussions about terrorist activities against party leaders proved to be false. Vukhnal' testified that during the time period identified by Chechvians'kyi, he was on a business trip in Leningrad and

³¹⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.72.

³¹⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.281. In 1958 during the rehabilitation process, Alla Bazhan stated: "I have never considered and do not consider myself [Vukhnal's] wife, because he was officially married, and had a daughter Vita from this marriage. During some period we were close."

³²⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.72-74.

Odesa but this information had been ignored by Akimov as insignificant.³²¹

Furthermore, the protest written by Vukhnal' that reveals Akimov's manipulative tactics during *ochnye stavki* serves as a testament to the interrogator's belief in his impunity. Vukhnal' stated that Akimov refused to include in the minutes his questions to Chechvians'kyi and Chechvians'kyi's responses that contradicted Chechvians'kyi's depositions against Vukhnal', just as Akimov denied Vukhnal' permission to write additional statements in the minutes. Vukhnal' demanded to hold these sessions in the presence of the prosecutor but his demands went unaddressed.³²²

These details and the interrogator's tactics reveal the level, degree and type of organizational and procedural patterns established in the interrogation rooms, their culture and aesthetics. Extensive descriptive literature on interrogation practices confirm (as does an analysis of many cases of the *slov'iany*) the absolute certainty on the part of NKVD operatives concerning what results they were to obtain in the course of each criminal case. Similarly, Vukhnal's case demonstrates a preconceived agenda, which was followed slavishly by the NKVD despite his persistent and adamant denial of all charges, including during the May 1937 conveyer interrogations through which he was put by Akimov.

Confessions or their absence played little role in final verdicts. However, the recalcitrant evoked the interrogators' fury, and they continued to torture the accused to satisfy themselves, not to fulfill the need for additional evidence or to appease their supervisors. The materials of the 1950s rehabilitation commissions and the correspondence between the KGB and

³²¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.99.

³²² AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.226-27zv.

relatives of the *slov'iany* shed light on the methods the NKVD routinely employed in interrogation rooms. Vukhnal's brother Leonid testified that he escaped from a little window in the bathroom (the apartment was located on the first floor) when the NKVD came to arrest Vukhnal'. Leonid saw his brother in prison during the last day before he was shot. According to Leonid, it was difficult to recognize Iurii; he was mutilated and beaten up. Vukhnal' told Leonid: "Lenechka, brother, I am not guilty."³²³ The last statement in Leonid's letter to the KGB authorities reads as following: "Your archive is a total fabrication."³²⁴

Through similar practices, the NKVD operatives Iakushev and the "second supporting violin" Lisitskii quickly broke Oleksii Savyts'kyi. The duet of these two interrogators proved to be effective. On the second day after his arrest, Savyts'kyi confessed that he belonged to a Ukrainian nationalist fascist organization that worked in the deep underground.³²⁵ Allegedly besides Chechvians'kyi and Vukhnal', Savyts'kyi named Mykhailo Semenko, Terentii Masenko, Ivan Kaliannyk, Amvrosii Buchma, Maksym Ryl's'kyi, Antin Dykyi and Ivan Plakhtin as members of the anti-Soviet organization.³²⁶ Savyts'kyi supposedly confirmed that ideologically he was recruited into this organization in 1927 by the brothers and "fascists" Chechvians'kyi and Vyshnia when he joined the editorial board of the journal *Chervonyi Perets'* (*Red Pepper*). "They cultivated an enemy of Soviet power in me,"

³²³ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.2 (the pages of this volume are not numbered). See the 23 July 1989 letter by L.D. Kovtun.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.115.

³²⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.111-12. See also HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.94-95.

Savyts'kyi's protocol stated on 28 November 1936.³²⁷ Savyts'kyi allegedly characterized Ivan Kaliannyk as an "active fascist," because there were cases, according to Savyts'kyi's testimony, when Kaliannyk beat other writers in *Budynok Slovo*, and hence was capable of terrorist acts against party leaders.³²⁸ The authorship of these accounts is of course doubtful. The level of reasoning assigned to Savyts'kyi, an individual with a sharp mind, great sense of humor and poise, appears rather childish, crude, and even under the extreme stressful circumstances of interrogation, highly incongruous.

Most importantly, the accounts of the conspiracy constantly changed, depending on the NKVD's perception of its requirements at the time. In October 1937, Mykhailo Semenko who was named by Savyts'kyi in 1936 as one of the members of a nationalist fascist organization suddenly became the one who in 1933 recruited Vukhnal', Chechvians'kyi and Savyts'kyi and created one of many terrorist groups that was supposed to assassinate Kosior.³²⁹ Savyts'kyi's story about his recruitment by Chechvians'kyi and Vyshnia had been abandoned and forgotten by the secret police.³³⁰

The lieutenant of the State Security Lisitskii was also assigned to investigate Ivan Kaliannyk's case.³³¹ Kaliannyk was a subtle poet and a former member of the literary association "Prolitfront." In late 1934, Kostiuk remembered Kaliannyk, who was usually emotional and flamboyant, as sad

³²⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.134. See also Savyts'kyi's 16 November 1936 interrogation protocol in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.92.

³²⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.138-39.

³²⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.105.

³³⁰ In May 1937, Savyts'kyi was conveyed to Kyiv, and perhaps this change of hands in his preliminary interrogation explains the inconsistencies in his depositions. Polishchuk, "Oleksii Savyts'kyi," 42.

³³¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.12-61.

and depressed because of the routine arrests in *Budynok Slovo*.³³² Kaliannyk earned a reputation as a hooligan because he beat a bureaucrat from the DVU who insulted his wife. A chorus of voices accused Kaliannyk of terrorism, and compared him to Nikolaev, who assassinated Kirov. This baseless idea was supported by party hawks in the Union of Writers. Ivan Kyrylenko was especially active in harassing and damning Kaliannyk as a “relative” of Nikolaev, and on 15 November 1935 Kaliannyk was ejected from its membership.³³³

Kaliannyk was an ethnic Russian, as was his wife Oleksandra Sherbakova. He dropped the ending –ov in his last name, an indication of Russian ethnicity, due to Pavlo Tychyna’s advice to write in Ukrainian.³³⁴ But he admired Russian poetry, and could cite by heart Pushkin for hours.³³⁵ Kaliannyk’s transformation into a Ukrainian poet and Ukrainian speaker was sufficient ground for the secret police to accuse him of membership in a Ukrainian nationalist fascist terrorist organization. In light of his arrest during the night of 3-4 November 1936, this detail is darkly ironic. Kaliannyk’s favorite hero of the revolution was Felix Dzerzhinskii, the founder of the Cheka.³³⁶ The night search in *Budynok Slovo* was conducted in the presence of the ubiquitous chief of the building Iakiv Fish. Among books by Epik, Vukhnał’, Masenko and Hrushevs’kyi that were deemed counterrevolutionary,

³³² Kostiuk, 1:280, 312, 388. Kostiuk met Kaliannyk in early November 1934 in Teren’ Masenko’s apartment in *Budynok Slovo*.

³³³ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.8,19,75-76.

³³⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.125-29.

³³⁵ Mykola Nahniyda, “Storinka poetychnoho litopysu,” in Ivan Kaliannyk, *Poezii* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1967), 9.

³³⁶ See Serhii Borzenko’s 17 June 1957 testimony to the rehabilitation commission in AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.125zv.

the NKVD operatives found a portrait of Alexander I, an outrageous fact that was used against Kaliannyk as evidence of his political unreliability.³³⁷

In the Kharkiv prison, Kaliannyk rejected the accusations and managed to tolerate Lisitskii's tortures for approximately a month. On 28 November 1936 he confessed that Kulish and Epik had enticed him into anti-Soviet activities, and the writers Savyts'kyi, Masenko, Serhii Borzenko, Chechvians'kyi, Vukhnal', Ivan Shutov and Ivan Khutors'kyi were his accomplices. All were supposedly members of the Ukrainian nationalist underground.³³⁸ Interestingly, some of those whom Kaliannyk identified as members of the organization and counterrevolutionaries, like Mykola Nahnibeda, Ivan Shutov, Serhii Borzenko, Teren' Masenko and Borys Kotliarov, were never repressed.³³⁹ Like Vukhnal', Savyts'kyi and Chechvians'kyi, Kaliannyk was convoyed to Kyiv in the middle of April, where he confirmed his deposition to the new interrogator Akimov.³⁴⁰ Akimov encouraged Kaliannyk to also include in the list of enemies Antin Dykyi and Mykhailo Semenko, who were arrested shortly after Kaliannyk's confession.³⁴¹

The code names for different Ukrainian nationalist groups were used interchangeably, and the treatment of members of all these imaginary organizations was virtually the same: they constituted a part of the Ukrainian nationalist underground. An interesting twist in the history of this particular group of the *slov'iany* manifested itself in the accusation signed in July 1937 by the assistant to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in the UkrSSR

³³⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.4-7.

³³⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.35-39.

³³⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.12-13,21,37,39,60.

³⁴⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.9.

³⁴¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.73.

V. Ivanov and the assistant to the Prosecutor in the USSR A. Vyshinskii. It stated that the NKVD had uncovered a Ukrainian counterrevolutionary Trotskyist terrorist organization. This name had never been used during the preliminary investigation.³⁴² The conclusion alleged that the members of the conspiracy had connections with the Trotskyite-Zinov'ievite center in Moscow, implemented Kirov's murder on 1 December 1934 and during subsequent years prepared terrorist acts against the leaders of the VKP(b).³⁴³

On 14 July 1937, Vukhnal', Savyts'kyi', Kaliannyk, Chechvians'kyi and other "members" of the conspiracy were sentenced to death as terrorists by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. The Collegium worked hard this day. In accordance with Stalin's 26 June 1937 order, also signed by Kaganovich and Voroshilov, 20 people were sentenced to death, including the Boichukists. Vukhnal' was the only one who denied the accusations during the closed court hearing. Kaliannyk confirmed his guilt, as did other "members" of the supposed organization, and asked the court to preserve his life because, he stated, he "behaved well during the preliminary investigation." The verdicts were implemented the next day. The conspirators were shot on 15 July 1937 in Kyiv, and the place of their burial remains unknown.³⁴⁴

As a routine practice, the families of the accused were evicted from *Budynok Slovo*, and their possessions were appropriated by the NKVD. Vira Mykhailivna, Savyts'kyi's wife, was also repressed and exiled to the Gulag. In

³⁴² AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.232.

³⁴³ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.235.

³⁴⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.236-240; AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.100-102,123. See Stalin's lists on the official website of the "Memorial," available at <http://stalin.memo.ru/names/index.htm> (accessed 19 September 2012), or in AP RF, op.24, d.409, l.214.

the late 1940s, their son Vitalii found traces of his mother in Mahadan.³⁴⁵

Oleksandra Vasyliivna, Kaliannyk's wife, was arrested in October 1937 and sentenced to 8 years in labor camps. In the 1950s they were rehabilitated.³⁴⁶

Kaliannyk's daughter Zhanna was allowed to see her father's criminal file, fabricated by the secret police, only after a prolonged battle with the authorities in 1990.³⁴⁷ On 28 September 1990, Zhanna wrote: "The KGB does its business as usual and stubbornly conceals mysteries about non-existent crimes even from the children [of the accused], who have already become old people."³⁴⁸

Samiilo Shchupak's fate was similar, although he established himself as an official literary critic and journalist who vigorously supported the party line. Among his supporters were Andrii Khvyliia, Vlas Chubar, Ievhen Hirschak and even Joseph Stalin. A long-time editor of the Kyiv newspaper *Proletars'ka pravda* (*Proletarian Truth*) and a past leader of the Kyiv chapter of the literary association "Pluh" (since 1924),³⁴⁹ Shchupak actively participated in the Literary Discussion in the 1920s, and criticized Khvyliiovyi and "fellow traveler" writers for their ideological deviations.³⁵⁰ A former *slov'ianyn*, he was arrested on 10 November 1936 in Kyiv. His arrest embodied a new NKVD practice that would blossom during the Great Terror: the elimination of servants who had implemented their assigned tasks and were no longer needed.

³⁴⁵ See Polishchuk, "Oleksii Savyts'kyi," 43.

³⁴⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr.014519, ark.152,155.

³⁴⁷ See the 10 October 1990 report by Murzin, an associate of the Kharkiv KGB in AU SBUKhO, spr.014519 (no numbers of these pages are provided).

³⁴⁸ See Zhanna Ovchinnikova's 28 September 1990 letter to the KGB in AU SBUKhO, spr.014519 (no numbers of these pages are provided).

³⁴⁹ Kostiuk, 1:127; Ilnytzyj, 64.

³⁵⁰ Dziuba, 1:211; Shevel'ov in Dziuba, 2: 311, 324; Shkandrij, *Modernists*, 86, 89.

Since 1930, Shchupak had lived in Kharkiv but moved to *Budynok Slovo*'s apartment 5 only in 1933 after the death of the writer Leonid Chernov-Maloshyichenko.³⁵¹ Khvyl'ovyi lived two floors above, in apartment 9. The brief time they shared as neighbors did not facilitate their rapprochement. Just the opposite; it exacerbated their mutual dislike. Khvyl'ovyi was not the only one who did not get along with Shchupak. The Futurists group was especially frustrated with Shchupak's attacks. In 1928, Oleksa Vlyz'ko characterized Shchupak as a person who "definitely disgusts us all."³⁵² Shchupak edited the journals *Kritika* and *Literaturna Hazeta*, and joined the literary association VUSPP, which was compliant to the party and began to dominate cultural discourse through the latter's support. VUSPP aggressively imposed the views of its overseers in art, which further aggravated Khvyl'ovyi, but he was no longer in a position to challenge them.³⁵³ The relationship between Shchupak and Khvyl'ovyi remained quite inimical. In autumn of 1933, Shchupak also played an active role in the harassment of Kurbas, accusing him of hatred of the proletariat and proletarian culture.³⁵⁴ A year later Shchupak moved to Kyiv and resided in Rolit, as did other cultural and party elite.

On 10 February 1935, Shchupak published an article in the newspaper *Komunist* "A Hostile Distortion of the History of Literature" ("Vorozhe spotvorennia istorii literatury") which was fully in tune with Postyshev's guidance regarding Ukrainian culture and literature. With an accountant's precision, Shchupak challenged all "combat forays" undertaken by nationalist writers in Ukraine. He mentioned the works written by the *slov'iany*

³⁵¹ Dukyna, 526.

³⁵² Quoted in Ilnytzkyj, 130.

³⁵³ Shkandrij, *Modernists*, 135.

³⁵⁴ Les' Taniuk, "Talan and talant Lesia Kurbas," in *Reabilitovani istorieiu: Kharkivs'ka oblast*, ed. P.T. Tron'ko et al. (Kharkiv: Oryhinal, 2005), 1:128.

Khrystiuk, Desniak, Richyts'kyi and many others, and characterized the authors as “double-dealers.” The *slov'iany* Ivan Lakyza and Volodymyr Koriak were identified as class enemies and bourgeois counterrevolutionaries. Shchupak embodied the aesthetics of literary criticism of the 1920-30s that was marked by “primitive stereotypes” and the desire to establish a “dead police-like order in literature.”³⁵⁵ Iurii Shevel'ov perceptively noted that Shchupak as a literary critic used the “logic of an ax”, and his thinking was highly politicized and conformed to the most current party resolution.³⁵⁶ He, and others like him, created a new genre, a “genre of political denunciation.”³⁵⁷

The state strove to control not only people's public and private spheres, but also their personality. Shchupak became a product of the Soviet social engineering experiment, although his political flexibility and *sovetskist*' did not save his life. A faithful Communist who followed party directives unquestionably and persistently, Shchupak became another November 1936 victim of the NKVD. The preliminary investigation was rather brief. After three interrogations, he was accused of membership in the counterrevolutionary Trotskyist organization that had implemented Kirov's murder, and recruited young literary cadres into this organization. The Ukrainian writer Oleksandr Kopylenko allegedly was one of the recruited. Shchupak's past membership in the Bund meant little for the final analysis of his wrecking activities against the state. The only tangible evidence of his guilt were books, confiscated from his library and written by Kamenev, Zinov'ev,

³⁵⁵ Samiilo Shchupak, “Vorozhe spotvorennia istorii literatury,” *Komunist*, 10 February 1935. See also Dziuba, 1:242, 403-04.

³⁵⁶ Iurii Sheveliov, *Literaturoznavstvo: Vybrani pratsi*, ed. Ivan Dziuba (Kyiv: KMA, 2008), 2:329.

³⁵⁷ Shevel'ov in Dziuba, 2:355.

Tomskii, and Skrypnyk—publications that were identified as “ideologically harmful and counterrevolutionary literature.”³⁵⁸ The 10 March 1937 10-minute closed meeting of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court in Moscow was a litany of falsehoods, as were thousands of other trials. Following Andrei Vyshinskii’s manual *Handbook on Criminal Procedure* (*Kurs ugolovnoho processa*), which suggested that the confession of an accused was sufficient proof of a crime, the main participants of the meeting, Vasilii Ul’rikh and Andrei Vyshinskii, sentenced Shchupak to death. He was executed the same day.³⁵⁹

Technically, Shchupak was accused of being a Ukrainian nationalist because he was a member of the same anti-Soviet organization as Piddubnyi, Svashenko, the Boichukists, Vukhnal’, Savyts’kyi and others. Being Jewish, Shchupak possessed a double-identity, and was fully immersed in Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian literary discourse. Moreover, there was another aspect of his self-identification, the Marxist or Communist one. However, he wrote in Ukrainian, spoke Ukrainian and was associated with a place that housed a “nest of nationalists,” *Budynok Slovo*. All these factors played a decisive role for the NKVD officials who decided his fate.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ Also several denunciations served as evidence of his crimes against the state. Among them is Dovhan’s deposition. The 10-11 January 1937 interrogation protocol of Kostiantyn Dovhan’, a scientific worker of the Narkomos, portrays Shchupak as the leader of a nationalist group that functioned in the newspaper *Proletarskaia Pravda* in 1927 in Kyiv. Among his supposed accomplices were Desniak, Antonenko-Davydovych, Doroshkevych, Hermaize, Fylypovych and others. According to Dovhan’, Shchupak pretended to be a fighter against Ukrainian nationalism. “In reality,” he created nationalist groups in various cultural institutions, including VUAMLIN. See HDA SBU, f.6, spr.75840fp, ark.251; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.46293fp, t.1, ark.175.

³⁵⁹ Musienko, 476-477. For more details on Vyshinskii, see Adam Bosiacki, “Andrei Yanuarevich Vyshinsky: Paragon of the Totalitarian Conception of the Law and Political Organization,” in *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression*, eds. Kevin McDermott, and Matthew Stibbe (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 177-87.

³⁶⁰ On Jewish-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Jewish identities, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven & London: Yale

In 1935, the campaign against nationalists and oppositionists was disguised as an “inspection of party documents.” Local party organs, fulfilling the May 1935 order of the Central Committee, created commissions which from May to December 1935 purged party members, subsequently arresting them. The party acted in collaboration with the NKVD, and their common reports were sent to Nikolai Ezhov who personally supervised the purge and repression. The Ukrainian NKVD transferred to the party approximately 17,368 dossiers on people who were supposed to be expelled from the party and later arrested by the secret police.³⁶¹ The statistics of the 1934-36 repression in Ukraine are revealing: in 1934 30,322 people were arrested, in 1935—24,934, and in 1936—15, 717. The years preceding the Great Terror in Ukraine took the lives of 70,973 people. Most of them were executed or died in the camps.³⁶²

In 1935-36, dozens of anti-Soviet nationalist organizations were “uncovered” throughout Ukraine. According to the Memorial Society data (in the Kyiv branch), “in the second half of 1935, the number of cases examined by special collegiums of oblast’ courts increased by 95 percent, compared to the first six months of that year. In the first half of 1936 this number increased by 20.8 percent.”³⁶³ The increased number of criminal cases during the transitional period before the Great Terror seemed to confirm Stalin’s doctrine about the intensified class struggle during the last stage of socialist

University Press, 2009). Petrovsky-Shtern included analyses of three *slov’iany*’s identity, Ivan Kulyk, Raisa Troianker and Leonid Pervomais’kyi.

³⁶¹ Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 130-31.

³⁶² Vasiliev, “The Great Terror,” 141.

³⁶³ See the official site of the All-Ukrainian Memorial Society named after Vasyl’ Stus, available at http://memorial.kiev.ua/expo/eng/1934_2.html (accessed 24 September 2012).

construction, which had been successfully achieved, according to Stalin's 1936 Constitution.

The individual histories of the *slov'iany* presented in this chapter confirm the notion that people's doubtful pasts mattered, years of loyal service to the Soviets did not. Those who earned a reputation as Ukrainian nationalists, even those who were not ethnic Ukrainians, were subject to arrest. Despite different ethnic backgrounds (Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish) and different aesthetic, artistic and social values, the *slov'iany* represented for the state a multi-bonded group who shared the same space, and more importantly, the same language.

The rhetoric and methods employed and publicized by the central secret organs reinforced the local traditions in the Ukrainian NKVD. By January 1935, the NKVD in Moscow completed the investigation of "crimes" committed by the former oppositionists Zinov'iev, Kamenev, Ievdokimov, Bakaev and their accomplices, who had allegedly prepared assassinations of Stalin, Molotov, Chubar', Postyshev, Kosior and Eikhe. The mechanics of procedures and aesthetics embedded in these cases reassured the vigilant secret organs in Ukraine that they were not lagging behind.

The NKVD scheme repeated itself over and over again. The scenario conceived by the interrogator included criminal charges, depositions of other individuals as incriminating evidence, and the prescription of the punishment. Confessions were an optional, rather than a mandatory part of the investigation. Formal procedures of trials and casual impositions of death as penalty without the slightest attempt at considering the alternatives to routine

killings have been symptomatic of the system's dealings with alleged "nationalists."

As this chapter demonstrates, the emotional condition of the *slov'iany* and their fears were entangled with the place to which they belonged, leaving them no room for resistance to accusations of conspiracy in prison. Vukhnal's stoicism was a rarity. In his book *The Myth of the State*, Ernst Cassirer emphasized the significant role of emotional identification of the masses under totalitarianism, which is necessary for creating a myth, a powerful tool of societal regimentation.³⁶⁴ Patiently cultivated by the state through incessant propaganda, the popular emotional (often unconscious) condition shaped people's individual and collective behavior, inspiring them to fight for the system or to surrender to it, if needed. The *slov'iany* could not escape either one of their identifications, spatial or emotional. They belonged to a community of supposed nationalists who were "entrenched" in *Budynok Slovo*, and most importantly, they were converted into, or rather enslaved, as builders of Soviet culture.

The behavior of *slov'iany* under arrest demonstrated that humans cannot tolerate anxiety for very long. Psychoanalysis explains that people develop defense mechanisms that help them inhibit, camouflage or eliminate their anxiety. The experience of constant external danger and expectation of arrest, combined with inner constraints and the impossibility of writing freely, induced most *slov'iany* to deny their reality and the trauma of betrayals, and accept lies about nationalists and enemies who contaminated the building.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, ed. Charles W. Hendel (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955).

³⁶⁵ Lawrence A. Pervin, *Personality: Theory, Assessment, and Research* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1970), 232.

They attended purge meetings, and with vigor sentenced their colleagues to definite death through their overpowering criticism. Finding themselves in interrogation rooms, they also accepted the version NKVD operatives provided—that their neighbors and fellow writers were a part of a nationalist conspiracy. Some not only believed it but also began to doubt their own innocence. Those who were still free continued to believe that they were part of the revolutionary elite, desired elite apartments, fought for them beyond human dignity, and innocently drank tea, where they “should not have had it.”

Chapter Nine

The Great Terror: Reshaping Social and Cultural Space

How can you not understand?
Everything is constantly changing here.
. . . Because it is the Zone...

Stalker¹

No Victors

By 1937 the *slov'iany* had been fully absorbed into the new political culture that manifested itself in widespread denunciations and arrests. They compromised each other through condemnations in the press, by adopting the party's language, or rather slang that habitually cast the writers as "anti-Soviet snakes (*gadiny*)" and "Trotskyist filth." The process of simultaneous societal homogenization and fragmentation continued in the republic, and as Evgeny Dobrenko noted, "language [was] transformed into a space of disunity, not unity," despite its desired ends of accord, peace and fruitful communication.² This behavior bolstered the state mechanisms of selecting men who would be awarded the title of Soviet writers. In Ukraine only a few were elevated to this rank. They were bureaucratized, seduced by the state's perks. The most important one, granted by the secret police, was life; they needed no other encouragement to support state programs. Those who were eager to participate in national cultural construction were expelled from the Ukrainian Union of Soviet Writers and were eliminated as nationalists for their anti-Soviet and

¹ Stalker is the main character in the film *Stalker* (1979), directed by Andrei Tarkovskii.

² Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 245. Words unite and "are in their very nature communications," as Max Eastman stated. See Max Eastman, *The Literary Mind: Its Place in an Age of Science* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 57. On the language used in the factory press in 1937-38, see Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 58-59.

terrorist activities. One historian noted that “people also helped [to prolong the terror], both individually and collectively, to create the whirlwind they experienced.”³ Indeed, political culture, state violence and fear cultivated from above stimulated extensive popular participation, drawing in the masses and those who stood above them.

Oleg Khlevniuk has noted that there were several factors that shaped the Great Terror. The most crucial one for the regime was to ensure complete control and regimentation of society through fear, to suppress dissenting voices and opposition to the regime in order to maintain the “sole authority of the leader.”⁴ The terror therefore provided an opportunity to fully exercise power in order to accomplish ideological, political and economic tasks in the ways Stalin envisioned. The 22 February-7 March 1937 Plenum of the Central Committee identified two primary targets for mass repressions and executions—the oppositional cadres in the highest echelons of power whose behavior would be unpredictable in the context of an increasing threat “from outside,” and a potential “fifth column” that would jeopardize construction of a monolithic state.⁵

The state facilitated the elimination of these enemies through the routine restructuring of operational and court procedures. By mid-1937, troikas were replaced by dvoikas, which included a prosecutor and an NKVD head. Of course, dvoikas dealt with cases outside the judiciary, and their chief responsibility was to increase the tempo: criminal cases were to be handled quickly according to prescribed schemata, and the verdicts were to be carried

³ Goldman, 136.

⁴ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 168.

⁵ Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 169.

out immediately according to the infamous order of 1 December 1934.⁶

Blessed by the Politburo, on 30 July 1937, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Nikolai Ezhov issued the notorious order no. 00447 "On an Operation to Repress Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements." The operation was to be launched in early August 1937 and be completed within four months. The remaining *slov'iany* neatly fell into one of the categories specified in the document, the category that targeted "terrorists" and "spies." The quota established for those to be arrested in Kharkiv oblast' was 1,500 people who were to be sentenced to death, and 4,000 people who were to be exiled for 8-10 years in labor camps.⁷

The archival evidence available today to historians leaves no doubt about Stalin's personal supervision of the NKVD's operations during the Great Terror. Ezhov never acted independently, and his decisions were fully shaped by Stalin's instructions. On 17 January 1938 Stalin ordered Ezhov to continue repressive operations that targeted ethnic and national groups, including those in Ukraine where, as he pointed out to Ezhov, "the SRs were very strong."⁸

During the Great Terror, the *slov'iany* were hunted down in territories geographically distant from *Budynok Slovo*, even when people disconnected their lives and memories from their former place of residence. Those who still

⁶ Adam Bosiacki, "Andrei Yanuarevich Vyshinsky: Paragon of the Totalitarian Conception of the Law and Political Organization," in *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression*, eds. Kevin McDermott, and Matthew Stibbe (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 181.

⁷ A.I. Kokurin, and N.V. Petrov, eds., *Gulag (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1918-1960* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo "Materik," 2002), 96-104; Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 180-81; Vadim Zolotar'ov, "Osobennosti raboty UNKVD po Khar'kovskoi oblasti vo vremia provedeniia massovoi operatsii po prikazy № 00447," in *Stalinizm v sovetskoi provintsii: 1937-1938. Massovye operatsii na osnove prikaza 00447*, ed. M. Iunge, B. Bonvech and R. Binner (Moskva: Rosspen, 2009), 572-93.

⁸ See the excerpt from Stalin's directive in Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 183-84, 195, 202.

resided in Kharkiv prepared themselves for arrest by burning personal correspondence, diaries and books with the autographs of their colleagues who had perished in the early thirties. The patterns of people's psychology were characteristic of communities under surveillance—friendships transformed or disintegrated, pervasive primitive alcoholism replaced social gatherings and poetry evenings. The aftermath of the Great Terror reveals no final victories or final defeats on either side (the *slov'iany* or their interrogators). Despite the physical elimination of both by the system, the two groups remained in opposition to each other, which became evident in the rehabilitation materials of the 1950s. The gravitation to self-destruction among the writers who survived until 1937-38 was a manifestation of the feeling of doom and a protective mechanism against state violence. In prison, they presented malleable material for NKVD operatives, for whom the rationale for mass repression also began to evaporate during the summer of 1937.

Mykhail' Semenko and Ivan Kulyk: Semantics Stripped of Meaning

In 1937, with a renewed vigor the party began to “uncover” bourgeois nationalists among Ukrainian intellectuals, blaming them for “wrecking” activities by creating a “fascist” Ukrainian language in which all words that resembled Russian words had been purged. They were accused of neglecting the Russian language as the language of instruction in Ukrainian secondary schools and schools of higher education, acts that were qualified as attempts aimed at the “separation of Soviet Ukraine from the USSR and the restoration of capitalist slavery.”⁹

⁹ *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, ch. 3 (March, 1938): 5, and *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, ch. 7 (July, 1938): 19.

Initiated by Stalin, the 13 January 1937 resolution of the TsK VKP(b) “About the unsatisfactory party leadership in the Kyiv oblast’ committee of the KP(b)U and the shortcomings in work of the KP(b)U” launched a new wave of mass repression in Ukraine. This resolution demoralized not only the Ukrainian party leaders but also those who held leading positions in Ukrainian cultural institutions. According to Ezhov’s 31 July 1937 order to the local NKVD organs, approximately 270,000 people had to be repressed. The mass terror in the republic lasted from January 1937 to late 1938, and swept away the remaining *slov’iany*, as well as their tormentors.¹⁰

One of the more recognizable *slov’ianyn* arrested during the Great Terror was Mykhail’ Semenko, an avant-garde futurist poet whose language and quest for new forms of expression had been very distant from party prescriptions and proscriptions. Yet, he aligned himself with the ideas of the Russian Futurists (the proletarian poet Vladimir Maiakovskii and his circle),¹¹ and argued that art had to “perform socially useful tasks.”¹² Solomiia Pavlychko argued that for Semenko, Futurism was the “analogy of socialism in real life,” in that it poeticized and supported the destruction of class enemies and approved of violence for the sake of the Revolution.¹³ In the 1920s, Semenko deservedly became the leader of the Ukrainian Futurists, whose

¹⁰ Mykola Doroshko, *Nomenclatura: Kerivna Verkhivka Radians’koi Ukrainy (1917-1938 rr.)* (Kyiv: Nika-Tsentr, 2008), 337-38.

¹¹ Miron Petrovskii, *Gorodu i miru: Kievskie ocherki*, 2nd ed. (Kiev: Dukh i litera, 2008), 170-75.

¹² Andrei Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, trans. Joanne Turnbull with the assistance of Nikolai Formozov (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1990), 48; Myroslav Shkandrij, “Politics and the Ukrainian Avant-garde,” in *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation*, eds. Irena R. Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 220.

¹³ Solomiia Pavlychko, *Teoriia literatury*, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomii Pavlychko “Osnovy,” 2009), 177, 591-92.

expectations for their art were grounded in European modern traditions.¹⁴

They vigorously rejected the orthodoxy of Taras Shevchenko. Semenko even published a collection of his own poems entitled *Kobzar* (1924) in an attempt to demolish Shevchenko's cult following in the minds of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.¹⁵ Indeed, Semenko had a "difficult" relationship with the Ukrainian cultural icon. Protesting against what he saw as stagnant cultural norms and traditions, he even publicly burned a volume by Shevchenko.¹⁶

The Literary Discussion "spoiled" Semenko's relationships with several Ukrainian writers, artists and with the theatre director Les' Kurbas.¹⁷ Semenko and his literary association "Nova Heneratsia" (New Generation) organized a crusade against Kurbas and his theatre "Berezil'," and against Boichuk and his circle.¹⁸ Often Semenko's criticism went beyond artistic analyses, and resembled what Hryhorii Kostiuk called "ideological and political battles."¹⁹ On the pages of *Nova Heneratsia*, Semenko also attacked VAPLITE and Khvyl'ovyi, identifying the views of *vaplitiany* as fascist.²⁰ In the context of the political culture of the time these intellectual attacks seemed quite normal, but in the light of preceding friendships and alliances—tragic, because initially these men constituted a group of like-minded individuals.

¹⁴ Shkandrij in Makaryk and Tkacz, 220, 229.

¹⁵ Petrovskii, 184; Tamara Hundorova, *ProIavlennia Slova: Dyskursiia rannioho ukrains'koho modernizmu*, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2009), 133.

¹⁶ Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 137; Iuliia Iulina, "Inkvizitor dlia Kobzaria," *Vestnik Krivbas*, 18 April 2012.

¹⁷ Anna Bila, *Futurizm* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2010), 98-99; Natalia Kuziakina, "Ukrainistyka XX stolittia: vidkryttia arkhiviv," in *Natalia Kuziakina: avtoportret, interv'iu, publikatsii riznykh lit, istoriia ikh retsenzii ta interpretatsii, memoria*, ed. V. Saenko (Drohobych, Kyiv, Odesa: VF "Vidrodzhennia," 2010), 347.

¹⁸ Petrovskii, 188-92.

¹⁹ Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:287-88.

²⁰ Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 157.

Like *vaplitianstvo*, Semenko's Futurism, bold poetry-painting (*poezomaliarstvo*), was for the state not only a form of literary transgression but primarily an ideological statement of freedom and "otherness." By the early thirties, under party pressure Semenko surrendered his principles to socialist realism.²¹ In the vortex of party harassment, criticism, and literary unification Semenko repudiated Futurism, and wrote several pieces in an uncharacteristic manner and disastrous from a literary point of view.²² Alcohol became an anesthetic for Semenko to dull his new experiences and uncertainties. It helped him ignore the vulgarity of his artistic transformation.²³

From 17 August-1 September 1934, the first Congress of Writers of the USSR took place in Moscow where for the first time the words "Soviet literature" were uttered repeatedly.²⁴ Iurii Smolych noted that Semenko who attended the Congress perfectly understood what was going on at the Congress—freedom of creativity had been fully paralyzed.²⁵ One day at this Congress became especially memorable for the secret police. A leaflet was distributed among the delegates that read: "Our real literature is behind bars, and you who gathered here have abandoned it. You should be desecrated and

²¹ Pavlychko, 190.

²² In 1932 he published selected poetry *Z radians'koho shchodennyka* (From the Soviet Diary), in 1933—*Mizhnarodni dila* (International Affairs), a panegyric to the Soviet Union and a condemnation of nationalism, and in 1936—the poem "Nimechchyna" (Germany) that became an apotheosis of conformism and ideological elasticity. See O.H. Musienko, ed. ...*Z poroha smerti...* *Pys'mennyky Ukrainy—zhertvy stalins'kykh represii* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991), 390.

²³ In 1937-28, most *slov'iany* began to drink heavily to mitigate their fear and inner disorder, and to soothe their shattered emotional condition. Kostiuik, 1:385, 388-89. See also AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.247zv.,275,280.

²⁴ Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid' pro nespokii tryvaie: deshcho z dvadtsiatykh, trydtsiatykh rokiv I doteper v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1969), 2:27.

²⁵ Smolych, 2: 23.

thrown out as garbage.” For three years, the NKVD searched unsuccessfully for the author of this proclamation.²⁶



Mykhail' Semenko.²⁷

On 26 April 1937, Semenko was arrested as an active member of a Ukrainian fascist terrorist organization and the author of the seditious leaflet.²⁸ Because Semenko often traveled to Kyiv, the secret police issued two orders for his arrest—one for the Kharkiv NKVD department, the second—for the Kyiv NKVD department. Semenko was arrested in the hotel “Kontinental” in Kyiv, the place of residence of his wife, Natalia Uzhvii. Although by this time the couple was separated, most of Semenko’s possessions were confiscated at Uzhvii’s place.²⁹

Despite Semenko’s open leftist positions, his membership in the Borot’bist party and his work together with Oleksandr Shums’kyi for the

²⁶ Myhailo Naienko, *Khudozhnia literatura Ukrainy: Vid mifiv do modernoi real’nosti* (Kyiv: Vudavnychy tseŋtr “Prosvita,” 2008), 767.

²⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.36.

²⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.2,5.

²⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.6-9. Semenko met Uzhvii, a leading actress of the State Drama Theatre, in Odesa. They got married in 1926, and Uzhvii moved to Kharkiv where she became an actress in Kurbas’s theatre “Berezil.” In 1933, Kurbas was arrested. By 1936 Semenko’s and Uzhvii’s relationship deteriorated and she moved to Kyiv where she became an actress of the Franko Theatre under the leadership of Hnat Iura. For more biographical details about Semenko, see Liubov Iakymchuk, “Iak povstav svit i zahynuv Mykhail’ Semenko,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 4 April 2013, p. 12.

People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Kyiv in the early twenties blemished his reputation.³⁰ Myron Akimov (Ehides) had been "working" with Semenko for two months, May and June. On 7 July 1937, he asked Semenko to confirm his membership in the nationalist organization. Semenko refused.³¹

One can only imagine what happened to Semenko during the period from early July to early September 1937. But on 4 September 1937 he wrote a letter to Leplevskii, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, stating that he resisted justice for 4 months and 8 days, and now he was willing to provide truthful information about his membership in the Ukrainian nationalist fascist terrorist organization and about other members in the hope that Soviet power would forgive him for his crime.³² Semenko's detailed confession of his crimes follows the letter to Leplevskii.

Semenko claimed that he was recruited into the organization by Andrii Khvyliia in 1927, and its alleged leaders were Ialovyi, Khvyliia and Pylypenko. The organization supposedly planned to murder party leaders, to dethrone the Soviet regime and to establish an independent Ukraine with the assistance of Germany. Ironically, it would be practically impossible to implement these plans under the watchful eye of the NKVD in Ukraine, yet the secret police wrote the scenario of conspiracy without "digging deeply" into the potential technicalities of such a daunting task. Routinely, terrorism was scripted as one of the methods employed by the organization. According to Semenko, the *slov'iany* Savyts'kyi and Vukhnal' were active participants in terrorist plans.³³ Galicians were also imbedded in the scenario of terrorist conspiracy: Semenko

³⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.12zv.,33.

³¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.34-34zv.

³² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.36.

³³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.37-37zv.

supposedly maintained connections with Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia who worked for the newspaper *Novyi chas* and provided leadership and support.³⁴

The practice of *ochnye stavki* remained common during the Great Terror. By engraving in their minds the visual image of their denouncer and by instilling horror and shame for their acts, these experiences kept the arrested subdued during the court hearing, a condition which facilitated the admission before the prosecutor of crimes they had “committed.” Semenکو was also subjected to this procedure. During the 17 September *ochnaia stavka* between Semenکو and Andrii Mykhailiuk, Semenکو claimed that the organization had prepared to assassinate Kosior on 1 May 1937, and a bomb was made and passed to Mykhailiuk who was supposed to throw it at Kosior during a street demonstration. To intimidate the arrested, usually more than one agent conducted the meeting. In Semenکو’s case, three people monitored the procedure—Daniil Lifar’, Akimov and Proskuriakov.³⁵ Both Semenکو and Mykhailiuk confirmed the scenario and signed the minutes of the meeting.³⁶

Interestingly, the political dynamic in Ukraine at any given time accurately found its reflection in the texts of criminal files. Semenکو was in prison during great perturbations that involved leading party figures in

³⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.38.

³⁵ **Daniil Lifar’** (1901-1943) was the head of the 3rd sector of the 4th department of UGB NKVD in the UkrSSR (4 August 1937-22 April 1938). During WWII, he was the head of the 1st department of UKR SMERSH (the North Caucasus front) and the deputy head of the 3rd department of UKR SMERSH (the South front). In 1943 he died at the front. See N.V. Petrov and K.V. Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD: 1934-1941*, ed. N.G. Okhotin and A.B. Roginskii (Moskva: “Zven’ia,” 1999), 273. In 1937, the 3rd sector of the 4th department (the SPV) was responsible for investigating Ukrainian nationalists and counter-revolutionists. See Oleh Bazhan and Vadym Zolotar’ov, ““Velykyi terror’ na Kharkivshchyni: Masshtaby, vykonavtsi, zhertvy,” *Kraeznavstvo* no. 1 (2012): 92.

³⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.40-41. **Andrii Mykhailiuk** was a Ukrainian poet and a member of the literary association *Nova Heneratsiia*. In 1930-34 he worked at the newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* in Kharkiv. In 1934 he moved to Kyiv. He was arrested on 11 September 1937 and was shot on 24 November 1937 as a member of a counterrevolutionary Ukrainian nationalist terrorist organization. On 21 October 1937 before the results of a preliminary investigation and a court hearing, Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Mikoian signed the order to execute Mykhailiuk. See Musienko, 494.

Ukraine, as well as the executors of their will— NKVD associates. In January 1937 the TsK accused Postyshev of failure to combat enemies in Ukraine. He was withdrawn from the republic in March 1937, and was arrested in Moscow the next year. Balyts'kyi was arrested on Ezhov's order on 7 July 1937.³⁷ The system began to cannibalize itself.

Consequently, the details of Semenko's conspiracy were enhanced and the "plot" thickened. A reader of Semenko's criminal file might be completely lost in the devilish whirlwind of names and events related to the "conspiracy" plotted by Ukrainian nationalists against the state. Importantly, the language of depositions remained bureaucratic and mediocre, more characteristic of Akimov and Proskuriakov than Semenko:

I continued to be a malicious nationalist, who was trying to find an outlet for my anti-Soviet views. My trip abroad and my meetings with the prominent representatives of the Ukrainian immigration not only strengthened my hostile convictions but also pushed me to fight against the VKP(b) and Soviet power in an organized fashion.³⁸

On 16 October Semenko received an assignment to write a substantial report about Ivan Kulyk, a former *slov'ianyn*, a member of the TsK VKP(b) and of the Central Executive Committee in the Ukrainian SSR, and the director of the Party Publishing House of the TsK VKP(b). In 1934, Kulyk was appointed the head of the Union of Writers in Ukraine, and since 1935 he was also an editor of *Literaturna Hazeta* and the journal *Radians'ka literatura*. The task of denouncing Kulyk was not accidental, and the subsequent flow of events was not fortuitous. Kulyk's best friend was the second person in the

³⁷ Iurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko and Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby, Fakty, Dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abris, 1997), 66, 69.

³⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.49. This is an excerpt from the minutes of Semenko's 22-23 September 1937 interrogation.

Ukrainian GPU Karl Karlson, Balyts'kyi's assistant.³⁹ When in the summer of 1937 Moscow began a fundamental cleansing of the Ukrainian NKVD, on 26 July 1937 Karlson was transferred to the NKVD in Moscow.⁴⁰ On the very next day, the NKVD arrested Kulyk. Nikolai Ezhov personally reported to Stalin about Kulyk's arrest.⁴¹

It is unknown whether Semenko was informed that the most influential individual in the Union of Writers, Ivan Kulyk, had been arrested. There are no traces in his file about how he spent the last two summer months of his life. In July and August the secret police was shaken by internal investigations of its own workers who, it was claimed, had conspired against the state and created an anti-Soviet organization within the secret police. The secret police had supposedly arrested innocent people in Ukraine to provoke a rebellion that, it was hoped, would lead to the destruction of the Soviet regime in Ukraine. Adam B. Ulam characterized the paradoxical dynamic of 1937 as a “kaleidoscopic pattern of Communist rule,” when “yesterday's heroes [were] becoming today's traitors and enemies.”⁴²

For the state, this maneuver was politically expedient from several perspectives. First, the party leadership found a scapegoat that could be blamed for mass killings in Ukraine; second, the witnesses of outrageously illegal procedures blessed by the party could be effectively eliminated; third, it was time for the rotation of the cadres in Ukraine, a regular practice to prevent

³⁹ Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia moho pokolinnia: Spohady uchasnyka revoliutsiinykh podii v Ukraini* (Edmonton, Canada: Kanads'kyi Instytut Ukrains'kykh Studii, Al'berts'kyi Universytet, 1985), 216.

⁴⁰ Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar'ov, 485. Karlson was arrested on 22 January 1938, and sentenced to death on 22 April 1938.

⁴¹ See the text of Ezhov's 15 August 1937 secret report to Stalin in Vladimir Khaustov and Lennart Samuelson, *Stalin, NKVD i repressii: 1936-1938 gg.* (Moskva: Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsyklopedia, 2010), 361.

⁴² Adam B. Ulam, “The Price of Sanity,” in *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World*, ed. G.R. Urban (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 105.

real conspiracies and corruption among NKVD agents. The promotion of Ukrainian *chekists* to leading positions in the NKVD in Moscow was out of the question—they had to be silenced.

Most GPU/NKVD operatives involved in Ukrainian operations and who had interrogated many *slov'iany* were arrested during the summer months of 1937. In late July 1937, Nikolai Grushevskii and Serhii Pustovoitov were put in prison.⁴³ According to their testimonies, Peisakh Rakhlis, Solomon Bruk, Oleksandr Sherstov, Boris Kozel'skii, Mykhail Aleksandrovskii and many others were members of an anti-Soviet terrorist organization that operated in the secret organs.⁴⁴ Even Balyts'kyi was alleged to be a leader of the terrorist organization.⁴⁵ Those who had implemented the largest operations in the history of the secret police and were responsible for millions of deaths in Ukraine, specialists in Ukrainian culture and “cultural producers,” were now considered regional nationalists and conspirators themselves.

The sweltering summer months of 1937 were stressful for the secret police. The number of the arrested in Ukraine put tremendous pressure on prison facilities. On 20 August 1937, Leplevskii complained to Ezhov that Ukrainian prisons were overcrowded—there were 43,000 people there—because only 30-50 percent of the arrested were being sentenced to death and executed. Many of those held in the prisons had been sentenced to labor camps, but could not be sent on their way because to do so would be to exceed

⁴³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69860fp, t.8, ark.80-83,93.

⁴⁴ **Peisakh Rakhlis** (1897-1938) began his career in the Cheka in Kyiv in the early 1920s. In 1932, he was promoted to the first assistant to the head of the Kharkiv GPU. In January 1937, he was appointed head of the 4th department of the State Security Administration in the Ukrainian NKVD but in May 1937 he was sent to Uzbekistan as head of the 3rd department of the State Security Administration in Uzbekistan. In August 1937 he was arrested and in January 1936 was sentenced to death. See private archive of V. Zolotar'ov.

⁴⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.69860fp, t.8, ark.95.

the quota established for the gulag. Accordingly, he proposed an increase in the quota of those sent to the gulag.⁴⁶ Perhaps, these “organizational difficulties” prolonged Semenko’s life for several months.

During the Great Terror, the assistant head of the fourth department UGB UNKVD Fiodor Fiodorov-Berkov, himself a Jew, conducted arrests, overwhelmingly of Jews. From 12 August 1937 to 6 April 1938 troikas “investigated” 412 criminal cases composed of 1341 individuals (not counting those who were shot by the decree of the Special Meeting of the NKVD in



Ivan Kulyk—standing far left.⁴⁷

Moscow). Most were Jews. They were accused of counterrevolutionary activity and anti-Soviet propaganda. 918 were sentenced to death, 402 people received ten years in labor camps, and 21 individuals were sent to the North for eight years.⁴⁸ In light of these events, Kulyk, a Jew (his real name was

⁴⁶ Serhii Bohunov, Vadym Zolotar’ov, Tetiana Rafal’s’ka, Olena Radzyvill, and Iurii Shapoval, eds., *Ukraina v dobu “Velykoho terroru” 1936-1938 roky* (Kyiv: Lybid’, 2009), 212. 39 prisons in Ukraine could accommodate only 24,755 prisoners. Only in Kharkiv oblast’, from June to December 1937, 13,047 people were arrested and sentenced to various degrees of punishment. See Bazhan and Zolotar’ov, 95.

⁴⁷ TsDAMLIMU, f.815, op.1, spr.10, ark.1.

⁴⁸ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.122. Yet there is also evidence that from 9 August 1937 to 11 March 1938, 6,865 corpses were secretly buried in the Kharkiv Jewish cemetery. See Bazhan and Zolotar’ov, 95. For details about the ethnic composition of the Ukrainian

Yisroel ben Yehuda Iudelevych), had little reason for optimism, although Kulyk never emphasized his Jewish heritage.⁴⁹

As part of the NKVD's routine, Kulyk's arrest was prepared by Semenko's extensive denunciation which served as evidence of Kulyk's crimes. Semenko portrayed Kulyk as a sympathizer of former *vaplitiany* and as a "deviationist" who promoted counterrevolutionary moods among young people.⁵⁰ Semenko wrote that during one of their meetings in 1932 Kulyk tried to recruit him in a counterrevolutionary organization but he, Semenko, "was already a member," so he promised Kulyk to "think about his invitation."⁵¹

For the NKVD, Semenko's deposition was exactly what was needed to indict Kulyk who openly carried himself as a Ukrainian and a Ukrainian writer.⁵² Moreover, he was the head of the Ukrainian Union of Writers, a factor that also played a role in Kulyk's arrest, because in 1937 Moscow ordered the rotation of the party cadres in Ukrainian institutions.⁵³

Not surprisingly, Kulyk had a different version of his 1932 meeting with Semenko. On 2 October 1937 Kulyk provided an interesting account about how in the summer of 1932 he recruited Semenko into a counterrevolutionary terrorist organization. Kulyk allegedly stated that it was

secret police, see Iurii Shapoval and Vadym Zolotar'ov, "Ievrei v kerivnytstvi orhaniv DPU-NKVS-USRR-URSR u 1920-1930-kh rr.," *Z arkhiviv VUChK-GPU-NKVD-KGB* 1(2010): 53-93 (on Fiodorov-Berkov, see p. 90).

⁴⁹ Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 216. For more on Kulyk, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 62-110.

⁵⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.68zv.,69,70. Semenko, like many other *slov'iany*, hated Kulyk for his demeanor, his habit to "speak Bolshevik" (using Steven Kotkin's term), and for his *vozhdizm* and *zameterenie*.

⁵¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.70zv.,71. Maksym Ryl's'kyi and Mykola Bazhan also found their place in Semenko's narrative of conspiracy. Interestingly, they were never arrested.

⁵² Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 216. Semenko testified against Kulyk, and vice versa The NKVD also used denunciations to indict Semenko and Kulyk that were dated back to 1933, as well the fresh ones.

⁵³ Doroshko, *Nomenclatura*, 337-43.

easy because he had *compromat* on Semenko about his connections with Galicians and UVO members.⁵⁴ Kulyk named Semenko's two close friends—Geo Shkurupii and Oleksa Vlyz'ko who of course were also named as members of the conspiracy.⁵⁵ According to Kulyk, Semenko's group "Nova Heneratsia" was anything but a literary association—all members were Ukrainian nationalists and part of an anti-Soviet organization.

Kulyk, like Shchupak, a Jew and a Ukrainian Communist, was fully immersed in Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian literary discourse. Beyond being a poet, writer, literary critic, journalist and editor, he was also an influential politician and party leader. What became the problem for the center and the secret police that decided Kulyk's fate: his past, his convictions or his identity to which he was faithful? A Jew from Uman' who spoke Ukrainian, Russian and Yiddish, a sympathizer of Khvyl'ovyi and *vaplitiany*, how did he survive the repression of the early thirties? The years Kulyk spent in the United States were a distant past for the NKVD, and to a certain extent, being a coal miner in Pennsylvania provided Kulyk with a reputation as a hard working proletarian and a trustworthy Marxist. Appointed the first leader of the Union of Writers in Ukraine, as expected, at its first Congress (1934) Kulyk discussed two antagonistic tendencies in Ukrainian literature, the nationalist as represented by Mykola Kulish's art and the proletarian as reflected in Ivan Mykytenko's plays.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, his affiliations, networks and friendships played a significantly negative role in his future. Among his friends were Mykola Skrypnyk, Iurii Kotsiubyns'kyi, Volodymyr Zaton's'kyi

⁵⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.120.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ V. Chalmaev, "V oblasti 'belykh piaten'," *Druzhba narodov*, no. 2 (1959): 264.

and Nikolai Bukharin, “nationalists” and “Trotskyites.”⁵⁷ Although he helped the state tame the spirit of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance in the 1920s, his links to the literary association “Hart” and to Khvyl’ovyi were highly suspect and had never been forgotten, neither had his enthusiastic support of Ukrainization. Despite his multiple identities, he chose Ukrainian as his language of everyday use, a preference that ran counter to the growing Russocentric stance that emanated from Moscow. Kulyk’s belief that Ukraine could be de-russified and de-colonized within communism, a belief that seemed quite normal in the early 1920s, was perceived as seditious thinking in the early 1930s. His ideological zeal in reinforcing party directives, and his literary work, which employed a “red revolutionary framework” in the early thirties, only delayed his arrest.⁵⁸

By 1935, Kulyk had deteriorated as a writer: his literary works recited newspaper slogans and sang odes to the party leader.⁵⁹ He surrounded himself with devotees whose literary talent was doubtful and the desire for emulating the party functionary (Kulyk) was boundless.⁶⁰ However, the *slov’iany* and literary critics Mykailo Dolengo and Volodymyr Koriak praised Kulyk’s creative art, which was characterized as revolutionary.⁶¹ Paraphrasing the Ukrainian writer Oleksii Poltorats’kyi, the political culture of the 1930s cultivated a certain type of literary dignitary, namely “Shchupakulyk” or

⁵⁷ Petrovsky-Shtern, 74.

⁵⁸ Petrovsky-Shtern, 99.

⁵⁹ Petrovsky-Shtern, 100-01.

⁶⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.69zv, 70.

⁶¹ Petrovsky-Shtern, 101-02.

“Shchupakoriak,” whose works were praised publicly but despised and mocked secretly in the 1930s.⁶²



The delegation of Ukrainian writers on the BBK (1933).
From left to right: Leonid Pervomais'kyi, Arkadii Liubchenko, Ivan Kulyk, the head of the BBK construction Semen Firin, Antin Dykyi, Itsyk Fefer, Iakiv Horods'koi (Iakiv Bliumkin), Ivan Senchenko, Pavlo Usenko.⁶³

Despite Kulyk's tremendous efforts to internalize the existing political culture of the time, the summer of 1937 was his last, as it was for Semenko. During his first interrogation, Kulyk “confessed” that when he, a Jew, was approached by Kost' Kotko and Mykhailo Ialovyi to join a Ukrainian nationalist counterrevolutionary organization, he immediately agreed because, as he stated, he perceived himself as a Jewish savior of the Ukrainian people. Of course the Union of Writers was only an instrument for implementing the goals of the organization, according to Kulyk.⁶⁴ However, in accordance with the tasks of the day, uncovering those who simply were Ukrainian nationalists seemed insufficient for NKVD operatives. Their foreign connections were to be identified to expose the conspiracy's international dimension. For Kulyk's

⁶² Oleksandr Poltorats'kyi, “Panfuturizm,” in Mykhail' Semenko, *Vybrani tvory*, ed. Anna Bila (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 326. The last name created by Poltorats'kyi was composed from two last names Shchupak and Koriak, the *slov'iany* and literary critics. The first name of Poltorats'kyi was Oleksii (1905-1977).

⁶³ The photograph was published in *Literaturna hazeta*, 30 September 1933, p. 1.

⁶⁴ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.37630, t.1, ark.5-49; Musienko, 292.

interrogators Vladimir Styryne and David Pertsov, this did not appear to be a problem. They “elaborated” on Kulyk’s experience abroad as a Ukrainian consul in Canada, and his communication with countless Ukrainian émigrés and foreigners was utilized as the foundation for the alleged international conspiracy designed to undermine Soviet power in Ukraine.⁶⁵ Kulyk was accused of membership in a Ukrainian nationalist organization and of being a spy of the British and German Intelligence Services. On 7 October 1937, he was sentenced to death and shot on 10 October 1937.⁶⁶ Shortly thereafter Kulyk’s tormentors suffered the same fate.

Semenko and Kulyk, both “leftists” and “party activists,” with mixed identities, in which the Marxist one dominated, were “rooted out of life, together with [their] archives” at a moment of complete inner disarray, personal crisis and confusion.⁶⁷ Semenko’s former friend and futurist Oleksii Poltorats’kyi emphasized that from 1930 to 1937 Semenko “was completely destroyed morally and physically—he was drinking heavily, engaged in regular debauchery, and through his behavior corrupted his friends the *slov’iany* Ivan Malovychko, Ievhen Kas’ianenko and Mykhailo Panchenko.”⁶⁸ According to Poltorats’kyi, two years before his arrest Semenko spent most of the day drinking together with Vukhknal’. Vukhknal’ was famous for his nationalist beliefs. However, Poltorats’kyi insisted that all these people were

⁶⁵ **Vladimir Styryne** (1897-1937) was appointed the head of the 3rd department UGB NKVD in the UkrSSR on 20 July 1937. He was arrested on 22 October 1937 and sentenced to the VMN on 15 November 1937. See Petrov and Skorkin, 398. **David Pertsov** (1909-1941?) was Styryne’s deputy. On 5 April 1938 he was promoted to the deputy head of the UNKVD in Kharkiv oblast’ but on 16 November 1938 he was arrested and on 6 June 1941 was sentenced to 15 years in labor camps where he died. See Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar’ov, 531.

⁶⁶ TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.37630, t.1, ark.173-73zv.; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.159. Kulyk was rehabilitated on 19 December 1956 on the basis of false accusations made against him.

⁶⁷ Petrovsky-Shtern, 98, 110; Petrovskii, 187. Both just separated from their wives, Natalia Uzhvii and Liutsiana Piontek.

⁶⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.176,179.

linked by their literary tastes, not politics.⁶⁹ During closed court hearings, both confirmed their crimes against the state to the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. On 23 October 1937 in the court room Semenko humbly asked the court to spare his life. That same day Semenko was sentenced to death through execution, and was shot the next day in Kyiv.⁷⁰

On 17 December 1956 the Kyiv Military Prosecutor reopened the case upon the request of Semenko's children Rostyslav and Iryna, and two members of the Ukrainian Union of Writers, Oles' Honchar and Iurii Smolych.⁷¹ The reinvestigation of Semenko's case demonstrated that Semenko's name had never been mentioned in the criminal file of Ialovy, who allegedly recruited Semenko into the anti-Soviet organization, and Semenko's "conspirators" had been rehabilitated in the 1950s because of false charges against them.⁷² Moreover, the depositions made by the interrogators Grushevskii, Pustovoitov and many others, who had been arrested in summer 1937, revealed that the entire staff of regional NKVD departments had fabricated criminal cases against the Ukrainian intelligentsia on orders from the NKVD in Kyiv and Moscow. However, these depositions had been ignored despite the fact that they had been obtained before October 1937 when Semenko and Kulyk were executed. Clearly, there was little interest in saving the writers from injustice. The scenario of their execution was sanctioned by Moscow, as well as the elimination of the top leadership and rank-and-file

⁶⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.177,179,184. Despite this common portrait that had been attributed to Semenko, his ex-wife Natalia Uzhvii had never mentioned his addiction to alcohol during the rehabilitation process in 1956; just the opposite, she characterized him as an interesting and cerebral artist who also deeply cared about his children.

⁷⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.130-33.

⁷¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.135-38.

⁷² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.143.

lieutenants of the Ukrainian NKVD.⁷³ On 22 October 1957 Semenko was rehabilitated by the Military Collegium of the USSR due to the absence of any grounds for his arrest.⁷⁴

While rehabilitating “nationalists” in the 1950s, the secret agency continued to obstruct the search for the truth by relatives. Like Kaliannyk’s daughter, who struggled with the KGB to see her father’s file for years, Rostyslav Semenko led a protracted battle with the agency for the right to see his father’s criminal file. His appeals to humanity, negative statements about the secret agency, and quotations from Khrushchev’s speeches about a “*chekist* with a chicken brain who viciously tortured Postyshev,” complicated his access to the file.⁷⁵ For some time, the KGB comforted Rostyslav with the information that the *chekisty* Leplevskii, Akimov, Levin and Matvii Herzon who investigated Semenko’s case had been arrested and executed in the late thirties for Trostkyite wrecking activity.⁷⁶ Rostyslav was persistent and managed to receive permission to read his father’s file. He believed that Uzhvii had denounced Semenko to buy her freedom. He found no evidence of

⁷³ After Ezhov’s February 1937 visit to the Ukrainian NKVD in Kyiv, a special group was created under David Pertsov’s leadership. The task of this group was to identify “enemies” within the secret organs. Approximately 35 NKVD operatives were arrested and executed. Mass arrests in the secret organs began in June 1937 after the visit of Mykhail Frinovskii, Ezhov’s first assistant, to Kyiv. By late April 1938, 241 secret agents were arrested. See Bohunov et al., 31-32, 38-59. On the center’s order about the repression of *chekists* during the Great Terror, see Vadym Zolotar’ov, *Sekretno-politychnyi viddil DPU USSR: Spravy ta liudy* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007), 80-83, 133-39, 176, 226-29, 232; Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 198-99. On Stalin’s crucial role in the mass repression of 1937-38, see Bohunov et al., 12-13, 18-21; Paul Hagenlon, *Stalin’s Police: Public Order and Mass Repressions in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 283-85; Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 201-02.

⁷⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.190-90zv.

⁷⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.198.

⁷⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.209. **Matvii Herzon** (1906-1938) was the head of the 4th department of the UGB NKVD in the UkrSSR from 20 July 1937. In October 1937 he was transferred to Moscow and arrested on 18 April 1938. On 23 September 1938 he was sentenced to death and shot on the same day in Kyiv. See Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar’ov, 451.

this in the file, although he discovered his father's weakness during investigation, which shocked him.

Both Semenko and Kulyk were arrested in Kyiv but the stigma of *Budynok Slovo*, the place where both once resided, and their Ukrainianness, which was associated with Kharkiv and the Ukrainian cultural revival, dominated the imagination of their interrogators. The narrative of conspiracy was intricately tied to the building and its residents, Semenko's and Kulyk's real and prescribed friends, individuals who had already been executed by 1937, and those who were awaiting their turn to be arrested shortly after July 1937.⁷⁷

The fates of Semenko's and Kulyk's wives are astoundingly different. Uzhvii was never repressed and was canonized by the party as the first Ukrainian Soviet theatre actress. In 1940 she received a Stalin Prize. Yet to serve her a reminder of Semenko's fate, in 1937 the NKVD arrested and shot her two brothers, Ievhen and Nazarii.⁷⁸ Uzhvii's appeal to Georhii Zhukov to help save at least Ievhen went unheeded.

On 5 August 1937, a week after Kulyk's arrest in Kyiv, Kulyk's wife Liutsiana Piontek who was the editor of the publishing house "Art" (Mystetstvo), was arrested as a foreign spy who conducted espionage in Ukraine on behalf of foreign intelligence services.⁷⁹ They had separated in June of 1937. However, her name was associated with Kulyk, a noted figure in the party and in the Union of Writers.⁸⁰ During her first interrogation on 19

⁷⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.37,37zv.,47,50,55,56,58,68-73; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.16,17 zv.

⁷⁸ Oleh Verhelis, "Ostannia zhertva. 'Persha ukrains'ka radians'ka actrysa' Natalia Uzhvii—stsenarii prykhovanoi doli," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 6 September 2008.

⁷⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.1,4-5.

⁸⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.14 zv.

August 1937 she immediately confessed that she had been a British spy, and was recruited in 1926 by her husband Ivan Kulyk.⁸¹

To secure the death penalty for Piontek, the interrogator Bondarenko made her sign the minutes about her cooperation with Poland and Germany.⁸² Supposedly, the foreign intelligence services had been interested in Soviet economic progress, and on Kulyk's orders in 1930 she, a German by birth, had collected data about the mood and attitudes toward collectivization among Ukrainian peasants. Piontek supposedly tried to discredit the VKP(b) and the policies of the Soviet Union in the eyes of foreign states.⁸³ On 22 September 1937 the NKVD troika sentenced Piontek to death, and she was executed on 25 September.⁸⁴ She was buried in Bykivnia, a village near Kyiv, where the Kyiv NKVD dumped the bodies of the executed.⁸⁵

As noted in Chapter Four, during the Great Terror, the NKVD substantially downsized criminal files and expedited preliminary investigations. Liutsiana Piontek's file is one of the shortest criminal files in the history of Soviet terror. It constitutes 57 pages and memorializes the terror on paper: the virtual absence of any investigation, the futility of human resistance and the brevity of human life while in the NKVD's custody. The text supposedly written by Piontek is formulaic and meaningless because of its

⁸¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.16, 17 zv.

⁸² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.22zv.

⁸³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.37,39.

⁸⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.51-53. Only two interrogations preceded the decision (19 August and 11 September 1937).

⁸⁵ See Piontek's name among those victims who were buried in Bykivnia in A.I. Amons, ed., *Bykivnians'ki zhertvy abo lak pratsiuvala "Vushcha dviika" na Kyivshchyni: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kyiv: MAUP, 2007), 544. For details about Bykivnia see Marko Carynnyk, "Bykivnia. I—zhodnoho obvynuvachenoho," *Vsesvit* no. 10 (1992): 183; and Hiroaki Kuromiya, «The Bykivnia Mass Graves» in his *The Voices of the Dead* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 20-4. As many other victims, Piontek was rehabilitated on 19 December 1956 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. See HDA SBU, f.6, spr.37631fp, ark.56-56zv.



National Park “Bykivnians’ki mohyly” (Bykivnia, Kyiv, Ukraine).
July 2009.

numerous inconsistencies. It also contradicts the master narrative created by the secret police several years earlier. The interrogators attempted, as always, to interweave the present conspiracies into the past master narrative about Ukrainian nationalism, yet in this file these attempts are completely incoherent and full of factual and logical errors. Consistent with the past master narrative, however, is the identification of the same group of people as the chief “actors” in the criminal cases. Almost all of them are entangled in a tight knot and associated with one place in Ukraine—*Budynok Slovo*.

“It Is Better to Hit Harder:”⁸⁶ The NKVD’s 1937 Crop of the Privileged

In 1937 the political atmosphere in Ukraine was characterized by two major developments: the continuous repression of the intelligentsia, and massive and aggressive russification of Ukrainian society from top to bottom.

⁸⁶ “It is better to hit harder,”—these words belong to Balyts’kyi, the Narkom of Internal Affairs in the UkrSSR, who made a speech at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U on 3 March 1937. See the text of the document in Bohunov et al., 187.

The most active rivals who were suspected of separatist tendencies and nationalist aspirations in Ukraine had been eliminated. In Kyiv, the new Ukrainian capital, the Russian newspaper *Sovetskaia Ukraina* became the chief official periodical and the organ of the TsK KP(b)U.⁸⁷

In late August and early September 1937, as a result of the refusal of the Ukrainian TsK to dismiss Kosior, Liubchenko and Petrovs'kyi from their leading positions and the rejection of Khrushchev's candidature for the position of first secretary of the Ukrainian TsK, the Ukrainian party leaders were arrested one by one within several months. Nine out of nine members of the Politburo of the Ukrainian TsK were arrested and shot. None of 12 members of the Ukrainian government could avoid prison. Only four people out of 17 members of the Supreme Rada of the UkrSSR, and 12 people out of 57 members of the TsK KP(b)U remained untouched. Eighty per cent of party secretaries of oblast', city and region executive committees in Ukraine were arrested, and 15,861 people in the primary party cells were effectively purged.⁸⁸ By the late 1930s, the remnants of administrative and economic autonomy in Ukraine were successfully eliminated. A wave of arrests spread also through the Ukrainian NKVD organs.

A new campaign against local nationalisms was widely illuminated by the Soviet press. *Pravda* published a series of articles that condemned local nationalisms in Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Buriat-Mongolia, Karelia, Tadzhikistan, Kirghiziia, Bashkiriia, Kazakhstan and Dagestan. At the same time, many lead articles emphasized the leadership of Russian people in socialist construction,

⁸⁷ Myroslav Prokop, *Ukraina i ukrains'ka polityka Moskvy: Period pidhotovy do Druhoi svitovoi viiny*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Suchasnist', 1981), 57, 80.

⁸⁸ *Pravda*, 16 June 1938 (see the speech by newly appointed Khrushchev at the party congress). See also Prokop, *Ukraina*, 52.

and their titles were similar to the one published in *Pravda* on 27 September 1937, “The Great Russian People—First Among Equals.”⁸⁹

In 1937, the Soviet secret police in Ukraine worked quickly and efficiently. The roles within the agency were strictly prescribed and distributed on the basis of political reliability, personal connections, loyalty, and professionalism. The goals and mechanisms of the NKVD’s operational and investigative work were carefully thought out and monitored by the party and the center.⁹⁰ The interrogators carried out their duties responsibly with full understanding of what was expected of them. On 17 July 1937, the Central Executive Committee of the USSR granted Ezhov the highest award named after Lenin (*orden Lenina*). On the front page of the newspaper *Literaturna hazeta*, published by the Ukrainian Union of Writers, the Ukrainian writers published their congratulatory panegyric to Ezhov and expressed their gratitude for the *chekist*’s work in cleansing the ranks of Ukrainian writers of “Trotskyite, spy and nationalist scum.” They also assured Ezhov that Ukrainian writers would be “real *chekists*,” and promised him they would work to eradicate foreign agents on the literary front.⁹¹

The message of the Ukrainian writers served the NKVD as a reminder, and *Budynok Slovo* was again shaken by arrests. In August the *slov’iany* Ievhen Kas’ianenko, Maik Iohansen and Mykhailo Bykovets’ were arrested. These writers had little in common. They had different educational backgrounds, worked in different cultural institutions in Kharkiv and in the 1920s belonged to different literary associations. The caliber of their literary talents also differed. Yet in the eyes of the NKVD they were “*inteligentiki*”

⁸⁹ Prokop, *Ukraina*, 41, 49.

⁹⁰ Zolotar’ov, *SPV*, 13.

⁹¹ *Literaturna hazeta*, 23 July 1937, p. 1.

(little intellectuals) who were sheltered in a place that cultivated Ukrainian nationalists.⁹²

Moreover, the hysteria about spy activities and networks that “ensnared” the entire republic, a rhetoric that filled the press and party meetings at the time, made certain individuals in the House of Writers especially vulnerable to the terror. Their ultimate “nationalisms” and “wrecking” activities in literature were conditioned by their past and their positions that they occupied in 1937-38. For instance, Ievhen Kas’ianenko worked as an engineer at the Kharkiv aviation factory, and his three brothers were essentially the founders of the Ukrainian aviation and aircraft industry—all four possessed knowledge that was considered secret. Maik Iohansen, who was of German/Swedish origin with a photographic memory and had an encyclopedic scientific knowledge, was a friend of Kurbas and Khvyl’ovyi, had mastered several languages and experimented in literature productively. Mykhailo Bykovets’ was the director of the Kharkiv chapter of Litfond, an organization that existed under the umbrella of the Union of Writers and was sponsored by the state. He was in charge of state funds and perks distributed among writers.⁹³

Kas’ianenko’s guilt before the party was of course his membership in the Borot’bist party and his service in the Central Rada. In March 1918 he joined the ranks of the KP(b)U and earned the new regime’s trust by working in Bolshevik newspapers, translating Friedrich Engels’s works and the

⁹² *Inteligentiki* is a derogatory Russian term for the intelligentsia that was often used by NKVD interrogators.

⁹³ On Litfond, see *Literaturnomu fondu SSSR 125 let*, Litfond (Moskva: Vneshtorgisdat, 1984), 17. For details on Bykovets’, see V. I. Marochko and Gëotz Hillig, *Represovani pedahohy Ukrainy: zhertvy politychnoho teroru (1929-1941)* (Kyiv: Vydavnystvo “Naukovyi Svit,” 2003), 69-74.

program of the RKP(b) into the Ukrainian language. In the 1920s, he was a representative of Ukraine in Germany (he worked for the Foreign Trade Administration), and was also appointed editor of the Ukrainian party newspaper *Visti VUTsVK*.

Before Kas'ianenko's arrest on 7 August 1937, he, like Svashenko and many other *slov'iany*, was expelled from the party—a preliminary step to prosecution.⁹⁴ The writers were fully at the mercy of the NKVD. When another victim had been selected, the secret organs sent a confidential note to the primary party cell in which the victim held his or her party membership. The party committee then urgently held a meeting, at which the victim was publicly denounced as a nationalist and an enemy of the people. After a unanimous vote to expel the victim from the party, the party organization notified the NKVD by sending the following statement: "So-and-so has been expelled from the party. Recommended: to sanction his arrest by the NKVD." In Kas'ianenko's case, the letter of "recommendation" was signed by Hykalo, the secretary of the regional committee, and sent to Reikhman, the head of the Kharkiv Oblast' Administration of the NKVD.⁹⁵ The procedure was a mere formality, and in this case the NKVD was not patient enough to wait for the decision made by the primary party cell. The NKVD arrested Kas'ianenko two

⁹⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.9. In 1934, when the purge commission "cleaned" the primary party cell of the Publishing House "LIM," Kas'ianenko avoided expulsion from the party. See also DAKhO, f.P20, op.3, spr.219, ark.26. However, in 1937, the NKVD selected him as a future victim, and ordered the party to expel him from its ranks.

⁹⁵ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.123-24; AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.5, 11. **Lev Reikhman**, head of the EKV NKVD department and before his arrest head of the seventh GUGB NKVD department in the USSR, was accused of spying against the Soviet Union and was shot on 26 January 1940 (EKU refers to the Economical Administration in the NKVD; GUGB stands for the Main Administration of State Security in the NKVD). According to Reikhman's testimony, he was sent to Kharkiv by Leplevskii, head of the NKVD in Ukraine, among other agents whose task was to undermine the NKVD from inside. It is noteworthy that Reikhman's case, like many other cases of the NKVD lieutenants, was investigated in Moscow. See Vadym Zolotar'ov, *ChK-DPU-NKVS na Kharkivshchyni: Liudy ta Doli. 1919-1941* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2003), 473-74.

weeks prior to the delivery of Hykalo's letter to Sovnarkomivs'ka Street, the NKVD headquarters in Kharkiv.

During Kas'ianenko's arrest, Petymko, the janitor of *Budynok Slovo* who had survived the repression of the early 1930s, surfaced and faithfully continued his duty as a witness to arrests in the building. On 7 August, he witnessed the search and confiscation of Kas'ianenko's possessions, materials that were deemed compromising to the owner. Seditious items, such as personal correspondence, notes, books by Semenko, Trotsky, Bukharin, Bachyns'kyi and Skrypnyk were confiscated. Interestingly, Kas'ianenko's valuables, including his watch, were taken during the second search on 11 August, apparently because the police were certain that he would no longer need them.⁹⁶

The haste with which individuals were processed and tried in "court" in 1937-38 was reflected on the pages of their files. The length of Kas'ianenko's file is 106 pages, including his 1 September 1937 confession, one witness account, and several denunciations of other individuals who were arrested before and after Kas'ianenko. Interestingly, on 12 September 1937 he denied all accusations and stated that he had conducted no anti-Soviet work and had never been a member of any anti-Soviet nationalist organization.⁹⁷ It seems likely that Kas'ianenko signed his confession under torture: Ivan Drushliak, the interrogator famous for his violent nature, together with another

⁹⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.5,7,13 zv. Likely during Kas'ianenko's arrest, his wife Mariia Deul', their daughter Vassanta and Kas'ianenko's mother-in-law Elena Deul' were present, although it is unclear from the search protocol whether they witnessed the second search. Senchenko who was present during several arrests of the *slov'iany* as *poiniatyi* testified that often secret agents did not complete any paper work during searches and confiscation of personal possessions. See Ivan Senchenko, *Opovidannia. Povisti. Spohady* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990), 778.

⁹⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.21, 22.

NKVD operative Fedir Tsvetukhin, worked with Kas'ianenko approximately three weeks before the confession was obtained.⁹⁸ Abram Simkhovich, the head of the NKVD's 4th department, sanctioned the application of torture and beatings, and therefore Drushliak and Tsvetukhin believed that such practices were not only permitted but also required.⁹⁹

Importantly, Kas'ianenko's confession reflects the NKVD operatives' preconceptions about the proper content of its final draft. They were working along two lines that are generally consistent with the rhetoric of this period. First, Ukrainian nationalists allegedly sought an alignment with Germany and Poland. As a borderland territory, nationalists thought that Ukraine would be occupied in the inevitable war with Germany. Losses would be minimized if Ukraine proclaimed independence and cooperated with the allies against the Soviets.¹⁰⁰ Second, the interrogators clearly attempted to frame the leading figures of the Union of Writers (Pavlo Baidebura, Leonid Iukhvyd, Ivan Senchenko and Teren' Masenko) as Ukrainian nationalists and to link them to the case of Iakir and Tukhachevskii, whose alleged conspiracy had been uncovered in June 1937.¹⁰¹ To link several group cases of state treason and

⁹⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.1, 17. For more details about Drushliak, see Bazhan and Zolotar'ov, 92-93.

⁹⁹ Bohunov et al., 397. **Abram Simkhovich**, former assistant head of the 3rd department of the GULAG NKVD in the USSR faced similar charges and, like Reikhman, was shot on 27 February 1940. Simkhovich allegedly confessed that he was recruited into an anti-Soviet terrorist organization by another NKVD agent Rakhlis, and conveyed secret information to the Polish secret service. See DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.125. On Simkhovich's biography, see Shapoval, Prystaiko and Zolotar'ov, 550.

¹⁰⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.15.

¹⁰¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.16-17. **Pavlo Baidebura** was a Ukrainian writer, one of the editors of the newspaper *Kharkiv proletar*, the organizational secretary of the Kharkiv chapter of the Union of Writers and the editor of the Publishing House "Mystetstvo i kul'tura" (Art and Culture). **Leonid Iukhvyd** was a Ukrainian writer. Before moving to Kharkiv in 1933, he lived in Kryvyi Rih and "missed" the early 1930s repression of prominent Ukrainian intellectuals in Kharkiv. In 1934 he began to work in the organizational committee and later in the administration of the Union of Writers (Kharkiv chapter). **Ivan Senchenko and Teren' Masenko** were Ukrainian writers and journalists, and worked in various journals and newspapers in Kharkiv. They were never repressed.

terrorism in cultural institutions, the army and the NKVD, Kas'ianenko's interrogators fabricated a confession about productive cooperation among foreign branches of an anti-Soviet nationalist organization, and its Moscow and Kyiv chapters. Kas'ianenko's confession was "supported" by a clearly fabricated witness's account. This witness happened to be Kas'ianenko's niece Nina Kas'ianenko-Dmitrieva.¹⁰²

She testified that during her 3 January 1936 visit to her uncle in *Budynok Slovo*, she had encountered 48 people whom she had never met before, and that her uncle had mentioned 10 revolvers that had to be obtained before their visit to Moscow and Leningrad. The conspirators supposedly discussed the assassinations of Stalin and Voroshilov. During her second visit to *Budynok Slovo* on 3 September 1936, she found 20 strangers in Kas'ianenko's apartment, and the conversation revolved around Zinov'ev's and Kamenev's execution. Those present had been allegedly sympathetic toward Zinov'ev and Kamenev. According to Nina's deposition, the conspirators believed that if Stalin and Voroshilov could be eliminated, there would be a great opportunity to inspire the working class in Ukraine to rebel against the Soviet regime.¹⁰³ To amplify the credibility of Nina's testimony, the NKVD operatives included the minutes of two of Nina's depositions (7

¹⁰² AU SBUKhO, spr. 016309, ark. 40-46. In 1955, the rehabilitation commission tried to find Nina, but she disappeared without a trace. Yet it is known that she survived the German occupation in Kharkiv and lived in Chaikovskii Street in Kharkiv after the Second World War. See AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.2, ark.82-83.

¹⁰³ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.40-41. Nina's precision in counting Kas'ianenko's guests seems implausible. Knowledge of the configuration of Kas'ianenko's apartment certainly helps in assessing Nina's "efforts" to count the visitors—it would be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to count these individuals without errors. In a constantly moving crowd of people, miscalculations are inevitable, especially considering the fact that all three rooms were easily accessible from at least two other locations in the apartment because of multiple doors installed in each room. This configuration allowed people to enter the room from one location and leave it through some other space, a factor that should not be overlooked in an analysis of other events in *Budynok Slovo* in the 1930s, one of which is Khvyl'ovyi's apparent suicide (see Chapter Five).

September 1936 and 8 September 1936), which are almost identical. Yet Nina's second account reveals that 6 individuals had also been selected to visit Moscow and assassinate Stalin. After completing the mission in Moscow, they were to travel to Leningrad to assassinate Voroshilov.¹⁰⁴ The absurdity of the plan supposedly narrated by Nina is rather obvious, yet some exploration of the putative plot that linked so many people together (Ukrainian writers, Iakir, Tukhachevskii, and even Stalin and Voroshilov) might shed light on the concealed dynamic that impelled the actions of the secret organs at the time.

According to some historians, one reason for the terror of 1937-38 was the uncovering by the NKVD in May-June 1937 of Tukhachevskii's conspiracy. Some believe that this conspiracy was fabricated, as were many others during the 1930s. Others tend to believe that Tukhachevskii was involved in a real conspiracy against Stalin and serious preparation (at least on the level of discussion among the highest echelons of power) for a coup d'état had been conducted.¹⁰⁵ It is common knowledge that Stalin never trusted Tukhachevskii. Molotov also considered him unreliable. However, as the Russian historian Leonid Naumov has argued, despite these factors, Stalin promoted Tukhachevskii to the position of Voroshilov's first assistant, and supported him until late 1936 and early 1937.¹⁰⁶ What happened in June 1937 when the group of Tukhachevskii, Iakir, Uborevich, Primakov and other prominent Soviet Army commanders were tried behind closed doors and

¹⁰⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.45.

¹⁰⁵ For discussions of Tukhachevskii's case, see Victor Alexandrov, *The Tukhachevskii Affair*, trans. John Hewish (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963); Leonid Naumov, *Stalin and NKVD* (Moskva: Novyi khronograph, 2010); Khaustov and Samuelson, 189-227; Lennart Samuelson, *Soviet Defense Industry Planning: Tukhachevskii and Military-Industrial Mobilization, 1926-1937* (Stockholm: Stockholm Institute of East European Economies, 1996).

¹⁰⁶ Naumov, 321.

hastily shot, a procedure that noticeably differed from the previous show trials of Zinov'ev, Kamenev, Bukharin and other noted party leaders? How might these developments be connected with the repression in the Ukrainian NKVD that began in early summer 1937?

The link the NKVD operatives tried to establish between the Ukrainian writers who were arrested in August 1937 and the conspiracy in the Army was quite plausible. Iona Iakir, who was tried together with Tukhachevskii, was the commander of the Kyiv Military District. Territorially and socially, Iakir and the Ukrainian intellectual elite might have crossed at some point, or in the case of a conspiracy, Iakir might have approached someone who had a reputation as a nationally conscious intellectual. Yet, the question remains: Why did Stalin reconsider his attitude toward Tukhachevskii? What made Stalin believe in his conspiracy?¹⁰⁷ According to Alexander Orlov's reminiscences (he was the NKVD resident in several foreign countries during Stalin's reign), the arrest of this group of commanders was motivated by a real conspiracy against Stalin. Allegedly, the infamous Vissarionov's file that was found accidentally by the NKVD operator Isaak Shtein was the reason for their decision to eliminate Stalin. The file revealed that Stalin was a secret informer of the Tsarist police, and from the military commanders' perspective this titillating detail was incompatible with his high rank in the party and government.¹⁰⁸ If the idea of a real plot is accepted, one of the conspirators, fearing discovery,

¹⁰⁷ The answer to this question might clarify the reasons behind the Great Terror which swept the entire country in 1937-38.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Orlov, *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (New York: Random House, 1953). In February 1937, Zinovii Katsnel'son, the first assistant of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in the UkrSSR, V. Balyts'kyi (11 July 1934--7 April 1937) and also Orlov's brother-in-law, revealed this detail to Orlov while in Paris. Interestingly, both Shtein and Katsnel'son were arrested in July 1937 and shot.

might have leaked the information to Stalin, and a chain of arrests followed, which also devoured the top leadership in the Ukrainian NKVD.

Because of several inconsistencies, Orlov's narrative may raise doubts about its own credibility. However, the dynamics in Ukraine demonstrate that Stalin believed in this conspiracy and even promoted Leplevskii (who was in charge of Tukhachevskii's case) to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in the Ukrainian SSR on 14 June 1937.¹⁰⁹ The "Ukrainian trace" in Tukhachevskii's case encouraged Leplevskii to intensify the repression in the republic. He especially emphasized the role of Ukrainian nationalists who, in his words, were organized as a "nationalist counterrevolutionary underground."¹¹⁰

Interestingly, mass arrests of Ukrainian *chekists* began after Mykhail Frinovskii, Ezhov's first assistant, visited Kyiv in June 1937. He introduced the new Narkom, Leplevskii, but he had a more important and special task—to uncover a conspiracy within the Ukrainian NKVD that was related to Tukhachevskii's plan.¹¹¹ The narrative of a complex amalgamated plot against the state and Stalin was quickly fabricated in the bowels of the NKVD, a plot that included NKVD officials, military officers, Ukrainian nationalists, borderland service men and militia operatives. The narrative perfectly suited the agenda and tasks of the day, which were outlined by Frinovskii. In the search for Ukrainian nationalists, the NKVD agents habitually turned their eyes toward *Budynok Slovo*, a place that seemed to breed nationalist cadres.

¹⁰⁹ Bohunov et al., 18.

¹¹⁰ Bohunov et al., 19. The NKVD Special Department of the Kharkiv Military District was responsible for identifying Tukhachevskii's accomplices in the Kharkiv Military District. During the second part of 1937, the NKVD repressed 442 people in the Kharkiv army (224 individuals as conspirators in Tukhachevskii's case, 128—as spies, and 90—as counter-revolutionists). See Bazhan and Zolotar'ov, 94.

¹¹¹ Bohunov et al., 44.

Drushliak and Tsvetukhin collected the depositions of the *slov'ianyn* Mykhailo Bykovets' (arrested on 24 August 1937) who claimed that Kas'ianenko was a member of the anti-Soviet nationalist organization, the *slov'ianyn* Antin Dykyi (arrested on 13 October 1937) who stated that Kas'ianenko recruited him into the organization, and several other literary workers who confirmed Kas'ianenko's membership in the organization. Even the "old" confession of the *slov'ianyn* Hryhorii Epik (arrested 5 December 1934) became evidence of Kas'ianenko's guilt.¹¹² Kas'ianenko resoundingly rejected the depositions of his former colleagues during *ochnye stavki*.¹¹³ Nevertheless, on 24 December 1937, Drushliak, Fiodorov and Reikhman proclaimed him guilty of terrorist activity and membership in a nationalist organization, and sent his case to the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. During a closed meeting in Moscow on 30 December 1937 Kas'ianenko told the court that "all of it [was]...a lie."¹¹⁴ The NKVD decided to execute Kas'ianenko on New Year's Eve, 31 December 1937, inaugurating the coming year with more violence and death.

The talented Ukrainian writer and translator Maik Iohansen was arrested on 18 August 1937, a week after Kas'ianenko.¹¹⁵ The confession that Kas'ianenko signed on 1 September 1937, in which he allegedly claimed that Iohansen was the most active member in the anti-Soviet nationalist organization, played no role in Iohansen's arrest. The NKVD had already determined Iohansen's fate much earlier, and his arrest occurred before Drushliak and Tsvetukhin broke Kas'ianenko. Moreover, Kas'ianenko's

¹¹² AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.23.

¹¹³ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.82-83,87.

¹¹⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.016309, ark.100.

¹¹⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.7.

deposition was not even included in Iohansen's file as important evidence.

Apparently for Iohansen's interrogator Abram Zamkov, it was easier to fabricate new depositions than to examine dozens of other files in the search for testimonies that would denounce Iohansen.¹¹⁶

Iohansen's knowledge of foreign languages was phenomenal, and he was famous for this among the *slov'iany*. He once told Iurii Smolych: "I will lay down after dinner for an hour—I have to learn the Serbian language."¹¹⁷ This was no joke. He was one of the most active translators of world literature (especially of poetry and plays), and a number of the plays he translated were performed by Berezhil'. He was also the editor and compiler of excellent dictionaries. Because of his skills and natural intelligence, various subjects in the arts and science came easy to him.¹¹⁸ He never wrote drafts of his poems



Maik Iohansen¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ For more on **Abram Zamkov-Zamans'kyi**, see Zolotar'ov, *ChK*, 460. The belated arrest of Iohansen remains a mystery. He was not a privileged person, and his free spirit and Ukrainianness was a target for the secret police since the early 1930s. He was not a party member and held no positions in cultural institutions. He earned his living exclusively through literary work and translations.

¹¹⁷ Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid' pro nespokii: deshcho z knyhy pro dvadtsiati i trydtsiati roky v ukrains'komu literaturnomu pobuti* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1968), 1:110.

¹¹⁸ "Iz spohadiv Ally Herbut-Iohansen," in Maik Iohansen, *Vybrani tvory*, ed. Rostyslav Mel'nykiv, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2009), 726.

¹¹⁹ TsDAMLIMU, f.302, op.1, spr.163, ark.1. From 1934 to the moment of his arrest, Iohansen published only two poems. See Iaryna Tsymbal, "Maik Iohansen," *Literaturna Ukraina*, 3 January 2013, p. 7.

or prose; there was only one draft, the final one. His contemporaries commented that Iohansen did not take seriously the “cultural life” of the police cell that was being cultivated in Ukraine by Moscow, and he found the atmosphere of the “Communist police culture” not only foreign but also harmful for himself as an artist.¹²⁰

The NKVD worked with Iohansen almost two months (from 19 August to 16 October 1937) before he signed every page of a 40-page interrogation protocol that is filled with details about his interactions with the *slov'iany*.¹²¹ Khvyl'ovyi, Ialovyi, Vyshnia, Dosvitnii, Liubchenko, Hirniak and Slisarenko were characterized as nationalists. According to Iohansen, the essence of his conversations with them can be reduced to several points: first, it was impossible to develop Ukrainian culture and literature within the framework of Soviet power; second, the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine was artificially created for the purpose of exterminating the Ukrainian population; third, Ukrainian writers were constantly harassed and could earn a living only by translating Russian or foreign writers; and, fourth, the best strategy for a writer would be to leave Ukraine for Russia to save oneself from repression in Ukraine.¹²²

Iohansen allegedly testified that Andrii Richyts'kyi told him that he was sent to the countryside to assist in extracting (“vykachka” *khleba*) grain from the peasants, and that he was terrified by the condition of the villages. Richyts'kyi supposedly informed Iohansen that he was convinced that peasant rebellions were inevitable.¹²³ Iohansen confessed that he was a member of a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization, and that his goals were to recruit

¹²⁰ “Iz spohadiv Ally Herburt-Iohansen,” in Mel'nykiv 728.

¹²¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.11-50.

¹²² AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.12-13,15-16,68-70.

¹²³ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.16.

the youth and the peasantry into the organization through his writings that agitated for overthrowing Soviet power in Ukraine.¹²⁴ Iohansen, or his interrogator Zamkov who likely composed the narrative of the confession, made Epik and Richyts'kyi responsible for inspiring Iohansen to counterrevolutionary activity.¹²⁵ However, the minutes of the 17 October 1937 interrogation reveal that Mykhail' Semenko gave orders to other members of the organization—Kas'ianenko, Malovychko, Poltorats'kyi, Dykyi and Iohansen.¹²⁶

On the basis of two interrogations and several indicting testimonies, Simkhovich, Polovetskii and Reikhman closed Iohansen's preliminary investigation and sent his case to the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.¹²⁷ During the court hearing, on 26 October 1937, Iohansen fully admitted his crime and confirmed his depositions. He was shot the next day in Kyiv.¹²⁸ Like other criminal files of 1937, Iohansen's is quite short—110 pages; it also includes the materials of the rehabilitation commission. On 20 March 1958, the Supreme Court of the USSR, specifically its head of justice Likhachev, signed Iohansen's rehabilitation.¹²⁹

Iurii Shevel'ov identified Iohansen as one of the most prominent Ukrainian writers who was not likely eliminated for his nationalist beliefs or activities. Shevel'ov posited that Iohansen was least interested in national problems, and the regime eliminated him for his “universalism, humanism, intelligence, giftedness and spiritual aristocratism.” He was removed not

¹²⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.17.

¹²⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.16,20,37.

¹²⁶ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.54. Iohansen signed every page of this protocol.

¹²⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.81.

¹²⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.89-91. Possibly, his body was buried in Bykivnia (NKVD mass graves near Kyiv).

¹²⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.015614, ark.110.

because he was against Soviet power, but because he did not pay any attention to it.¹³⁰ “Theatricality” in life and “mystification” in art were much more interesting and important for Iohansen than politics, and *Budynok Slovo* was his playground.¹³¹

Khvyl’ovyi’s suicide in 1933 broke Iohansen, who anticipated his own death. He wrote: “I, Maik Iohansen, will die in 1942, and, settling down in the kingdom of shadows, will have an intelligent conversation with Hesiod, Heine and Miguel de Cervantes.”¹³² Iohansen’s words echoed the fears of Pluzhnyk, who, observing the city from a window, wrote: “Kyiv is so beautiful, I love it so much! But I won’t live here, we’ll be destroyed, all of us, all writers with a brain—they cannot tolerate us; they see potential enemies in us.”¹³³ Tragically, the feeling of doom was overwhelming among the *slov’iany*. By 1937, it was transformed into an absolute certainty of the approaching end.

The *slov’iany* Mykhailo Bykovets’ was arrested on 24 August in a picturesque place, the Novi Sanzhary region of Poltava oblast’, where he was resting during his vacation.¹³⁴ Bykovets’ was a journalist, one of the founders of the literary association “Pluh,” and the right hand of Pylypenko. In the early and mid-twenties, Bykovets’ worked as an inspector in the People’s Commissariat of Education (the department of social upbringing and children’s safety). As a state employee and head of the department, he attended various meetings with high party and GPU/NKVD officials. Perhaps

¹³⁰ Iurii Shevel’ov, *Literaturoznavstvo: Vybrani pratsi*, ed. Ivan Dsiuba (Kyiv: KMA, 2008), 2:557.

¹³¹ Anna Bila, *Ukrains’kyi literaturnyi avanhard: Poshuky. Styliovi napriamky* (Kyiv, Smoloskyp, 2006), 245.

¹³² Iohansen, “Avtobiohrafiiia Maika Iohansena,” in *Mel’nykiv 718*; Mykola Zhulyns’kyi, “Ievhen Pluzhnyk—‘ubiennyi syn’ narodu suvoroi doli,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 22 November 2012, p. 1.

¹³³ Zhulyns’kyi, “Ievhen Pluzhnyk,” p. 4.

¹³⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.035463, ark.2-4.

his acquaintance with Balyts'kyi played a certain role at the time of his arrest. He survived the 1933-early 1934 repression in the People's Commissariat of Education, the terror that swept away almost all of Skrypnyk's staff, and the peak of the repression in *Budynok Slovo* in 1933 when the most prominent writers were shot or exiled to the gulag. However, he was picked up shortly after Balyts'kyi's arrest in July 1937, which might have played a fatal role in Bykovets's fate.¹³⁵

The most interesting detail about Bykovets' concerns his interests, which the police overlooked for many years. Bykovets' was involved in collecting bibliographical information seemingly about every figure who ever worked in Ukrainian culture, from ancient times until 1930. His friend and neighbor Vasyl' Sokil claimed that Bykovets's catalogue was a treasure for



Mykhailo Bykovets' is standing far right.¹³⁶

historians of Ukrainian culture, and consisted of thousands of cards with biographical and bibliographical information about various figures. In 1937 this catalogue was temporarily located in the cellars of the Kharkiv NKVD,

¹³⁵ Marochko and Hillig, 8-9, 69-74.

¹³⁶ The photograph was published in *Pluzhany* no. 11-12 (1927): 54.

along with the cataloguer.¹³⁷ According to Iurii Smolych, for several days prior to the occupation of Kharkiv by German troops in 24 October 1941, smoke covered the internal yard of the NKVD headquarters in Sovnarkomivs'ka Street, spreading ashes through the central streets of Kharkiv. The secret police was burning its archives.¹³⁸ It seems likely that books, correspondence and unpublished literary work of the *slov'iany*, confiscated by the GPU/NKVD, and possibly Bykovets's catalogue perished at that time.¹³⁹

An analysis of Bykovets's criminal file and its contents indicates that it belongs to the category of "conveyer" cases fabricated in haste in 1937. NKVD operatives wasted neither time, nor paper. Over the preceding decade of political terror in Ukraine, the procedure of arrest, search and preliminary investigation had been developed and became a routine. The scenario of interrogation had been worked out in detail, and the minutes of Bykovets's interrogation reflect the same trend so characteristic of many other cases fabricated during the Great Terror. Shortly after the arrest, he was conveyed to Kyiv to the Luk'ianivs'ka prison, but only on 13 September 1937 did the prosecutor of the Kyiv Military District sign the order for his arrest.¹⁴⁰ Two weeks after his arrest, Bykovets' confessed that he was a "conscious Ukrainian nationalist" and that his views had been shaped by Vynnychenko, Hrushevs'kyi and Iefremov. Among other "nationalist" influences, he identified the *slov'iany* Paniv, Pylypenko, Vyshnia and Sosiura. In this list,

¹³⁷ Vasyl' Sokil, *Zdaleka do blyz'koho (spohady, rozdumy)*, (Edmonton: Kanads'kyi instytut ukraiins'kykh studii, Al'berts'kyi universytet, 1987), 88-89.

¹³⁸ Smolych, 2:144.

¹³⁹ According to archivists of the former KGB archives in Ukraine, archival collections contain no newspapers, books or personal correspondence that belonged to those arrested during Stalin's reign.

¹⁴⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.035463, ark.7.

only Sosiura remained free. Allegedly, Bykovets' claimed that he was recruited into a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization by Vyshnia. The minutes are written by hand, and have Bykovets's signature. However, stylistically and grammatically, it is clear that the text of Bykovets's answers was created not by a writer or an experienced journalist but by an individual with limited literary skills. The pathos of dialogues relating to the "recruitment" procedure reflects neither the style of Vyshnia, nor of Bykovets. They are written in Russian:

Vyshnia: Misha, do you love the place where you were born?

Bykovets': Of course.

Vyshnia: Are you ready to give up your life for it? Will you defend dearest Ukraine?

Bykovets'- to the interrogator: I responded by agreeing.¹⁴¹

Bykovets' supposedly denounced dozens of Ukrainian intellectuals. Among them were those who were arrested in 1933-35 and the *slov'iany* who were still alive (Mykola Dukyn, Dmytro Bedzyk, Ivan Kyrylenko, Ivan Mykytenko, Ivan Senchenko, Petro Panch, Pavlo Tychyna, Volodymyr Sosiura and Oleksandr Dovzhenko). Dovzhenko's ideas about Ukrainian independence, Bykovets' supposedly claimed, were close to those of the organization, and its members internalized them as guidance in their activities.¹⁴² An uncritical eye stunned by dozens of names and intricate connections among individuals might imagine a multi-layered conspiracy that united the most prominent intellectuals in Ukraine who planned to demolish Soviet power in the republic. Primitive linguistic and contextual constructs used in the minutes of interrogation constitute revealing elements that might

¹⁴¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.035463, ark.13.

¹⁴² AU SBUKhO, spr.035463, ark.14-20,23,49.

turn readers from the imagined conspiracy to a more careful evaluation of the text as a kind of theatre of the absurd.

One of the most prominent topics that Bykovets's interrogator, the NKVD operative Shterenberg, developed during the preliminary investigation was the 1932-33 famine and Soviet collectivization in Ukraine. Shterenberg had previous experience in conducting investigations of Ukrainian nationalists—the intelligentsia and the peasantry—and he wrote the script of Bykovets's testimony in a way that was quite typical for most criminal cases fabricated in Ukraine at the time.¹⁴³ Bykovets' allegedly testified that the *slov'iany* regularly discussed the tragedy, concluding that Soviet power would be fatal for Ukraine in the context of the countryside's complete destruction.¹⁴⁴ This line in the scenario manufactured in Bykovets' file provided the required link between the intelligentsia and the peasants, and conveniently provided the vision of a potential organized rebellion and Ukraine's secession from the Union.

Bykovets' spent his last birthday on 3 September in prison. As in most 1937-38 cases, Shterenberg's preliminary investigation was rather brief. It took less than two months and three interrogations (11 September, 3 October and 17 October) to "prove" Bykovets's guilt. During the court hearing, he admitted his crimes before the state, and asked the court to preserve his life. On the basis of alleged denunciations (that in reality were also fabricated) by Ialovyi, Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi, Paniv, Epik and other literary figures, the

¹⁴³ For more on Shterenberg, see HDA SBU, spr. 31308 fp, or *Holodomor1932-33rokiv v Ukraini za dokumentamy HDA SBU*, available at <http://history.org.ua/LiberUA/978-966-1594-17-2/5.pdf> (accessed 5 December 2012); and Roman Koval', "Nevyhadani istorii: Spohady chekista Ptashyns'koho," available at http://ukrlife.org/main/evshan/za_volyu5.htm (accessed 5 December 2012).

¹⁴⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.035463, ark.27-28.

People's Commissar of the NKVD in Ukraine Leplevskii and the Prosecutor General of the USSR Vyshinskii sentenced Bykovets' to death. A day after the verdict, on 24 October 1937, he was shot.¹⁴⁵ Quite possibly his body was buried in Bykivnia near Kyiv among the other tens of thousands of individuals who spent their last days in the Luk'ianivs'ka and other prisons in Kyiv in 1937-38.¹⁴⁶ At the moment of the execution, he was only 43, the same age as his friend and colleague Pylypenko. Together they founded "Pluh" and both belonged to the cohort of conscious Ukrainian intellectuals who nurtured Ukrainian culture and disseminated knowledge about it.¹⁴⁷

October 1937 was fatal for three other *slov'iany*: Volodymyr Koriak, Ivan Mykytenko, and Antin Dykyi. Koriak belonged to the older generation of revolutionary intelligentsia, as did Pylypenko and Kulyk. As they did, he accepted and internalized the idea that socialism should be the basis for cultural development in Ukraine.¹⁴⁸ In 1923 Koriak became one of the founders of the literary association "Hart" but in 1926 joined the VUSPP which served as the party's organization of proletarian writers, with the task of shaping literary trends in Ukraine. Among his "brothers in arms" were Ivan Kulyk, Ivan Mykytenko and Ivan Kyrylenko, a group that was despised by most *slov'iany*.

¹⁴⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.035463, ark.61-75, 77-80. See also HDA SBU, f.6, spr.48570fp, and Andrii Paniv's 3 January 1935 interrogation protocol in Natalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vudannia zhurnalu "Berezil'," 2002), 134-35.

¹⁴⁶ Until spring 1937, the bodies of the executed were buried in the Luk'ianivs'ka cemetery. When there was no space left there, on 20 March 1937, the authorities secretly allocated a territory in Bykivnia "for the NKVD special needs." See A.I. Amons, ed., *Bykivnians'ki zhertvy abo iak pratsiuvala "Vyshcha dviika" na Kyivshchyni: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kyiv: MAUP, 2007), 39.

¹⁴⁷ Bykovets' did not have a family at the time of his arrest, and no relatives can shed light on his last days in prison, as did Oles' Dosvitnii's, Mykola Zerov's, Serhii Pylypenko's, Marko Voronyi's and Onanii Lebid's wives and sisters. See, for instance, HDA SBU, f.6, spr.48570fp, t.6; f.6, spr.36546 fp, t.11; or TsDAHOU, f.263, op.1, spr.44228, t.1-2.

¹⁴⁸ Ivan Dziuba, *Z krynytsi lit* (Kyiv: KMA, 2006), 1:195, 208.

Although an orthodox Marxist and party member, Koriak had committed one “sin” for which he was criticized in the press: in 1917-20, he had been a member of the Ukrainian Borot’bist party.¹⁴⁹ In an article published on 10 February 1935 in the newspaper *Komunist*, Samiilo Shchupak posited that Koriak believed in Borot’bism as the chief inspiration of Soviet Ukrainian literature.

Koriak’s battles with Khvyl’ovyi, who became his main adversary in the 1920s, earned Koriak some credit in the eyes of the NKVD. However, this was soon forgotten.¹⁵⁰ Despite his Jewish origins (his real name was Bliumshtein), Koriak spoke Ukrainian and was a Ukrainian scholar. His professorship in Ukrainian literature at the Kharkiv Institute of People’s Education was a constant irritant to the secret police.



Volodymyr Koriak

On 5 September 1937, Leonid Iukhvyd published a scathing article about Koriak’s nationalism. Iukhvyd stated that Koriak’s *Istoriia literatury* (*History of Literature*) had been written by an enemy and a bourgeois

¹⁴⁹ Musienko, 261.

¹⁵⁰ Shevel’ov in Dziuba, 2: 318-19, 330. See also Shkandrij, *Modernists*, 89, 100, 104, 105, 130.

nationalist, and his reputation as a professor was overblown.¹⁵¹

Simultaneously, his former colleagues were forced in prison to sign papers against Koriak as a member of a Ukrainian fascist organization that functioned under Semenko's leadership.¹⁵² In September 1937 Koriak was expelled from the party as a "bourgeois nationalist,"¹⁵³ and on 1 October 1937 he was arrested.

He was denounced by Volodymyr Iurynets', an NKVD informer who denounced many of the *slov'iany*.¹⁵⁴ On 24 July 1937 Iurynets' testified that as a secret informer since 1933, he had written dozens of false reports about the existence of nationalist and terrorist organizations in Ukraine. Put under pressure by the NKVD operative Pustovoitov, who constantly demanded information about new nationalist groups, Iurynets' wrote several reports about Koriak: in 1934, 1935 and 1936. According to Iurynets', Pustovoitov identified the general points that had to be reflected in his report. For example, Koriak supposedly propagandized nationalist fascist ideas among the Ukrainian youth. Although Iurynets' knew nothing about this, he elaborated on Koriak's terrorist activities over 162 pages.¹⁵⁵

The most fascinating thing is that already in July 1937, when a great number of NKVD informers and operatives had been arrested, the NKVD

¹⁵¹ P. Iukhvyd, "Obitsianky i dila 'profesora' Koriaka," *Literaturna hazeta*, 5 September 1937, p. 4.

¹⁵² See, for instance, Mykola Demchenko's 9 September 1937 deposition (People's Commissar of Sovkhozy in the USSR) in HDA SBU, f.6, spr.44961fp, ark.119.

¹⁵³ *Literaturna hazeta*, 17 September 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.72-73,81,84. **Volodymyr Iurynets'** (1891-1937) was a philosopher, literary and art critic, poet, and a member of the Academy of Science in the UkrSSR since 1929. Like Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi and other informers, Iurynets' himself was arrested on 22 July 1937 when the repression in the secret organs began. He was sentenced to death on 1 October 1937, the day of Koriak's arrest, and executed on 4 October 1937 as a member of a counter-revolutionary terrorist organization. Denouncing dozens of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, he also wrote false reports about Boichuk, Sedliar, Padalka and Semenko. Interestingly, according to the *slov'iany* Senchenko, Koriak also worked for the secret police, and all *slov'iany* were aware of this. See Senchenko, 563, 576.

¹⁵⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.36546fp, t.11, ark.75.

suddenly appeared to have “discovered” the massive scale on which criminal cases against the Ukrainian intelligentsia had been fabricated. However, the secret police quickly executed the “fabricators” and then continued to arrest those whom the “fabricators” had denounced. Despite testimonies by NKVD informers and operatives such as Iurynets’, Bilen’kyi-Berezyns’kyi, Onishchuk, Karbonenko, Borodchak, Bruk, Hrushevs’kyi (among many others) about the fabrication procedure that had been put in place, the repression raged on until the beginning of the war. The NKVD continued to methodically eliminate “nationalists,” or those who knew too much about the implementation of the terror against them. Paradoxically, often on the same day (as in the case of Iurynets’ and Koriak) the NKVD sentenced to death the informer for providing false information, and arrested the victim who had been falsely denounced. As was the case with most *slov’iany*, Koriak immediately confessed that he belonged to a Ukrainian counterrevolutionary organization, and was executed on 22 December 1937.¹⁵⁶

On 15 August 1937, Ezhov issued order no. 00486 “About the operation concerning the repression of wives and children of traitors of the Motherland.”¹⁵⁷ Of course this document did not radically change the way NKVD practices had operated in Ukraine since the early thirties. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the secret police had arrested the wives of many *slov’iany* before 15 August 1937.¹⁵⁸ These arrests were accompanied by the confiscation of possessions. However, the practice was now legitimized by

¹⁵⁶ Musienko, 162.

¹⁵⁷ See the text of the document in Kokurin and Petrov, 106-110.

¹⁵⁸ By late 1937, in Kharkiv prisons there were 682 wives of the enemies of the people. 364 women were a “part” of right Trotskyite and military fascist conspiracies, and 318 women were investigated in connection with Polish, German, Romanian and Kharbin operations. See Bazhan and Zolotar’ov, 86.

Moscow, and the details of the procedures were stipulated. Sofiia Koriak's arrest came three weeks after her husband's, and she was exiled to Karaganda for 5 years. Paradoxically, the NKVD violated Ezhov's order, and did not arrest Koriak's daughters: seventeen-year-old Oksana and twenty-two-year-old Halyna. Their mother survived the exile. In 1956, Halyna wrote to Khrushchev requesting that her father be rehabilitated.¹⁵⁹ The request was satisfied.

The story of Koriak's former colleague in VUSPP Ivan Mykytenko appears less clear and transparent. As "the general secretary" of VUSPP, in the 1920s Mykytenko was supported by two important party figures in the Central Committee of the KP(b)U: the head of Agitprop Andrii Khvyliia and the secretary of the Central Committee in cultural affairs Panas Liubchenko.



Ivan Mykytenko.

Most *slov'iany* avoided contact with him and despised him as a talentless careerist. It usually took Mykola Kulish 7-9 months to write a play.

¹⁵⁹ Musienko, 262.

Mykytenko responded to a party resolution with a new play in two weeks. His *Dyktatura* is an example.¹⁶⁰

In January 1937, Mykytenko in his speech at the Extraordinary XIV Ukrainian Congress of Soviets stated: “the great Soviet people . . . over the 19 years of their new history has built a life that poets will glorify for centuries,” and that “the Ukrainian people has not forgotten and will never forget the bloody crimes of nationalist counterrevolution.” His speech was interrupted several times with vigorous long-lasting applause (*burkhlyvi dovhotryvali oplesky*).¹⁶¹



In the presidium of the Extraordinary XIV Ukrainian Congress of Soviets from left to right: Vsevolod Balyts'kyi, Panas Liubchenko, Mendel' Khataevych, Pavlo Postyshev, Stanislav Kosior, Ievhen Veher, Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi and Oleksii Stakhanov.¹⁶²

Political changes in late spring and early summer of 1937 were fatal for Mykytenko. The leading figures of the Central Committee and the NKVD were dismissed and arrested.¹⁶³ The Great Terror consumed both of Mykytenko's patrons. Andrii Khvyliya was arrested on 13 August 1937 as a member of the bourgeois nationalist organization of former Borot'bists. Panas

¹⁶⁰ Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 244-45.

¹⁶¹ *Literaturna hazeta*, 5 February 1937, p.4.

¹⁶² The picture is published in *Literaturna hazeta*, 29 January 1937, p. 1.

¹⁶³ Vadym Zolotar'ov, “Kerivnyi sklad NKVS URSR pid chas “Velykoho teroru (1936-1938 rr.): sotsial'no-statystychnyi analiz,” *Z arkhiviv VUCHK-GPU-NKVD-KGB* no. 2 (33) (2009): 89-90.

Liubchenko was denounced at the August Plenum of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U by Khvyliia, who accused him of heading a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization in Ukraine. Liubchenko shot his wife Mariia Krupenik and committed suicide on 27 August 1937.¹⁶⁴

In September, the now vulnerable Mykytenko became a target for press attacks. He was accused of concealing his past, specifically that he was born into the family of a *kurkul'*. But most importantly, anonymous articles identified Mykytenko for his links to “enemies of the people” and for participating in Trotskyist nationalist sabotage operations together with other members of the Union of Writers. In early October 1937, he was dismissed from all positions in the Union of Writers, removed as an editor of the publishing house “Radians’ka literatura” (Soviet Literature), and on 3 October was expelled from the party.¹⁶⁵ On 4 October 1937 Mykytenko told his wife that he was going to the NKVD to surrender his firearms. He never returned. Over the years, the NKVD provided his wife with various explanations. Finally in March 1956, the agency informed Mykytenko’s wife that his body had been found on 18 October 1937 in the suburbs of Kyiv with a bullet in the head. Not surprisingly, the medical commission concluded that Mykytenko committed suicide.¹⁶⁶

In the context of the “extreme politics” of the time, Mykytenko’s suicide was not an unusual phenomenon.¹⁶⁷ He anticipated his end, and his close connections with the leadership in Ukraine made him more aware than others about the treatment that writers received in the NKVD prisons. Another

¹⁶⁴ Bohunov, et al., 218.

¹⁶⁵ Musienko, 327-28. See also *Literaturna hazeta*, 6 October 1937, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Musienko, 28.

¹⁶⁷ This term is borrowed from Charles King’s book entitled *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

explanation for his decision is also plausible. According to Vladimir Shlapentokh's understanding of the second half of the 1930s, loyalty to the regime increased due to "the growing social mobility, the continuation of repression, the brainwashing of the people, the regime's total isolation, and some amelioration of the standard of living."¹⁶⁸ Shlapentokh divided the mental worlds of the people of the Stalin era into three categories: those who supported the regime; those who hated it; and those who "tried not to think about ideological matters and spent very little time, emotion, or thought on any world beyond everyday life."¹⁶⁹ Mykytenko clearly belonged to the first category, and as a loyal Communist, he could not understand how the regime that supported him for years turned its back on him. Disillusioned and depressed, he might have committed suicide.

The fate of the *slov'ianyn* Antin Dykyi is more evident than that of Mykytenko, although his life was filled with opaque turns and developments. For a person without a job and who published little, Dykyi led an extravagant lifestyle and always seemed to have funds for alcohol and food. According to several accounts, he liked to drink and gamble. He loved vulgar jokes, and was characterized as a womanizer.¹⁷⁰ The Kharkiv intelligentsia was puzzled by his ability to draw funds from mysterious sources. His habit of bragging about his connections with the NKVD, and even about providing information to the *slov'iany* who would be arrested next added a mystifying aura to his image.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How it Collapsed* (New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 127.

¹⁶⁹ Vladimir Shlapentokh, 130.

¹⁷⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.2, ark.16; AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.247zv.

¹⁷¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.276; Senchenko, "Notatky," 574. In 1931-34, Oleksii Poltorats'kyi rented a room from Dykyi in *Budynok Slovo*, and was amazed at the level of Dykyi's ignorance and vulgarity.

In November 1929, a time of massive party purges, Dykyi managed to maintain his position as a party member, although the purge commission was amazed at Dykyi's extraordinarily low cultural and political level.¹⁷² The *slov'iany* considered him almost illiterate, although they gave him credit for a wonderful story-telling gift.¹⁷³ The NKVD might have effectively used this



Antin Dykyi.

skill, although there is no evidence of Dykyi's cooperation with the secret police. Obviously, he could not compete with those informers who submitted extensive written reports to the NKVD and were highly educated individuals, such as Volodymyr Iurynets', who was a professor and academician.

At the moment of his arrest on 13 October 1937, Dykyi worked as a director of the Kharkiv historical museum.¹⁷⁴ The ubiquitous janitor Petymko witnessed the arrest and search of Dykyi's apartment, which became a treasure trove for the NKVD. Besides Dykyi's documents and correspondence, they confiscated a hunting gun, ammunition, two gold brooches, four pairs of gold

¹⁷² DAKhO, f.P15, op.2, spr.11, ark.9.

¹⁷³ Uliana Pasicznyk, ed., *The Ever-Present Past: The Memoirs of Tatiana Kardinalowska*, transcr. by Assya Humesky, trans. Vera Kaczmarska (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2004), 147. Ivan Maistrenko, working for the newspaper *Chornomors'ka komuna* in Odesa in the 1920s, provided Dykyi with a stipend for learning the Ukrainian language, although, as the subsequent accounts about Dykyi demonstrated, the result was disappointing. See Maistrenko, *Istoriia*, 242.

¹⁷⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.1, ark.6,9.

earrings, two gold rings, a gold ring with a diamond, and a camera.¹⁷⁵ The signature on the receipt about confiscating these items is illegible.

Almost for a month Dykyi had been beaten by a number of interrogators: Samiilo Spivak, Polovetskii, Simkhovich and Reikhman. However, the most sophisticated torturer was Drushliak.¹⁷⁶ The Kharkiv interrogators Mykhailo Nikitin and M.O. Gokhberg, who refused to apply physical force to Dykyi and other prisoners, were chastised and admonished at NKVD meetings and called *intelligentiki*. Drushliak and operatives like him were presented by their supervisors as examples of how to “properly work with” the arrested.¹⁷⁷ Dykyi surrendered on 6 November 1937. He himself wrote a confession, in which he claimed that he had been recruited to a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization by Kas’ianenko. He identified Dukyn, Koriak, and Bykovets’ as members of the organization, and also reported that he personally recruited the *slov’iany* Plakhtin, Iukhvyd, Dukyn and Senchenko into the organization.¹⁷⁸

Clearly, in Dykyi’s case, the period of beatings is equal to the period of “preliminary investigation.” It took the NKVD three weeks to complete it. His criminal file included, alongside Dykyi’s 6 November confession only two interrogation protocols (13 November and 14 November), three *ochnye stavki* (5 November, 8 November and 22 November), and two denunciation excerpts

¹⁷⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.1, ark.6-8.

¹⁷⁶ **Samiilo Spivak** (1904-?) had been working in the SPV of the UNKVD in Kharkiv oblast’ since 1934. In December 1940 he was dismissed from the organs because he was sick. He survived the Second World War, and in 1949-50 he was a deputy head of the 4th department of the UMGB in Izmail oblast’. See Zolotar’ov, *ChK*, 441. The information about Dykyi’s torture in the Kharkiv prison became known to researchers through the secret police’s investigative materials and rehabilitation documents, and Ivan Bahrianyi’s account. See AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.2, ark.99-100; AU SBUKhO, spr.017800, t.1, ark.242.

¹⁷⁷ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.2, ark.100. For details about **Mykhailo Nikitin**, see Zolotar’ov, *ChK*, 460; about **M.O. Gokhberg-Orlov**, see Bazhan and Zolotar’ov, 86.

¹⁷⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.1, ark.10-12.

from other criminal files. With the full set of required materials, his case was passed on to the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.¹⁷⁹ During the court hearing on 30 December 1937, the now broken and pacified Dykyi fully admitted his guilt, confirmed his depositions, and asked the court to believe in the sincerity of his repentance and to save his life.¹⁸⁰ On the same day the Collegium sentenced him to death and ordered the confiscation of his possessions, which, as in all other cases involving the *slov'iany*, had already been done before the order was given. In contrast to the information provided in Tatiana Kardinalowska's memoirs,¹⁸¹ Dykyi was executed on 31 December 1937 in the Kharkiv prison, on the same day as his friend and *slov'ianyn* Ievhen Kas'ianenko. Their bodies were likely buried in the 5th kvartal (bloc) of the Lesopark zone in Kharkiv.¹⁸² We will never know whether it was just another job for the Kharkiv NKVD executioners to shoot a number of people on New Year's Eve, or whether they took special pleasure in murdering "nationalists" and "enemies of the people," and considered this a special holiday gift.¹⁸³

Dykyi's wife Anastasiia Mykolaiivna survived the 1930s repression and resided in Lviv oblast'. On 30 January 1950 she was arrested as the mother of an OUN member and was exiled to special settlements in the North.¹⁸⁴ Her fate is unknown. The 28 May 1959 certificate about Dykyi's

¹⁷⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.1, ark.67-69.

¹⁸⁰ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.1, ark.72.

¹⁸¹ Pasicznyk, 147. The account provided the date of Dykyi's death-1954 which is inconsistent with the archival evidence.

¹⁸² AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.1, ark.74.

¹⁸³ For a discussion of sadistic personalities of many GPU/NKVD operatives, see a collection of documents in Bohunov et al.; Zolotar'ov's study about the *SPV*; Ivan Bahrianyi's account about the interrogators' personalities in the Kharkiv prison--Ivan Bahrianyi, *Sad Hetsymans'kyi* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo "Shkola," 2008); and DAKhO, f. R 6452, op. 1, spr. 7641.

¹⁸⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.2, ark.108.

rehabilitation was sent to Inta Badulina, his daughter from his first marriage, who resided in Kharkiv. Inta's question about why her father's apartment was sealed by the NKVD after his arrest remained unanswered.¹⁸⁵

1938: The Remaining *Slov'iany* Were Swept Away

In January 1938, Nikita Khrushchev replaced Stanislav Kosior as the first secretary of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U. In his memoirs, Khrushchev immediately characterized the situation of the cadres in Ukraine at the time of his arrival in the following manner: "I had the impression that the Tatar Khan Mamai had passed through. There were neither...secretaries of party regional committees, nor heads of regional executive committees. There was not even a secretary of the Kyiv city party committee."¹⁸⁶ Following a similar fundamental purge of the Ukrainian NKVD in 1937, the need for new cadres in the secret organs became an extremely important problem. In early 1938, an NKVD cadre officer reported that the Kharkiv oblast' desperately needed NKVD operatives. Approximately 80 vacancies were opened for heads of various departments and rank-and-file operational workers. The avalanche of arrests had brought about the requirement for more staff.¹⁸⁷ The Central Committee of the KP(b)U solved this question by issuing a resolution in February 1938, according to which 150 high party officials were appointed as heads of NKVD departments in various regional offices, and 500 rank-and-file party members, as well as Komsomol members, were appointed as plenipotentiaries: interrogators (operatives) and their assistants. The Kharkiv

¹⁸⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.016310, t.2, ark.3zv.

¹⁸⁶ Nikita Khrushchev, "Memuary," *Voprosy istorii* no. 5 (1990): 47.

¹⁸⁷ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.16, spr.15, ark.2-5. See also Bohunov et al., 233.

NKVD received a fresh infusion of personnel in the form of 30 new heads and 80 operatives.¹⁸⁸

“New blood” facilitated the efficiency of the NKVD’s work, and regional NKVD heads assured the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs Aleksandr Uspenskii that the operation concerning the underground Ukrainian nationalist movement was under control.¹⁸⁹ Special analytical groups labored to evaluate the mental condition of the arrested, and the number and tempo of confessions under investigation. They provided the results of their work in graphic form, drawing charts, tables and diagrams, and attaching these documents to their written reports to Uspenskii.¹⁹⁰

Khrushchev actively supported the NKVD’s actions against nationalists and continued to implement the counter-Ukrainization prescribed by Moscow. Only one-tenth of those Ukrainian writers who were published in 1930 who were still alive were able to publish their work in 1938.¹⁹¹ The offensive was directed not only against the Ukrainian language but also against German, French and Polish languages. Khrushchev proclaimed that there was no need for teaching foreign languages in Ukraine. Spies and nationalist “trash” would be eradicated, and “all peoples [would] learn the Russian language.”¹⁹² On 20 April 1938, the Soviet People’s Commissariat of the USSR and the KP(b)U issued a resolution “On the mandatory learning of the Russian language in non-Russian schools in Ukraine.”¹⁹³ In October 1938

¹⁸⁸ Bohunov et al., 232.

¹⁸⁹ Bohunov et al., 264. Uspenskii was the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs in the UkrSSR from 25 January 1938 to 14 November 1938.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ivan Ivanchenko, “Cherez terny—do pravdy pro Ukrainu,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 21 February 2013, p. 12.

¹⁹² *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, ch. 7 (July, 1938): 25, and *Pravda*, 16 June 1938.

¹⁹³ TsDAHOU, f.1, op.6, ark.463, ark.77, 93-97.

the Politburo considered the question of fundamentally reorganizing national schools in the context of their russification.¹⁹⁴

Armed with these party orders, and re-energized by new cadres, the NKVD arrested three more *slov'iany* in February-March 1938: Ivan Kyrylenko, Hryhorii Kotsiuba and Volodymyr Dukyn.

Kyrylenko was a faithful Komsomol and party leader. However, many writers had criticized his moral conduct. He was notorious for his careerism and subservience to the party.¹⁹⁵ In 1934, as a privileged party member, Kyrylenko had moved to Kyiv and taken up residence in Rolit. He became the secretary of the Union of Writers and the head of its primary party cell. Simultaneously, he was the editor of the journal *Chervonyi Shliakh*, and held a privileged position as a deputy in the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee. He conducted a fight against nationalist deviations in Ukraine, including *khvyliovism*. Kyrylenko gave a speech at Khvyl'ovyi's 14 May 1933 funeral, over the grave of the person who despised him the most. Kyrylenko characterized Khvyl'ovyi's suicide as his "last regrettable mistake."¹⁹⁶ As an adamant fighter against Ukrainian nationalism, Kyrylenko was eventually selected by Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi as his personal secretary.¹⁹⁷ Still obsessively pursuing a top position within the party, Kyrylenko found himself among those who were to be eliminated during the Great Terror.

¹⁹⁴ Iurii Shapoval, *Ukraina 20-50kh rokiv: Storinky nenapysanoi istorii* (Kyiv: Kyivs'kyi universytet imeni T. Shevchenka, 1994), 30-31.

¹⁹⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.106. For instance, Dmytro Buz'ko wrote about Kyrylenko: "In everyday life, he is rude, a drunkard and a despot." Buz'ko's letter was perused by the NKVD, and its excerpt was included in Kyrylenko's *papka-formuliar*. See also Volodymyr Kulish, *A Word about the Writers' Home 'Slovo:''' Memoirs* (Toronto, Canada: "Homin Ukrainy," 1966); Dukyna, 543, Senchenko, 553.

¹⁹⁶ *Literaturna hazeta*, 27 May 1933, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Until 1937, **Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi** was the chief deputy of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, and in 1937-38 was the chief deputy of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. From 1926 to 1939, he was a candidate of the Politburo of the Central Committee.



Ivan Kyrylenko¹⁹⁸

From 5 December 1936, the NKVD began to collect surveillance materials on him. A dozen secret informants followed him and delivered to the NKVD regular reports which on 13 November 1938 were organized in a separate operational file (*papka-formuliar*).¹⁹⁹ On 21 February 1938 two NKVD operatives were waiting for Kyrylenko in his apartment. They confiscated everything that could be carried out by hand, including Kyrylenko's typewriter, and the remaining possessions were sealed in two rooms of the apartment. Clearly, the NKVD did not expect him to return home after the preliminary investigation.²⁰⁰

Five days after his arrest, Kyrylenko wrote to Uspenskii:

It is difficult and easy to write this petition. This is a paradox, and a feeling that is familiar to any man who experiences a deep crisis of his mentality and psyche. It is difficult because I have to revive memories about crimes against the party, and about people with loathing and disgust, and to shudder at the thought of them. It is easy because each fact of my shameful past surrendered to the investigators frees my soul and my consciousness from the grave disease of nationalism. I am becoming cleaner; I am becoming transparent; I am becoming more amenable to a new fruitful life, to which I want to give myself to my last breath. It is easy because with every fact of my past I surrender, I excoriate the shameful scabs of nationalism that have deeply penetrated my soul, and I begin to see myself as the person I was before 1932, an active Komsomol member, a young member of

¹⁹⁸ TsDAMLIMU, f.271, op.1, spr.310, ark.18.

¹⁹⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.106. See a definition of *papka-formuliar* in Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 36.

²⁰⁰ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.3-4zv.; HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.5. See also Musienko, 238.

the party able to fight for its ideals, a developing Soviet writer whose first books found a vivid response in the flaming hearts of Ukrainian youth.²⁰¹

The main term Kyrylenko employed to characterize the *slov'iany* and his colleagues in the Union of Writers was “enemy.” Pylypenko, Khvyl’ovyi, Kulyk, Ovcharov, Hirniak, Vyshnia, and his former friend Mykytenko fell into this category: they allegedly united Ukrainian nationalist forces to overthrow Soviet power in Ukraine through an armed insurrection.²⁰² In exhaustive detail the 26 February 1938 letter explained the goals of the organization and named its active members. Kyrylenko’s first and only interrogation occurred on 4 May 1938, which was recorded as a detailed 33-page document in his criminal file.

Importantly, Kyrylenko’s *papka-formuliar* offers a fascinating description of how the minutes of Kyrylenko’s interrogation were constructed. Operational files shed light on how the NKVD worked with the arrested, and what materials were purged from their criminal files and why. In Kyrylenko’s case, he himself typed the first draft of his interrogation meeting on his Remington typewriter, the one that was confiscated by the NKVD during his arrest. This draft (47 pages) was written on 23 March 1938 and is included in the *papka-formuliar*. The text is dotted with amendments and contains a plan that Kyrylenko had to follow: he was to narrate the organization’s conspiracy to conduct terror and launch a rebellion. The text also has multiple notes and comments written in different handwritings, inks and pencils.²⁰³ In the

²⁰¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.18.

²⁰² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.27.

²⁰³ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.107. The list of issues that were scripted by Kyrylenko’s interrogators reads as follows: “1. Introduction. 2. Talks about terror. 3. Recruitment. 4. Members of the organization. 5. Leadership. 6. The purpose of the literary group of the organization. 7. Connections with Liubchenko and Khvyliia. 8. Mobilization of forces. 9. Connections with Belorussia and Georgia. 10. Connections with Killeroh and Popov,” and so

conclusion of this draft, Kyrylenko lamented that being an active party member, he had never had the time to write a high-quality text, and completed the minutes of the interrogation with the following lamentation: “Party, people, readers—I am all yours. Accept me into your family or crush me as a worm. I do not see any other way for myself.”²⁰⁴ The inner suffering of the arrested was of little interest to interrogators, and they ordered the omission of this paragraph from the final draft of the minutes.

Careful scrutiny of the minutes of this interrogation reveals that the NKVD tried to compromise several cultural institutions in Ukraine. The NKVD targeted the Kharkiv party regional committee (*obkom*), although its first secretary Mykola Demchenko had already been replaced by Mykola Hykalo, who followed Stalin’s orders slavishly.²⁰⁵ Using Kyrylenko’s confession, the Kharkiv obkom was depicted as a nest of nationalists that produced new “anti-Soviet Ukrainian nationalist cadres.”²⁰⁶ The Kharkiv and Kyiv chapters of the Union of Writers and its leadership were also identified as potential victims. They, it was claimed, were also members of a nationalist organization. Virtually, all major Ukrainian writers were mentioned in the minutes as conspirators, and ultimately the NKVD even questioned the very existence of the chapters of the Writers’ Union in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Litfond.²⁰⁷ Iurii Ianovs’kyi, Andrii Holovko, Natalia Zabyla, Teren’ Masenko, Hryhorii Kotsiuba, Iurii Smolych, Ivan Mykytenko, Petro Panch and Ivan Le “smuggled nationalist chauvinist concepts” into their works, and Zinaida

on. In total, there were 24 points specified. Among the notes, there is also one about “the situation in the Union of Writers.”

²⁰⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.109.

²⁰⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.31. See also Roman Pidkur, “Stalins’ka ‘khirurhiia’,” *Tyzhden*, 3 June 2012.

²⁰⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.31-32.

²⁰⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.35-37,40-41,46,48-49.

Tulub, Maksym Ryl's'kyi and Arkadii Liubchenko glorified Ukraine's past, romanticized the Zaporozhian Cossacks and nurtured nationalist sentiment in their works.²⁰⁸ In the state's view (as it was reflected in the NKVD's interrogation), Ukrainian cultural institutions appeared to struggle against Soviet domination in the Ukrainian SSR and set a bad example for other republics. The Belorussian SSR and Georgia were especially susceptible to nationalist propaganda, and, as Kyrylenko's testimony indicated, the Ukrainian nationalist organization had established connections with local nationalists in these two republics.²⁰⁹

In addition, although rhetorically the party condemned antisemitism, Stalin's antisemitic stance surfaced in the NKVD's practices. The summer of 1938 was marked by the quiet removal of Jews from the secret organs, as well as from the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, where in early 1939 Maxim Litvinov, whose background was Jewish, was replaced by Viacheslav Molotov. Stalin advised Molotov: "Remove the Jews from the Narkomat."²¹⁰ Kyrylenko's criminal file reveals an explicit attack in Ukraine on those listed in the category of "unreliable" Jewish writers. Among them were Avraam Abchuk, Itsyk Fefer and Itsyk Kipnis.²¹¹ Through Kyrylenko's deposition, Savva Holovanivs'kyi, Leonid Pervomais'kyi and Fefer were framed as enemies who produced utterly "Trotskyite works."²¹²

²⁰⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.41-43.

²⁰⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.52-53.

²¹⁰ Quoted in Naumov, 342. On the removal of Litvinov and the repression in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, see Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 100-103.

²¹¹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.45.

²¹² HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.44-45. Abchuk was arrested in 1935 and shot in 1937; Fefer was arrested in 1948 as a member of the Anti-Fascist Jewish Committee, and shot in 1952; Kipnis was arrested in 1948, but returned from the gulag in 1955. Holovanivs'kyi and Pervomais'kyi were more fortunate—they were never repressed. See Iosif Kheifets, "Khronologiiia stanovleniia i razvitiia idish-kul'tury," *Zametki po ievreiskoi istorii* no. 17

To finalize Kyrylenko's case, the interrogator Akimov habitually tailored the testimonies of party leaders, writers and journalists into the file that confirmed Kyrylenko's membership in the anti-Soviet terrorist nationalist organization.²¹³ On 21 August and on 21 September 1938, various interrogators (Proskuriakov, Kopylov and Grankin) made sure that Kyrylenko was ready to confirm his crime before the court. The latter dutifully played his assigned role.²¹⁴

Significantly, neither the *papka-formuliar*, nor Kyrylenko's criminal case contain concrete facts or details of conspiracy. However, this was no obstacle for the *vyezdnaiia sessiia* of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR that took place in Kyiv on 23 September 1938. Behind closed doors, Kyrylenko confirmed his crimes against the state and asked the court for an opportunity to "remove the blemish of being an enemy of the people."²¹⁵ The Collegium sentenced him to death and the verdict was implemented on the same day.²¹⁶

In September 1955 in his letter to the head of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Klimentii Voroshilov, Kyrylenko's brother Oleksandr wrote that in 1939 he obtained an appointment with the chief

(120) (2009). For details about Fefer, Abchuk and Kipnis, see David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture: 1918-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 127, 149, 151-53, 157-59, 165, 168-70, 196, 216-18; on the Kharkiv Jewish literary figures in the 1920s-mid-1930s, see Gennady Estraikh, "The Kharkiv Yiddish Literary World, 1920s-Mid-1930s," *East European Jewish Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2002): 70-88; see also NKVD surveillance documents concerning Jewish writers in Ukraine in the late 1930s in Olga Bertelsen, "New Archival Documentation on Soviet Jewish Policy in Interwar Ukraine. Part Two: Repressions of Zionist Parties and Groups in the 1930s," *On the Jewish Street* no. 2 (2011): 165-206. On 22 January 1949, the *slov'ianyn* Leib Kvitko was also arrested as a member of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee on 22 January 1949, and was executed in August 1952. See Petrovskii, 352, 354, 367.

²¹³ Interestingly, no new depositions were employed in Kyrylenko's case. They are all dated by 1937.

²¹⁴ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.75-76, 78.

²¹⁵ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.90zv.

²¹⁶ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.91zv., 92.

deputy of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in the Ukrainian SSR Amaiak Kobulov. Unaware of his brother's death, he tried to persuade the organs that Ivan was an honest Communist. Kobulov told him: "If you continue to make noise, you will follow your brother."²¹⁷ Oleksandr had the courage to ask for his brother's rehabilitation only during the Khrushchev Thaw; it was granted on 28 May 1957.²¹⁸ Ironically, on 16 June 1989, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Ukraine posthumously restored Kyrylenko to its ranks shortly before its own disbanding.²¹⁹

Unfortunately for the writers Hordii Kotsiuba and Volodymyr Dukyn, who were arrested in *Budynok Slovo* on the same day, 21 March 1938, the retreat of the mass terror came too late.

Hordii Kotsiuba was an educated man, although some colleagues considered him a mediocre writer. In 1917 he graduated from the Petersburg University and became a lawyer. His membership in two parties, the Ukrainian party of socialist revolutionaries (October 1917-May 1918) and the Ukrainian Communist Party of Borot'bists (1918-1920) made him suspect to the Soviet regime. In 1920 he edited the Borot'bist newspaper *Poltavs'kyi borotbist*. He never joined the KP(b)U as did other Borot'bisty, and remained a non-party writer until his arrest.²²⁰ As far as the state was concerned, Kotsiuba was also a member of the "wrong" literary associations (Hart, VAPLITE and Prolitfront), and never was interested in joining the "right" one, VUSPP. He was one of the founders and editors of the journal *Sliakhy*

²¹⁷ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.94zv.

²¹⁸ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.135-36.

²¹⁹ HDA SBU, f.6, spr.41465fp, ark.138.

²²⁰ Maisternko, *Istoriia*, 120.

mystetstva in Kharkiv (1921-23), and worked as a journalist for various newspapers and journals in the 1920s-30s. In 1934 he became a member of the Union of Writers.²²¹

Kotsiuba was arrested without the prosecutor's sanction as a member of an anti-Soviet organization of Ukrainian SRs which allegedly prepared an armed insurrection against Soviet power in Ukraine. Spivak, Fiodorov-Berkov and Grigorii Teleshev signed the order for his arrest, but interestingly enough, they no longer considered it necessary to specify the address at which the victim had to be arrested. They put only two words on the address line: "*Dom 'Slovo'.*"²²² Almost a decade of surveillance and arrests implemented by the secret organs in *Budynok Slovo* made this place familiar to nearly the entire staff of the Kharkiv NKVD. The janitor Petymko also served as an excellent navigator to the exact place of residence of the next victim.

Kotsiuba's criminal case exemplifies the key trends and patterns of the Great Terror. The year 1938 was characterized by an increasing number of group criminal cases. State violence reached its apogee. The terror against the cultural elite swept away people of different professions. Together with Kotsiuba, nine more men were arrested. Among them were Tymofii Pushkar (a party bureaucrat), Arsenii Khomenko (a demographer), Mytrofan Maliuha (an agricultural engineer), Serhii Zarudnyi (a planning engineer of "Iuzhspetsstroï"), Oleksandr Stepurs'kyi (a chemist and engineer of "Masloprom"), Ivan Voskoboinikov (an artist), Oleksandr Kulykov (a doctor and radiological specialist in the Institute of Emergency Surgery), Vasyl'

²²¹ V.A. Smolii et al., eds., *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2008), 5:568.

²²² AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.1, ark.13, 33. In March 1938, **Grigorii Teleshev** became the new head of the UNKVD in Kharkiv oblast'. On Teleshev, see Bazhan and Zolotar'ov, 98.

Pochtarenko (an economist in the Kharkiv Tractor Factory), and Ivan Batiuk (an agricultural engineer).

The testimonies against Kotsiuba collected by the NKVD reveal that he was a “khvyl’ovyst” (supporter of Khvyl’ovyi) and that the anti-Soviet organization to which he supposedly belonged included Panas Liubchenko, Andrii Khvyliia, Hryhorii Hryn’ko, Ievhen Kas’ianenko and Volodymyr Koriak. The *slov’iany* Ivan Senchenko, Antin Shmyhel’s’kyi, Natalia Zabila, Maik Iohansen and Petro Panch were also allegedly active members of the organization. Kotsiuba’s task was to mobilize peasants in *kolhospy* (the collective farms) and to organize military detachments in the Valkovs’kyi district.²²³ According to Ivan Sokolians’kyi, Kotsiuba collected facts about the arrests and executions of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, collectivization and the attitudes of Soviet authorities toward the Ukrainian language. Kotsiuba, Sokolians’kyi claimed, burned the notebooks, fearing his arrest.²²⁴

Although Kotsiuba was arrested on 21 March 1938, he was first questioned only on 5 June 1938, according to his file.²²⁵ It is unknown how long it took the NKVD to break Kotsiuba, but the first “proper” protocol that reflected the NKVD’s agenda was attached to the file in early June. Kotsiuba stated that he lived with the idea that “Ukraine [should be] only for Ukrainians” until his arrest.²²⁶ His deposition shows that, on a micro-level, the organization planned to stop bread export from Ukraine, and on a macro-level,

²²³ AU SBUKKhO, spr.014317, t.1, ark.97-98; AU SBUKKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.168,176-82,188.

²²⁴ AU SBUKKhO, spr.014317, t.1, ark.103.

²²⁵ AU SBUKKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.217.

²²⁶ AU SBUKKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.217.



Hryhorii Kotsiuba.²²⁷

to overthrow Soviet power and to create a nationalist state.²²⁸ Assistance had been expected from Galicia, and the organization allegedly prepared several districts in Kharkiv oblast' for an insurrection, including Valky, Zmiiov and Lokhvytsia.²²⁹

Curiously, in 1938 several NKVD operatives usually worked with the arrested, a rule that reinforced the method of *krugovaia poruka*, which made no single man responsible for the outcome of each criminal case.²³⁰ In Kotsiuba's case, Zamkov, Shevchenko and Krits led the preliminary investigation.²³¹ They scrupulously arranged *ochnye stavki* among all ten men investigated in this case, and one can only guess what sort of preparation the victims had endured. Most of them confirmed the allegations, and denounced each other. Through denunciations of each of those arrested, hundreds of

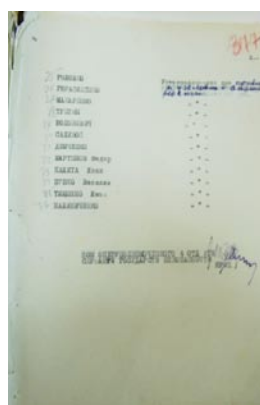
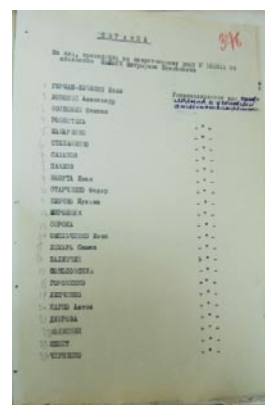
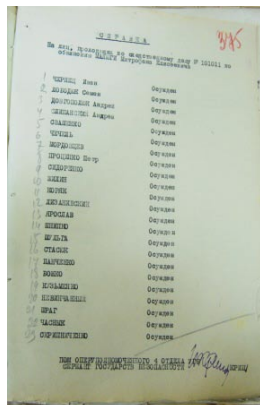
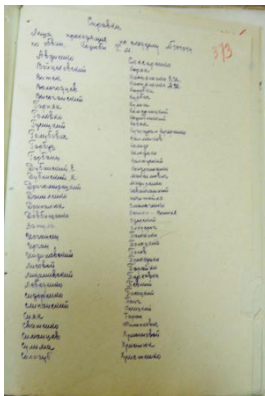
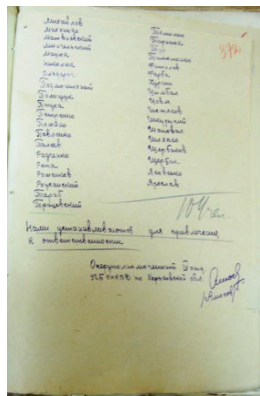
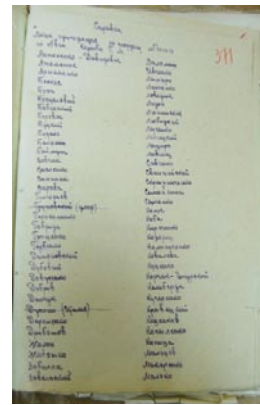
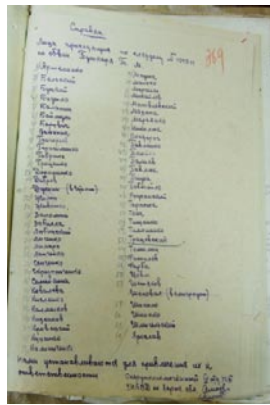
²²⁷ The photograph is published in *Literaturna hazeta*, 30 December 1933, p. 2.

²²⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.225,230.

²²⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark. 243-44.

²³⁰ *Krugovaia poruka* (in Russian) means mutual guarantee and collective responsibility, "the institution of hostages" which implies "punishability for actions of others." The principle of *krugovaia poruka* was established by Lenin in December 1919 and was employed by the regime for nearly 70 years. For more details, see Jacques Rossi, *The Gulag Handbook: An Encyclopedia Dictionary of Soviet Penitentiary Institutions and Terms Related to the Forced Labor Camps*, trans. William A. Burhans (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 183-84.

²³¹ AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.244-245,247.



The lists of those who were to be arrested because of denunciations made by “Kotsiuba’s group.”

people were arrested on false accusations of membership in the organization.²³² Kotsiuba’s case and his forcibly obtained testimony allowed the NKVD to arrest 104 people.²³³

²³² AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.369-77.

²³³ AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.371-72.

During the 17 December 1938 court hearing of the Kharkiv Military Tribunal, Kotsiuba stated that he felt “he had become younger” and would be able to work for Soviet power. “I beg the court, he said, to grant me an opportunity to expiate my guilt. I beg you to return me to my family.”²³⁴ The tribunal sentenced Kotsiuba to death, and the place of his burial is unknown.²³⁵

The Ukrainian writer Mykola Dukyn was taken to the Kharkiv NKVD prison on the same night with Kotsiuba. In the early 1920s, he had been a teacher in Izium but in 1928 by Pylypenko’s invitation he moved to Kharkiv to work for the journal *Pluh*. Until his arrest in 1938, he earned a living through translation and literary work.²³⁶ In 1934, Sosiura moved to Kyiv, and Dukyn and his family moved into his apartment, number 57 on the second floor. When Dukyn was taken downstairs by NKVD operatives, his desperate cry cut through the silence of the night: “I am not guilty! I am not guilty!!!”²³⁷

Dukyn was accused of membership in an anti-Soviet terrorist nationalist organization.²³⁸ He set a record for the Kharkiv prison: the NKVD operatives Mikotkin and Shevchenko obtained his confession 5 months after his arrest on 17 August 1938.²³⁹ In his *Sad Hetsymans’kyi*, Ivan Bahrianyi, who happened to be in the Kharkiv prison together with Dukyn, vividly described the sophisticated torture to which the NKVD subjected prisoners, including Dukyn. Bahrianyi remembered Dukyn as depressed and indifferent.

²³⁴ AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.394. Kotsiuba had a wife, the librarian Elena Kolobova, and a 10-year-old son, Iurii. See AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.1, ark.61.

²³⁵ AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.396-400. During the court hearing, Maliuha, Batiuk, Kulykov and Pochtarenko rejected the accusations, and the “witnesses” denied their previous depositions. See AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.382-84,405zv. Kotsiuba’s family was evicted from *Budynok Slovo*, and their possessions were confiscated by the NKVD. See AU SBUKhO, spr.014317, t.2, ark.487.

²³⁶ Musienko, 175-76. In 1932-34, Dukyn also worked for the journal *Krytyka*.

²³⁷ Dukyna, 129.

²³⁸ AU SBUKhO, spr.013200, ark.7.

²³⁹ AU SBUKhO, spr.013200, ark.24-27.

He suffered from a sense of shame at his own weakness.²⁴⁰ The “neighborhood” of 340 people packed into a cell designed for 50, diseases, dirt, thirst and hunger were negligible in comparison with the moral suffering Dukyn experienced.²⁴¹



Mykola Dukyn.

In February 1939, possibly encouraged by the change in the NKVD, Dukyn denied his previous deposition.²⁴² His criminal case was sent to Kyiv, and finally to Moscow. Miraculously, Dukyn’s verdict exemplified the “positive” changes and even the “Beria thaw” that ordinary people imagined or hoped to see.²⁴³ Perhaps his persistent denial of the accusations played a role. On 29 October 1939 a Special Meeting of the NKVD in Moscow sentenced Dukyn to 5 years in labor camps. The word “terrorist” disappeared from the verdict but the accusation of “nationalist” of course remained. In total, Dukyn spent 1.5 years in prison before he was exiled to the Oneglag.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Bahrianyi, 316.

²⁴¹ Dukyna, 149-53.

²⁴² AU SBUKhO, spr.013200, ark.40-42. Non-officially, Beria replaced Ezhov as chief of the NKVD in September 1938, and on 23 November 1938 Ezhov submitted a letter of resignation to Stalin which was signed the next day. See Knight, 89-90.

²⁴³ Knight, 92.

²⁴⁴ Dukyna, 144, 147.

In 1943 the term was prolonged until the end of the war. On 10 October 1943, Dukyn died from tuberculosis in the camp hospital.²⁴⁵

During the Great Terror, the dynamics in the two places that are of central interest for this study, *Budynok Slovo* and the NKVD, were simultaneously similar and different. The similarity rested in the rapid disappearance of both writers and torturers; they were executed as fast as the NKVD could process their criminal cases. The difference appears in the general social atmosphere (“the air of the time”) in the two places and the professional involvement of the two social groups that occupied them. During and after the terror of 1937-38 in Ukraine in general, and in *Budynok Slovo* in particular, “there was a complete cemetery-like silence,” as one observer stated.²⁴⁶ People feared their surroundings, everything and everyone, those who stood below and above them. They sedated their condition with alcohol and meaningless activities. Families quietly deteriorated; friendships degraded; everyone had something to conceal. The writers’ literary engagement was reduced to complimentary articles praising the state and its leaders, and effusive responses to Stalin’s awards. Yet, the NKVD was reminiscent of a blast furnace in which nationalist conspiracies were fabricated and eradicated with exhilarating vigor and speed. The secret agency operated in haste through constant *avraly* (all hands on deck), although no organizational chaos was apparent. NKVD groups worked cohesively and it seemed they took pleasure in what they had been doing. The principle “anything goes” that was delegated to them from above eased and ritualized the procedure of “uncovering” nationalists in the republic. Confusion among

²⁴⁵ Dukyna, 144. Both Dukyn and Kotsiuba were rehabilitated posthumously in the 1950s.

²⁴⁶ Prokop, *Ukraina*, 116-17.

NKVD associates did emerge in the summer of 1937 when the staff of their department began to disappear into prison cells, and this confusion found its reflection in the criminal files that were fabricated at the time. They received treatment that was very familiar to them as professionals: they were executed with “no pretense of investigating [their] cases.”²⁴⁷

The archival evidence suggests that the terror of 1937-38 in Ukraine that swallowed *kurkuli*, religious figures, immigrants, German and Polish spies and other enemies of the state continued to target “Ukrainian nationalists.” In 1937, despite the fact that they all allegedly “belonged” to a broad network of the “Ukrainian nationalist underground,” the NKVD fabricated individual cases against them. In contrast, in 1938, the NKVD produced mostly group cases against “Ukrainian nationalists,” repeating the pattern of the early 1930s.²⁴⁸ As a result of their methodical elimination, by 1937-38 the *slov’iany* had been dispersed and marginalized as state enemies, and many literary talents among them never blossomed. The writers feared to write, or were transformed by a self-censorship that destroyed them as artists and individuals.²⁴⁹

Importantly, the national vector of the Great Terror in Ukraine in general, and in the building in particular, should be considered in the context of foreign policies and Stalin’s imagination that the Soviet Union would be strangled by a vicious triangle consisting of Poland, Germany and Japan—the states that in his view supported the formation of a “fifth column” in Ukraine

²⁴⁷ Alexander Weissberg, *The Accused*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), 11-12; Orlov, 216; Bahrianyi, 447.

²⁴⁸ Bohunov et al., 19.

²⁴⁹ On transformation of the writers into their own censors, see Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), xviii.

and the creation of a republic of “nationalist counterrevolutionaries.” Notably, most of the individuals mentioned in this chapter were included in the lists personally signed by Stalin, which predetermined their fate. The top party leadership secretly and unanimously voted for sentencing the writers to death before preliminary investigations and court hearings, which of course, considering Stalin’s resolution, were a mere formality.²⁵⁰ The *slov’iany* Semenko, Iohansen, Bykovets’, Koriak, Dykyi and Kyrylenko were among other Ukrainian intellectuals who made it into these lists in 1937-38. As far as Stalin was concerned, they represented oppositionists, the “SRs” and “nationalists,” and had to die.

Stalin’s perception of *Budynok Slovo* was shaped by the writers’ national cultural aspirations of the 1920s. This perception was ossified and strengthened by the peasants’ resistance to collectivization and by Ukrainization in the republic, factors that fashioned the goals and patterns of the pre-war repression. Tragically, its tentacles reached even the former *slov’iany* who resided in geographical locations other than Kharkiv. Besides the Kyivites, the NKVD arrested the former *slov’iany* who resided in Cherkasy and Chernivtsi, and accused them of organizing nationalist bands and detachments to dethrone Soviet power. Among them were the Ukrainian writers and journalists Onoprii Turhan and Ivan Vyrhan.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Stalin and Molotov were the main signatories of the lists. Molotov’s signature appears on 372 lists. His participation was the most active, although Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Mikoian also signed most documents. Zhdanov joined the company in 1938, and his signature is on the document that determined Ivan Kyrylenko’s fate. On the history of Stalin’s lists, see the official site of Memorial, available at <http://stalin.memo.ru/images/intro.htm> (accessed 5 December, 2012).

²⁵¹ **Onoprii Turhan** was arrested on 5 November 1937 in Kyiv and was transferred to Cherkasy where his family lived. His case was linked to a group of counter-revolutionists from Cherkasy (village Lozuvatka of Shpola region). He was executed in Cherkasy on 15 January 1938. Turhan’s criminal file is located in the State Archive of Cherkasy oblast’ (spr. 2305), and constitutes only 58 pages, including rehabilitation materials. In 1925 Turhan

The epithet “fascist” accompanied any definition of nationalism and any nationalist conspiracy, into which the NKVD enrolled free-minded individuals and conformists, party members and non-party members, the privileged and the non-privileged. The conspiracies were written by the Akimovs and Drushliaks, and their “members” were ultimately guilty of state treason and terrorism. The prescribed collective guilt negated considerations of individual guilt or its absence.

An analysis of the secret police’s practices and the deeds of interrogators suggests that the majority of NKVD agents did not believe in the premise of a total national conspiracy in Ukraine. It did not exist, and therefore, no real efforts to investigate the cases were undertaken. Routine fabrications of criminal cases, cynical scoffing at and beating of the arrested appear to indicate the virtual absence of any evidence of such a conspiracy. For most NKVD operatives, morality became a commodity that was used to their advantage. They rejected it as a universal philosophical concept, but rhetorically employed it when it was professionally and politically expedient. The “commoditization” of morality and its applications in interrogation rooms tormented the arrested. Some believed they could make a deal with interrogators by accepting their rules (as occurred in Kyrylenko’s case). Many lost their moral orientation, as did Dukyn, and the latter’s human evolution or

married Raisa Troianker, and the couple moved to Kharkiv. In 1930 Onoprii and Raisa parted, and in the same year Onoprii was arrested by the GPU but was then released. For more details on Onoprii Turhan, see Volodymyr Polishchuk, “Onoprii Turhan—zhurnalyst i pys’mennyk,” *Umans’kyi literaturnyi klub*, available at http://umanliteratura.ucoz.ua/news/v_polishhuk_onoprij_turgan_zhurnalyst_i_pismennik/2010-12-20-256 (accessed 13 December 2012). Raisa was never repressed. For details on Troianker, see Petrovsky-Shtern, 111-64. **Ivan Vyrhan** was arrested in November 1940, and in March 1941 he was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps. He survived the gulag. For more details on Vyrhan, see K.S. Pokotylo and L.I. Korol’ova, “Storinky zhyttia i dial’nosti Ivana Vyrhana,” *The Union of Writers (Kharkiv chapter)*, available at <http://dspace.nbuv.gov.ua/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/10429/16-Pokotylo.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 17 December 2012); Musienko, 99-100.

rather regression frightened him and made him suffer more than the applied physical torture.²⁵²

NKVD operatives held fast to the state, embodying and preserving it, and sustaining its totality. However, the defectiveness and amorality of the system manifested itself in the “purging of the purgers,” a phenomenon of fatal self-cannibalization.²⁵³ “Yesterday’s executioners became today’s victims.”²⁵⁴ the Ukrainian party leaders Kosior, Postyshev, Zatonskii and Chubar were arrested in early 1938 and shot in February 1939.²⁵⁵ The cascade of arrests in the Ukrainian NKVD that began in the summer of 1937 included David Epel’baum, head of the fourth UGB NKVD department in the Kharkiv region, and a group of ten other NKVD associates who on October 25-29, 1939 were sentenced to death or ten years in labor camps for their criminal conduct during investigations and for fabrications of criminal cases.²⁵⁶

The state clashed with the preexistent cultural space and national sentiment in Ukraine, and in its attempts to reshape this space, defined its own circle of “insiders” and “outsiders” and its own system of values. The top

²⁵² For more on morality, freedom, intellectuals and authoritarianism, see Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1960).

²⁵³ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 442.

²⁵⁴ Jerzy W. Borejsza, “Italian Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism: Three Forms of Totalitarianism from a Twenty-First-Century Perspective” in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe: Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jerzy W. Borejsza, and Klaus Ziemer (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 13.

²⁵⁵ Gerald M. Easter, *Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 158.

²⁵⁶ DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.7641, ark.126. UGB refers to the Administration of State Security in the NKVD. The 17 November 1938 resolution of the RNC USSR and TsK VKP(b) “About arrests, supervision by the Procuracy and the conduct of investigations” ended the mass terror. For more details about the resolution, see Knight, 89-90. The statistics of the political repression during the Great Terror demonstrate that Kharkiv oblast’ suffered the most because of the social and industrial infrastructure of Kharkiv as the former capital of Ukraine. For a more detailed explanation of this dynamic, see Bazhan and Zolotar’ov, 99-100. During the period of the 1920s-50s, 22,000 NKVD agents became victims of the repressive machine, designed by their supervisors, but perpetuated and advanced by rank-and-file operatives. In the central apparatus of the external intelligence service, approximately 20 out of 100 agents survived the terror by the middle of 1939. See Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains’ki Solovky* (Kyiv: “EksOb,” 2001), 152.

party leadership simultaneously hierarchized, homogenized and fragmented social spaces and places in Ukraine, and then consigned their participants altogether to the trash bin of history as an obstinate, aging, used and unneeded material.²⁵⁷

Pressured by the state's regulatory mechanisms, the *slov'iany* and the secret police produced a new common space of social interaction. Their perceptions of this new common space differed for some time: for the former it was fragile and confusing; for the latter durable and emboldening. By the Great Terror, few sincerely believed in the future of such a space: the lies were transparent for both parties, and the mediating role of the third party in the socialist enterprise, the state, was confusing and ambiguous, especially for those who identified themselves with the state. The fear of the state's "monumentality" and power suppressed most desires by the *slov'iany* to resist violence, and in 1937 also penetrated the NKVD's organs.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ The intelligentsia, such as Volodymyr Iurynets' and Antin Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi, recruited by the GPU (*seksoty*), reflect the "amalgamated" material that was generated, reinforced and ultimately disposed of by the state in the 1930s.

²⁵⁸ On production of a social space and a national territory, see Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 224. For more on the subjectivities of those who worked for the secret police, see Weissberg, 410-11.

Conclusion

In the 1920s, Ukrainization in the republic had been a ploy and a concession to Ukrainian communists to win their support and loyalty, and by 1925, in the center's view, it had gone out of control. The consequences of Ukrainization appeared to be unpredictable, and in 1925 Lazar Kaganovich was sent to Ukraine to oversee and to "normalize" the situation.¹ He played a crucial role in subsequent repressive tactics of the secret police. On Stalin's order and through Kaganovich's endorsement, in 1926 the Ukrainian secret police, the center's eyes and ears in the republic, designed a special operation to tame Ukrainian nationalism. The course of counter-Ukrainization was to be implemented through mass repression which the secret police began to apply from 1929. Importantly, counter-Ukrainization was clearly an anti-Ukrainian policy which targeted not Ukrainian ethnicity as such but rather was directed against the development of Ukrainian national identity and Ukrainian statehood that were perceived as a challenge to the center's control and as harbingers of separatism. According to GPU circulars, art could not be a private or national affair, and those who believed so were simply nationalists and separatists. Moreover, Ukraine had more serious tasks than art production. To assist the victory of socialism, Ukraine had to continue to provide grain and the steady inflow of cash for the state. Indeed, the industrialization project and the rapid installation of the Soviet infrastructure would be in jeopardy without Ukraine's contribution.

¹ To "normalize" meant to consolidate Stalin's control in the republic, and to "block demands for greater Ukrainian autonomy," as E.A. Rees stated. On Kaganovich's actions in Ukraine in 1925-28, see E.A. Rees, *Iron Lazar: A Political Biography of Lazar Kaganovich* (New York: Anthem Press, 2012), 61-80.

From early on, it was Moscow's understanding that the enterprise called the USSR could not be realized without Ukraine. Stalin also believed that Ukraine was the "second weak spot of Soviet power" after Turkestan, in which the party persecuted Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev for his "nationalism."² Stalin's suspicion of Ukrainian separatist tendencies was amplified by the GPU, which on his order became actively engaged in the search for a nationalist conspiracy in Ukraine. Subsequently, the hysteria surrounding such a conspiracy was mutually reinforced and encouraged, and the witch hunt for Ukrainian separatists escalated, reaching its apogee during the Great Terror.

Significantly, the decision to eliminate the local elite in Ukraine, whose national sentiment had been induced by the Twelfth Congress, matured shortly after 1923, and predetermined the outcome of Ukrainization and shaped the future tactics and methods of the secret police. The demands of the national communists Oleksandr Shums'kyi, Mykola Khvyl'ovyi and Mykhailo Volobuiev who advocated political, cultural and economic autonomy of the republic exacerbated Stalin's frustration, and the campaign against *shumskism*, *khvyliovism* and *volobuevshchyna* grew into terror against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, many of whom resided in *Budynok Slovo*.³ Secret GPU documents that were prepared in 1926 (the 30 March 1926 circular "About the Ukrainian Citizenry" and the 4 September 1926 circular "On Ukrainian Separatism") identified four main goals in eradicating Ukrainian nationalism (see Chapter Three). Transparently, from as early as 1926, the GPU effectively

² On Stalin's understanding of Ukraine's role in socialist construction, see his speech at the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee of RCP(b) which took place in Moscow on 9-12 June 1923. See also Yuri Shapoval, "GPU-NKVD as an Instrument of Counter-Ukrainization in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600-1945*, ed. Andreas Kappeler, et al. (Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003), 326.

³ Shapoval in Kappeler, 328.

drew a line of demarcation between “us” and “them,” and most importantly, divided society into “right” and “wrong” places, the attendance of which elevated people to privileged positions, or on the contrary compromised them for life in the eyes of the secret police. *Budynok Slovo* became a primary focus of scrutiny by the secret police in light of these goals. The composition of residents, most of whom were prominent Ukrainian writers, actors and artists, allowed the secret police to be extraordinarily efficient in implementing one of the bloodiest operations in Ukraine.

The secret agency played a key role in propagating an unappealing image of Ukrainization for the center. In the late 1920s, it was more and more frequently characterized as ‘Petliurite’ Ukrainization that was carried out by “nationalist deviationists,” and that served as propaganda for those who resisted industrialization and collectivization policies. Ultimately, a “perverted” version of Ukrainization, it was claimed, led to resistance to grain procurements and revolts in the countryside.

Significantly, while “devising” a nationalist conspiracy, GPU/NKVD operatives never failed to frame the Ukrainian intelligentsia as supporters of the peasantry, as we have seen. The writers’ depositions forcibly extracted from them or fabricated by their interrogators illuminate the *slov’iany*’s convictions that Moscow instigated the famine in Ukraine to change the ethnic composition of the republic, which would solve the Ukrainian question once and for all. From the state’s perspective, these ideas were false and seditious. The persistence of the efforts undertaken by the secret police to indict the *slov’iany* for this seditious thinking can be traced in criminal files from 1932 to 1938. Moreover, according to the scenario written by the interrogators, the

intelligentsia organized military detachments among the peasantry preparing a coup d'état, accusations that, decades later through the efforts of rehabilitation commissions, proved to be complete fabrications.⁴

Furthermore, as has been demonstrated, for the center the physical elimination of the supporters of Ukrainization was as important as the elimination of the Ukrainian language as a means of communication and transmission of Ukrainian cultural traditions. The very existence of national cultural institutions and projects in Ukraine, such as national encyclopedias, committees on Ukrainian spelling, linguistics and history, theatres and university departments, institutions that employed the Ukrainian language, became problematic for the center. By the late 1930s, almost all Ukrainian institutions were closed, modified and restructured with a greater orientation toward their essential russification. The repression of cultural figures in Ukraine in the 1930s affected thousands.⁵ In arresting “terrorists” in Ukraine who allegedly were organized in groups to demolish Soviet power in the republic, the secret police functioned almost exclusively as the agency that eliminated political opposition to the regime. In the administration’s eyes the GPU/NKVD’s terror was “moral” by definition because it was implemented to unite the state, and the secret police’s leaders in Moscow and Ukraine were regularly rewarded with medals and privileges for uncovering another organization of Ukrainian nationalists.

⁴ Interestingly, James Mace’s study and his conclusions based on oral interviews of the Holodomor’s victims in the 1980s were confirmed by archival evidence only during the last decade. For Mace’s argument, see one of his last articles “Izbiratel’naia pamiat’: Golodomor v Ukraine,” in *Ukraina Incognita*, ed. Larisa Ivshyna (Kiev: Ukrainskaia press-gruppa, 2004), 316-319.

⁵ See the secret police’s statistical reports for 1937-38 in Serhii Bohunov, Vadym Zolotar’ov, Tetiana Rafal’s’ka, Olena Radzyvill, and Iurii Shapoval, eds., *Ukraina v dobu “Velykoho teroru” 1936-1938 roky* (Kyiv: Lybid’, 2009), 222-29, 244-47, 249.

As has been demonstrated in this study, Russians and Jews were among those arrested as Ukrainian “nationalists” and “terrorists.” Moreover, among them were faithful Marxists and Communists. Jerzy W. Borejsza noted that the discrepancy between words and deeds in the Soviet Union was striking,⁶ and the regime provided no public explanations about the repression of these categories of people. In fact, all operations on eliminating the nationally conscious elites were conducted secretly.⁷

The “acculturation into the colonial” and the preference for Ukrainian over Russian or Yiddish exhibited by the *slov’iany* of Russian and Jewish origin led them “straight to the basement of the NKVD.”⁸ For them, the use of the Ukrainian language seemed a path to liberation from the imperial oppressive practices and legacies, and this seemed to them not only fair from a humanistic perspective but also proper from the Marxist and Bolshevik point of view. Formerly oppressed but now emancipated and modern, a new Ukrainian culture would help de-colonize the Ukrainian people and lead them to a bright socialist future. Precisely this consideration inspired Ukrainian Russians and Ukrainian Jews to speak and write in Ukrainian which became problematic for the state. It dubbed this phenomenon a “nationalist deviation.”

Petrovsky-Shtern has noted that “a Russian Jew had to maintain a low profile

⁶ Borejsza argued that “the gap between words and deeds in the Stalinist Soviet Union was even greater than that in Hitler’s Third Reich. From the 1920s, Hitler spoke of the physical extermination of the Jews and Bolsheviks and of the domination of the German race, and acted by using gas on his enemies. To the end of his life Stalin was speaking about friendship among nations.” See Jerzy W. Borejsza, “Italian Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism: Three Forms of Totalitarianism from a Twenty-First-Century Perspective,” in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe: Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jerzy W. Borejsza, and Klaus Ziemer (New York; Berghahn Books, 2006), 12.

⁷ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 201.

⁸ Petrovsky-Shtern analyzed cultural and linguistic affinities of several Jewish writers, including the *slov’iany*, and demonstrated their complex cultural identities (Ukrainian/Jewish; Jewish/Ukrainian) that influenced their art and lives. See Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 6.

but could survive. Ukrainian Jews were not blessed with this chance.”⁹ The visible *slov’iany* with ethnicities other than Ukrainian but with Ukrainian or mixed identities fell immediate victims to the repression by the secret police that methodically cleansed the nationally conscious intellectuals. The state had little interest in the cultural hybridization of “foreign” elements (Ukrainian+Jewish or Jewish+Ukrainian), or in Russian identity polluted with Ukrainian national sentiment in the republic.

The early 1930s repressions in *Budynok Slovo* cultivated overwhelming fear among those who were still free. The temporary nature of their free existence generated deep pessimism among the *slov’iany*. Uncertainties about what the next day would bring shaped their lives, in which there was no room for creative art. “We were like rabbits mesmerized before the gaping mouth of a boa,” Hryhorii Kostiuk stated.¹⁰ Sadistically, the secret police invited the *slov’iany* to witness the arrests of their neighbors and friends. Vasyl’ Sokil had to be present when Andrii Paniv was arrested. Ivan Senchenko was *poiniatyi* during Iukhym Hedz’s arrest. Their home (*Budynok Slovo*/ Kharkiv/Ukraine) became a dangerous place, and many tried to escape. Some managed to do so and survived the thirties but then lived in fear for years. To some *slov’iany* the moment of recognition of terror and the feeling of déjà-vu came almost twenty years later, after the war, as it did to Leib Kvitko who was arrested in Kyiv in 1949.

Importantly, the *slov’iany*’s behavior in prison was fostered by chronic stress attending their expectation of arrest. Their drive toward life and art was truncated, which ultimately increased the drive toward self-destruction. Erich

⁹ Petrovsky-Shtern, 277.

¹⁰ Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knyhakh* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2008), 1:283.

Fromm posited that “destructiveness [was] the outcome of unlived life.”¹¹ In Khvyly’ovyi’s case, “unlived life” or rather life that went on against his principles and beliefs became unwanted, and this apparently led him to suicide. Life in fear of repression induced Semenko, Dykyi, Vukhnal’ and other *slov’iany* to resort to habitual use of alcohol. The isolation and marginalization of the writers as Ukrainian nationalists by the regime, and a profound feeling of despair and powerlessness to resist the center’s counter-Ukrainization suppressed their passion (*oderzhymist’* in Valentyn Moroz’s terms) for art and life, narrowing their space of escape and intensifying their feeling of insecurity and doom. By the early 1930s, the “energy of the national renaissance was depleted, indicating the beginning of a decline,” Moroz noted.¹² The writers adopted the vigilant behavior and personality required by the political culture of the time, a mandatory stance that had to be exhibited through the press and their art. To avoid repression, the *slov’iany* followed the steps of the Shchupaks and Koriaks, denouncing their colleagues in the press and disguising their denunciations as literary criticism. While continuing to exist in the space of art, they lost their spontaneity and originality. Their thoughts and feelings ceased to be their own, and those new thoughts and feelings that emerged inspired verse or prose that glorified the leaders of the revolution, and even the leaders of the secret police.

By the mid-thirties, the Ukrainian cultural landscape had become one dimensional and flat, a result of the destruction of national cultural patterns and traditions by the state. Symptomatically, under terror, the writers began to pen verse and prose for children (a relatively safe genre) and were engaged in

¹¹ Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1960), 158.

¹² Valentyn Moroz, “Nationalism and Genocide: The Origin of the Artificial Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine,” *The Journal of Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (1986): 207-220.

translation projects. Oles' Donchenko, Volodymyr Dukyn, Ivan Senchenko, Oksana Ivanenko and Maik Iohansen now produced novels and fairy tales for children. The writers had been wandering through a linguistic maze, trying to find a "neutral" genre and language that could not be seen as suspicious by the party. They experienced spatial and cultural somnambulism and confusion. The language itself, however, ceased being neutral. Socialist in content, it still remained Ukrainian—not national but now nationalist in essence for the state, and thus incriminating, anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary.

Katerina Clark noted that in the 1930s translations of world literature became a common trend not only in Russia but also in all Soviet republics. She posited that translations became "a celebration of 'world literature,'" and were a sign of cosmopolitanism in Soviet literature in the 1930s. In Clark's analysis, the avalanche of translations of world literature has been interpreted and explained as an original and natural phenomenon of the literary process rather than a consequence of repressive cultural tactics. She claimed that "the wave of translations from European literature in the Soviet 1930s might have led to a flowering and ultimately Soviet dominance."¹³ The current study of *Budynok Slovo* reveals something entirely different. Soviet control of culture in general, and literature in particular, an essential factor for the state's domination, was designed to monitor the writers' independent thought and their original creative work. Translation work did not lead to "Soviet dominance," but rather "Soviet dominance" led to "the wave of translations" which became a means of survival for the writers because of the overarching

¹³ Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 18.

and omnipresent control of the literary process in the Soviet Union.¹⁴

According to many accounts by writers who worked during this period, translations became the only possible literary activity in the context of terror and repression. As in Boris Pasternak's case and a great many other cases, translations helped people physically survive in the 1930s when they could not publish any works of their own. The slightest deviation from the norms of socialist realism had been punished by party reprimands and ostracism in the press. Translations became the writers' escape from the realities of being Soviet writers; it was safer to publish a European author in translation than to publish one's own original work, where any aesthetic premise could be challenged by the party. For some, translations were a conscious principal choice of not conforming to socialist realism; for others, this activity became the only means of survival, as in the *slov'iany*'s case.

Notably, the current study provides not only individual histories of many *slov'iany* that were previously unknown to historians but also discusses those of their tormentors—the most prominent and rank-and-file functionaries of the Soviet secret organs. Their histories and methods of work were unclear and vague before the early 1990s, and remain so in the West. This knowledge offers new ways of thinking about the writers' dilemmas they encountered while in prison at the mercy of GPU/NKVD agents. The scrutiny of techniques employed by GPU/NKVD agents and their treatment of the

¹⁴ Interestingly, Clark claimed that, for instance, for Boris Pasternak, financial considerations were less important than the idea of bringing classics into the Russian cultural space. In fact, Pasternak supported several families with funds obtained exclusively from translations. They were crucial for him as a means of physical survival. On Boris Pasternak's desperate financial needs and translations, the low quality of some of his translations because of *podenshchina*, and the absence of freedom of expression for a writer, see Dmitrii Bykov, *Boris Pasternak* in the series *Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei* (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 2006), 433, 484-85, 602, 686.

arrested helped illuminate the writers' private dramas, moral turmoil, failures, victories and acts of heroism. Physical and mental torture transformed people into obedient automatons, a fact that explains the writers' inner surrender and collaboration with the organs. Some prisoners tried to establish cordial relationships with their interrogators, hoping to disarm them of their cruelty, as did Ivan Kyrylenko (see Chapter Nine). Some were horrified from the moment they were arrested, like Hryhorii Epik (see Chapter Seven), and the fear of death and the prison's practices paralyzed their will and ability to maintain dignity during and after preliminary investigation. Some, like Mykhailo Ialovyι (see Chapter Four), subliminally balanced between their hopes and fears before finally surrendering to their interrogators. Yet, because of their principles and stubbornness, there were a few who alienated themselves from the realities of the investigation room, and never complied with the rules of the game their investigators imposed on them. Among them were the writers Ivan Bahrianyi and Onanii Lebid'. The knowledge about these patterns of human behavior under torture has often been obtained obliquely, through individual histories and testimonies of their tormentors.

Prison, interrogation rooms and investigative practices confronted the writers in a violent and barbaric way, and invited the majority to choose a faint prospect of life instead of certain death. Threats of retaliation against their relatives were serious and real, and as has been discussed in Chapter Seven, "prisonization" of the *slov'iany*'s minds and violence made them compliant and subversive to the interrogators.

Using Fromm's terminology, the imprisoned writers, losing their "primary bonds" with the building and their self-identification in this place,

were searching for “secondary bonds” with the system that persuaded them that nationalist conspiracies existed and even convinced them of their own participation in them (see Ialovyi’s case).¹⁵ This search manifested itself in submission and complete surrender to the interrogator. They felt inferior, insignificant and confused, and they rationalized their gradual slip into nationalism and wrecking activities by “foreign” and “malicious” influences. Ialovyi verbally crucified himself for his ideological shortsightedness. Kyrilenko belittled himself, identifying himself as a worm, and begged the party to crush him if he was unworthy of its trust. Through intimidation and fear, the secret police demanded people’s absolute submission to the state, even before their deaths. The task of the interrogator was to de-humanize the accused to the point where their previous identity became vague and fuzzy, and eventually would be replaced by what Fromm called a “pseudo-identity” or a “pseudo self.”¹⁶ The *slov’iany* tried to overcome the panic linked to this inner transformation (see Dukyn’s and Kas’ianenko’s cases) and wrote long letters explaining themselves to their tormentors who seemed to them their only saviors under the circumstances. They understood that they could not negotiate with the state but they tried to negotiate with its middle men—NKVD operatives and their supervisors.

This study also demonstrates that places are not static but dynamic. Despite the rigidity of the Soviet system, its spaces (e.g. political/social/cultural), places (e.g. *Budynok Slovo*/the GPU/NKVD prison) and institutions (e.g. the Union of Writers/ the secret police) were

¹⁵ Fromm, 122-23.

¹⁶ Fromm, 177.

characterized by constant changes within them, where nothing was fixed or permanent.

The general atmosphere of corruption and violence that reigned in the secret organs in the 1930s encouraged the sadistic personalities of those who worked there. Working in blood and executing people on New Year's Eve, the GPU/NKVD agents seemed to take special pleasure from their sadistic actions. The Russian scholar Boris Lanin noted that "sadism routinely uses the fear of death for its pleasure."¹⁷ Some argue that only people of certain personalities were hired to work in the secret police. Paraphrasing one *chekist*, "being a *chekist* is not an occupation; this is a permanent state of his or her soul."¹⁸ Whatever the case might be, Soviet practices of terror encouraged and rewarded the *chekists'* inhuman behaviors in interrogation rooms with memorable watches and certificates of excellence. They enjoyed their power, even though this power was extended only over their office or interrogation room. The spatial dimension of their power reduced to a single room and over one or two individuals at a time never disturbed them. They were addicted to power which was absolutely necessary for their psychological equilibrium in the atmosphere of common violence and fear.¹⁹ Their moral regression was inevitable and required. Ideological fuel and support for violence were derived from their supervisors who in turn looked up the hierarchical ladder for inspiration. The micro-environment in the NKVD headquarters in

¹⁷ Boris Lanin, "Anatomiia literaturnoi antiutopii," in *Russkaia literaturnaia antiutopiia* (Moskva: Rossiiskii otkrytyi universitet, 1993), 163.

¹⁸ Leonid Shebarshin, *KGB shutit...Aforizmy ot nachal'nika Sovetskoi rasvedki* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012), 30.

¹⁹ See Chapter Three; Ivan Bahrianyi, *Sad Hetsymans'kyi* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo "Shkola," 2008), 412-13, 415, 496, 501; Weissberg, *The Accused*; Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, trans. Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (New York: A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book Harcourt, Inc., 1995); Vadim Z. Rogovin, *Stalin's Terror of 1937-1938: Political Genocide in the USSR*, trans. Frederick S. Choate (Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, 2009), 208, 211-212.

Radnarkomivs'ka Street in Kharkiv encouraged violence on the part of NKVD associates, and structured their everyday behavioral patterns. The goal of “uncovering a nationalist conspiracy” was identified, and “nationalists” were severely beaten and tortured by their interrogators. As archival materials show, this group of people perceived themselves as the masters of a limited space and time which they appropriated; for them, the subjects of their experiments lived in the past and present without prospects to make it into the future. Some interrogators (Ivan Drushliak) exercised their power through brutal physical torture of the arrested; others (Pustovoitov) habitually applied mental abuse to their victims, demonstrating the “friendliness of the cannibal” that alternated with shouting and verbal humiliation.²⁰

This study provides evidence of how “nationalist conspiracies” were fabricated by the secret police, and shows the active involvement of the center in writing a conspiracy scenario in Ukraine. Importantly, criminal files of “Ukrainian nationalists” were fabricated for the insiders, not for public consumption. The scenario of massive nationalist conspiracy written by the police would not hold water or maintain narrative continuity had it been read by either a non-specialist or an independent lawyer or a foreign government or an international observer. However, the creators of these files composed texts that always found grateful appreciators. Using literary jargon, the majority of the texts in criminal files had been written “on commission,” and the interrogators’ patrons were generally pleased with the final appearance of the

²⁰ The expression “friendliness of the cannibal” is borrowed from Theodore W. Adorno. Quoted in Benjamin’s 27 February 1936 letter to Adorno in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, eds. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno and trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 523.

files. The secret police, as it had been understood by them, held exclusive reading rights over these files once and forever.

The space of politics brought perpetrators and victims closer to each other, eventually forcing them to share the same place, and within this space and place they became interchangeable and interchanged. Some writers became secret agents, and some members of the secret police became the accused and were ultimately repressed as well. State violence disabled the resistance of both groups, and they were physically eliminated. Tragically, both groups attempted to conform to the regime in their own ways, but they were not permitted to conform.

As in a bad play, the outcome of the terror was rather predictable. The Great Terror also devoured its managers and perpetrators. Violence encouraged by the government and the secret police led to a crisis in both institutions. In 1937, despite Ezhov's claims that the agency had been reorganized to pay more attention to surveillance methods rather than mass operations, surveillance work had diminished, and the unmatched terror was unleashed, eventually consuming its executors.²¹ After a conspiracy, imagined or real, that was uncovered in spring 1937 in the NKVD and the Red Army, the "whole Soviet Government hung by a thread," as Ezhov's deputy Mykhail Frinovskii explained.²² In essence, fear became a totalizing migrating phenomenon, which "traveled" from agency to agency, from institution to institution. In the face of the virtual demise of the Ukrainian secret police's staff, its leadership tried to escape and to hide. Some committed suicide. In

²¹ Bohunov et al., 13; Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repressions in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 228, 233.

²² Alexander Orlov, *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (New York: Random House, 1953), 237.

July 1937 Balyts'kyi was arrested. During the night of 12-13 June 1938, anticipating inevitable liquidation, Henrikh Liushkov, the first head of the Ukrainian Secret Political Department (SPV) and head of the Far Eastern NKVD administration, escaped and surrendered to the Japanese. Aleksandr Uspenskii, Commissar of Internal Affairs in Ukraine, went into hiding on 14 November 1938.²³ During 1937-38, those operatives and heads of the departments who were involved in “the Ukrainian operation” and the elimination of the *slov'iany* were arrested and executed as anti-Soviet conspirators.

According to Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, one of the goals of the Great Terror was to “identify scapegoats held responsible for the political and economic failings” of the state.²⁴ Following his routine scheme of politics, Stalin blamed the party leadership and the secret police in Ukraine for excesses and anti-Soviet conspiracy, and executed those “responsible” for them. The entire composition of the highest echelons of power in Ukraine was tossed and reshuffled. Most were arrested and executed. Khrushchev's leadership in Ukraine marked a new course of cultural development there—russification accompanied by the physical elimination of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in prisons and labor camps. The majority of the *slov'iany* who were arrested in 1937-38 were sentenced to death. Criminal cases of those who had been sent to the Solovky earlier were reopened, and they were shot as

²³ Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, 196-99. For more details on Liushkov's defection, see Joseph Newman, ed., *Famous Soviet Spies: The Kremlin's Secret Weapon* (Washington, D.C.: A Division of U.S. News & World Report, Inc., 1973), 48-50; Zolotar'ov, *SPV*, 85-103.

²⁴ Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 12.

Ukrainian nationalists in Sandarmokh (Karelia).²⁵ For many *slov'iany*, Sandarmokh became a place of liberation: the death they met there ended their suffering and the violence to which they had been subjected for a decade.²⁶

Katerina Clark depicted Moscow in the 1930s as the Soviet capital that “was considered advanced” culturally, and as “the place where culture was ‘happening.’” She noted that “culture spread centripetally.”²⁷ Which culture she refers to—Soviet, Russian, or non-Russian—is unclear. In reality, the imperial culture did not spread but was forcibly implanted in centrifugal fashion, devouring “colonial” talents, original ideas and discoveries. The “colonial” culture, including religious traditions and its carriers (“centrifugal forces” by Stalin’s definition), strove for cultural independence and was murdered by the state. Those few who survived the terror, impelled by “the centripetal forces,” moved to Moscow not by choice but by necessity to avoid the repression. Interestingly, in Clark’s narrative, the agency (the center) and its brutality in establishing cultural monopoly are de-emphasized, and the process of “centripetal spread of culture” is cast as a natural historical flow. Indeed, culture must have been “happening” in Moscow, because according to the center’s assimilation plans, other national cultures together with their proponents, were physically exterminated, as well as their artifacts—art, books, architecture and sculpture.

Another scholar, Sheila Fitzpatrick, has written that “from the first half of the 1930s, the intelligentsia—Communist and non-party, technical and

²⁵ Most *slov'iany* were shot on 3 November 1937 in Sandarmokh by the GB captain Matveev.

²⁶ Vasyl’ Stus, a Ukrainian poet who was prosecuted in the 1970s for his “nationalism,” also perceived his death in camps as liberation which found manifold reflection in his poems. See Volodymyr Bazylevs’kyi, “Stus: struktura etychnoho radykalizmu,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, 13 September 2012.

²⁷ Clark, 15.

cultural—became an unambiguously privileged group within the society,”²⁸ and that they could negotiate their position with party authorities and literary dignitaries. The campaign against Ukrainian nationalism and the destruction of Ukrainian culture demand different lenses for examining the lives of the Russian and Ukrainian intelligentsia, although there were some common features. The image of the privileged intelligentsia might be accurate for the RSFSR, but in 1933-38 not only was the Ukrainian intelligentsia not a privileged group, it was virtually destroyed. Ukrainization had been curtailed and all its supporters had been eliminated. Moreover, the repression that was conducted by the secret police and aimed at eliminating the critically-thinking Ukrainian intelligentsia and nationally conscious elite was so intense and rapid that there was simply no time for “negotiations.” Those few negotiations that occurred were related to literary conformism. They meant little in the context of the scale of state violence against the intellectuals who were swept away en masse. The biggest paradox of the newly created Soviet Ukrainian state was that there was no place for Ukrainian culture in it. The arrest of the most prominent Ukrainian intellectuals in a cultural microcosm such as *Budynok Slovo* indicates that this was the case.

The history of this building demonstrates the impossibility of a natural cultural flow or international cultural exchange in the space of violence, or the possibility of a national renaissance. Moreover, it showed that in this space, morality and wickedness, creativity and destruction, the truth and deception began to co-exist, blending and amalgamating to the point of creating a composite: one big lie and social indifference, a feature and a norm of a

²⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 245.

regimented society. Ukraine's national revival became of little concern for the majority of its people, and its democratic revivalist initiatives were choked at the root.

In the late twenties, the center rebuked the Ukrainian intelligentsia for its bourgeois lifestyle and material comfort. In the early thirties, when the community of Ukrainian intellectuals built a home for themselves, they were perceived by the center as a rather independent and private group of individuals. As recent studies have demonstrated, the Soviet regime exhibited ambivalence toward the private sphere of Soviet citizens, refusing "to acknowledge the legitimacy of spheres of the private and set about attempting to colonize or eliminate them," and at the same promoting private space.²⁹ This study demonstrates that the center's concerns emanated not from its perception of Ukrainian writers as an extremely private and wealthy (according to the standards of the 1930s) community but from the perception of danger the Ukrainian intelligentsia represented. The *slov'iany* wrote their own history and culture, and sought Ukrainian culture's roots in the European cultural tradition. For a centralized state such as the Soviet Union, free spirit and independent thinking were much more dangerous social trends than excessive privacy or material welfare. In Moscow's view, the freedom allowed by Ukrainization extended to thoughts about political separatism, a phenomenon that outgrew aspirations for cultural independence.

Through party purges and repression, the state stigmatized *Budynok Slovo* as a "nest of nationalists," and its autonomous social and intellectual space was denied to be absorbed into a larger space of politics and ideology.

²⁹ Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 14-15.

Creative art was gradually transformed into the art of living and surviving under the terror, skills that not every artist could afford or wanted to learn. The state and the secret police fragmented the community of the *slov'iany*, and not surprisingly, the value of their social space and its original meaning were altered for people. This change was conditioned by the physical destruction of the community, and by people's moral and intellectual transformations that were accompanied by newly developed behavioral trends. The residents became suspicious of each other, and social contacts among them were minimized.

The evidence suggests that being a Ukrainian in Ukraine in the 1930s meant a probable persecution, but being a critically thinking individual, actively involved in Ukrainian social, cultural and political affairs, meant definite arrest, and almost always definite death. By the late thirties, in the building no stone was left unturned. Most residents were repressed, and there was no apartment in *Budynok Slovo* that had not been searched by the GPU/NKVD multiple times. Arrests in the building became so habitual and ritualistic that secret agents no longer treated the residents with visible disgust or hatred. The searches were often conducted in silence, and the operatives were emphatically indifferent to the inhabitants of the apartment.³⁰ They were usually focused on the search procedure, and treated the arrested as an "empty space" (*pustoe mesto*), using Eugenia Ginzburg's observation.³¹ The future

³⁰ To be sure, some agents still enjoyed humiliating and intimidating the arrested, as in Ivan Maistrenko's case. Maistrenko who was arrested just before the Great Terror in December 1936 remembered that NKVD agents, reading his correspondence with his wife who spoke and wrote in Russian, treated her with great respect, and chastised him for his use of Ukrainian, calling him a "nationalist." See Ivan Maistrenko, *Istoriia moho pokolinnia: Spohady uchasnyka revoliutsiinykh podii v Ukraini* (Edmonton, Canada: Kanads'kyi Instytut Ukrain's'kykh Studii, Al'berts'kyi Universytet, 1985), 203.

³¹ Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, trans. Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (New York: A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book Harcourt, Inc., 1995), 52.

scenario of processing the individual was carried out *de fidei*, and the final result of the night event was obvious for everyone in *Budynok Slovo*: the arrested would never return home; their wives would likely be arrested; their possessions would be confiscated; and the apartment would be appropriated by the secret police.³² Stalin's lists predetermined the fates of many *slov'iany*, and the Special Collegium, troikas and dvoikas passed their verdicts unanimously on the basis of Stalin's decision.

Early November 1937 marked the end of those *slov'iany* who had survived to that point. Today we know who signed the final verdicts of execution: the head of the NKVD troika in Leningrad oblast' Leonid Zakovskii (Genrikh Shtubis), the second secretary of the VKP(b) committee in Leningrad oblast' Piotr Smorodin and the prosecutor in Leningrad oblast' Boris Pozern. After November 1937, Zakovskii was even promoted to positions in the central apparatus of the NKVD, and worked as an assistant to the People's Commissar. Not surprisingly, he was arrested and shot as a counterrevolutionary on 29 August 1938, as were many of his colleagues, including the head of the Solovky prison Ivan Apeter and his assistant Piotr Raevskii.³³ Smorodin and Pozern met the same violent death, and were executed on the same day—25 February 1939.

The bodies of many of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, disfigured and mutilated, cannot be found or identified. The *slov'iany*, the “executed

³² The relatives of the arrested were evicted from the building, and compensations for the shareholders were never paid. Through secret resolutions, the GPU/NKVD placed their associates in the apartments, often forcing the writers to share them with the families of a GPU/NKVD operative. For instance, after the arrest of Volodymyr Koriak, the writer Stepan Kryzhaniv's'kyi moved into his four-room apartment no. 28 but he had to share it with a secret agent and his family. See the correspondence between Kryzhaniv's'kyi and Dukyna in Nataalka Dukyna, *Na dobryi spomyn: Povist' pro bat'ka* (Kharkiv: Vydannia zhurnalu “Berezil’,” 2002), 550.

³³ Dmytro Vedenev and Serhii Shevchenko, *Ukrains'ki Solovky* (Kyiv: “EksOb,” 2001), 88, 90. Ivan Apeter was shot in August 1938; Petr Raievs'kyi was shot in November 1939.

renaissance,” have only symbolic graves, such as those of Kurbas in Kharkiv and of Epik in Kyiv. They were buried together with many thousands of people in the frozen soil of Karelia in pits dug by their fellow prisoners. Sandarmokh also became a burial place of the *slov’iany*’s ideas, novels, poems and theatre performances that have never been and will never be consummated. They are irrevocably lost, without having had the opportunity to be born. The *slov’iany* goals remain unattainable, and this loss is irredeemable. During the period of one decade, the terror tore a hole in the fabric of Ukrainian culture that has never been and may never be mended.

Miron Petrovskii wrote:

Not only the avant-garde artists were exterminated, their art was exterminated through banning from circulation, and thus their fermentative influence on the cultural development was interrupted...Subsequent generations were unable to inherit the findings of their predecessors as a legitimate tradition—they had to start from the beginning... the continuity [of cultural tradition] requires a non-interrupted flow...our cultural development began from the beginning, similar to how a reptile grows a new tail [after its damage].³⁴

The humanistic tradition may incorporate the failure of the *slov’iany* to reach their literary and political goals. Historically, the Ukrainians struggled for their self-identity for centuries, and the community of *Budynok Slovo* neither initiated this struggle, nor completed it. Once again it was suppressed by authorities. This struggle seems to be a permanent cyclical phenomenon, which might never be completed. After decades of Soviet repression, Ukrainian culture appeared to be rejuvenating during the years of independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, although it is again in jeopardy. Pitirim A. Sorokin argued:

Only petty and relatively valueless cultural systems and congeries fail to revive (and there are exceptions even to this rule). Truly great cultural systems and supersystems are virtually indestructible. They may be enfeebled, suppressed, or temporarily

³⁴ Miron Petrovskii, *Gorodu i miru: Kievskie ocherki*, 2nd ed. (Kiev: Izdatel'stvo Dukh i litera, 2008), 187.

extinguished; but ultimately most of them reassert themselves and renew their development until they have achieved their creative mission.³⁵

Perhaps such striving is the essence of humanism. As Mikhail Epstein noted, common sense resists the notion of “the last,” and “the completed.”³⁶ What the humanistic tradition cannot accommodate is a cultural formula that employs violence to suppress goals and cultural aspirations, a formula that Lemkin called genocide—a destruction of nations and cultures.³⁷

In the systematic elimination of the intelligentsia, one can trace anti-Ukrainian, anti-human, anti-aesthetic and anti-intellectual stances of the Soviet Communist regime and its faithful servants. The beautiful and subtle was doomed, and the crude and unsophisticated was encouraged and promoted. The former survived as an aberration in dormant, carefully concealed or distorted forms, while the latter victoriously paraded across the cultural landscape and ultimately dominated the popular culture. In her study about post-war repression in Yugoslavia, Jerca Vodusek Staric observed that the state exercised “the terror of subjugating the population to a forcibly installed level of ‘vulgarity’ imposed in everyday life...in behavior, family relations, literature, architecture and the educational system...which aspired not only to control the mind, but also to transform human nature.”³⁸ Party leaders disguised their anti-aesthetics and vulgarity through dubious ideology and pseudo-revolutionary romanticism.

³⁵ See Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), 713.

³⁶ Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, ed. David Gross and William M. Johnston, trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 334.

³⁷ Rafael Lemkin, “Soviet Genocide in Ukraine,” in “Lemkin on Genocide of Nations,” with the foreword by Roman Serbyn, *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 7 (2009): 126-8.

³⁸ Jerca Vodusek Staric, “Stalinist and Anti-Stalinist Repression in Yugoslavia, 1944-1953,” in McDermott and Stibbe, 172. On the legacy of Soviet “vulgarity as a state style” in contemporary Ukraine, see Semen Reznik, “‘Novaia vul’garnost’ kak gosudarstvennyi stil’,” *Ezhenedel’nik* 2000, no. 8 (595) (2012).

In *Budynok Slovo* there were 66 apartments. Three of them were not residential and belonged to the cooperative's administration, *kerbud* (the chief of the building) and the kindergarten. The arrests in 63 apartments of the building lasted relentlessly until the beginning of the Second World War. A decade of terror wiped out 59 people who lived or used to live in the House of Writers.³⁹ Mykola Khvyl'ovyi and Ivan Mykytenko supposedly committed suicide in 1933 and 1937 respectively. The Jewish writers and former residents of the building Itsyk Fefer and Leib Kvitko were shot in 1952 together with other members of the Jewish Anti-fascist Committee. Only 7 former residents of *Budynok Slovo* miraculously survived the gulag, Halyna Orlivna, Ivan Bahrianyi, Hryhorii Kostiuk, Volodymyr Gzhyts'kyi, Ostap Vyshnia, Lidiia Vovchyk-Blakytina and Ivan Vyrhan. Vasyl' Mysyk whose life was intertwined with the building and *slov'iany* also returned to Kharkiv after the war.

The survivors developed a fear of the place that was associated with their torturous past, most never returned to Kharkiv and *Budynok Slovo*.⁴⁰ Some emigrated abroad; some relocated to Lviv and Kyiv. The *slov'iany* inhabited places indifferent to their past, places that had a healing effect on their souls and did not evoke bad memories. They believed that only a total spatial alienation could rejuvenate art in them, bringing them redemption in

³⁹ The list of those who were executed or perished in the gulag included: Klym Polishchuk, Pavlo Khrystiuk, Mykhailo Ialovy, Andrii Richyts'kyi, Serhii Pylypenko, Vasyl' Desniak-Vasylenko, Mykhailo Panchenko, Oles' Dosvitnii, Oles' Kurbas, Oleksa Slisarenko, Krushel'nytski Antin, Ivan, Taras, Bohdan, Ostap and Volodymyra, Valerian Polishchuk, Mykola Kulish, Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi, Vasyl' Vrazhlyvyi, Hryhorii Epik, Volodymyr Shtanhei, Andrii Paniv, Ivan Lakyza, Oleksa Vlyz'ko, Hryhorii Piddubnyi-Tolmach'ov, Petro Lisovyi, Vasyl' Sedliar, Ivan Padalka, Mariia Padalka, Oles' Iasnyi, Vira Savyts'ka, Iurii Vukhnal', Ivan Kaliannyk, Oleksandra Kaliannyk, Samiilo Shchupak, Mykhail' Semenko, Ivan Kulyk, Ievhen Kas'ianenko, Liutsiana Piontek, Maik Iohansen, Mykhailo Bykovets', Volodymyr Koriak, Sofiia Koriak, Antin Dykyi, Anastasiia Dyka, Onoprii Turhan, Ivan Mykytenko, Ivan Kyrylenko, Hordii Kotsiuba and Volodymyr Dukyn.

⁴⁰ Vasyl' Mysyk was an exception.

their future. They hoped that the frontiers between the past and the future would be eventually erased, and they would be able to reflect on both through their art.⁴¹ A spatial notion such as the geographical distance between the place of their suffering and the place of future redemption was supposed to cure their psychological traumas. For the most part, this turned out to be an illusion. Their present returned them to their past, in turn reducing the imaginary spatial and associative distance between Kharkiv and the place of their new residence. Unable to forget or to critically perceive the past, they extended their suffering into the future—permanently, and without a chance for psychological recovery. As the Russian writer and dissident Andrei Amalrik has argued, the Soviet system disfigured people's psyche; individuals who were born in the Soviet Union could not be considered quite normal in a psychological sense.⁴²

Three *slov'iany* passed away because of tuberculosis and a psychiatric collapse, and hence avoided certain repression: Leonid Chernov-Maloshyichenko (d.1933), Ivan Dniprovs'kyi (d.1934) and Samiilo Raduhin-Rashpa (d. 1942). Systematic arrests in *Budynok Slovo* distressed the psychological equilibrium of Samiilo Raduhin and Volodymyr Sosiura who found themselves in the Saburova Dacha, a psychiatric clinic near Kharkiv.⁴³ Perhaps, this factor saved them from inevitable arrest. Those who in the 1930s

⁴¹ Gzhyts'kyi's life after the camps and his creative work is instructive in this respect.

⁴² Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970). On popular acceptance of Stalinism and on popular "historical" cynicism, see Adam B. Ulam, "The Price of Sanity" in *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World*, ed. G.R.Urbani (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 106.

⁴³ Dukyna, 540-41; Kostiuk, 1:302-03.

moved from Kharkiv to Kyiv and Moscow survived the terror, and were never repressed.⁴⁴

Larysa Krushel'nyts'ka aptly noted that Stalin's repressions turned the graphical representation of the genealogical tree of most Ukrainian intellectuals' families upside down. Many families were completely obliterated, others lost a few members, and many other families, even large families, were reduced to one or two members who survived the terror.⁴⁵

"Mapping" this place and time where the *slov'iany* lived is important because *Budynok Slovo* embodies not only individual histories of Ukrainian intellectuals and the cultural history of interwar Kharkiv but its walls preserve the memory of unmatched state violence that was disastrous for Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian citizenry. Alla Herburt-Iohansen, Maik Iohansen's wife who survived the terror, once stated that stories told by history differ from what occurred in reality. The realities of *Budynok Slovo* were much more frightening and hopeless than has been imagined or told.⁴⁶ Hopefully, this study approaches an approximation of the realities, and it broadens the space of memory and knowledge about state violence and cultural disruption in Ukraine in the 1930s.

⁴⁴ The list of those who used to live in *Budynok Slovo* and who were never repressed included: Antin Shmyhel's'kyi, Volodymyr Iurezans'kyi, Arkadii Liubchenko, Mykola Bazhan, Iurii Ianovs'kyi, Pavlo Tychyna, Iurii Smolych, Oleksandr Kopylenko, Ivan Senchenko, Teren' Masenko, Leonid Iukhvyd, Stepan Kryzhaniv's'kyi, Andrii Holovko, Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Volodymyr Sosiura, David Fel'dman, Natalia Uzhvii, Ivan Plakhtin, Mykhailo Dolenho, Leonid Pervomais'kyi, Natalia Zabyla, Petro Panch, Oleksandr Leites, Vadym Meller, Anatolii Petryts'kyi, Pavlo Usenko, Mykola Nahnibeda, Oleksii Poltorats'kyi, Ivan Shutov, Oleksii Varava, Pylyp Kozyts'kyi, Oles' Donchenko, Dmytro Bedzyk and Ieremiia Aizenshtok.

⁴⁵ All of Krushel'nyts'ka's family was wiped out by Stalin's terror. She almost perished as a parentless homeless child in Kursk, but survived with the help of Kateryna Peshkova and the Red Cross. See L.I. Krushel'nyts'ka, *Rubaly lis... (Spohady halychanky)* (L'viv: Natsional'na akademiia nauk Ukrainy, L'vivs'ka naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanyka, 2001), 11.

⁴⁶ "Iz spohadiv Ally Herburt-Iohansen," in Maik Iohansen, *Vybrani tvory*, ed. Rostyslav Mel'nykiv, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2009), 728.

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