

# Popular Movement Radicalizing Ukraine

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In Ukraine, the most populous non-Russian republic, Gorbachev's reforms have not brought a revolution from above - but they have made it possible for the opposition to emerge from underground. The struggle between an alliance of prominent writers, dissidents and political activists and the Brezhnevite state has crystallized over the attempt to form a popular movement. Whatever its outcome, this battle promises to have a profound effect on the Soviet Union. If a Ukrainian popular movement is allowed to form it will be the missing link in the chain of opposition movements ringing Moscow from the Baltic to Central Asia. But to continue repressing the rising tide of opposition ever more severe measures will be required, which might goad the public into fighting back and would certainly discredit perestroika.

The formation of a Ukrainian popular movement was first publicly broached in L'viv, the capital of Western Ukraine with a long-standing reputation for political volatility, as the culmination of a summer of demonstrations. Dogs were turned on the crowds, demonstrators were beaten and arrested, and one of the most prominent activists, Ivan Makar was imprisoned for three months. These measures succeeded in preventing the formation of a popular movement.

The action has now shifted to Kiev, the traditionally more passive capital. On November 13, at an ecological demonstration attended by 10,000 people, the largest mass meeting in Soviet Kiev, the formation of a popular movement was advocated as the only means of solving Ukraine's ecological crisis. Ten days later 33 people, including prominent writers and academics as well as representatives of "unofficial" social groups and factory worker collectives, formed an initiative group, based on the Writers' Union, to spear-head the creation of a Ukrainian popular movement. Collectives at several institutes, including the Institute of Literature, declared their support for the initiative group the following week. An indication that this group could not be restricted to the "unofficial" margins came with the announcement of its creation in the December 8 issue of the widely read organ of the Writers' Union, *Literaturna Ukraina*.

Behind the scenes the initiative group continues to operate. In mid-December a program for the popular movement was drafted, according to one member who also expected this program to be published in *Literaturna Ukraina* by the end of January. Compared to their outspoken Moscow counterparts, or to the openly insubordinate Estonians, the members of the initiative group - among whom are such literary luminaries as Ivan Drach and Dmytro Pavlychko - are remarkably circumspect in their behavior.

They have taken great pains to insure that their program will appear as the work of a group and not of individuals by meeting to write it in 'safe' houses, asking that the authors names not be reported, and planning to publish it without personal signatures. Echoing a common fear, one writer explains, "we do not want to make our names public because if Gorbachev goes we shall all be punished."

Working in concert with the officially recognized writers are a whole slate of independent social groups whose membership ranges from hardened dissidents to perestroika-inspired political neophytes. The most active groups in Kiev are *Hromada* (Community), a university-student group, *Spadshchyna* (Heritage), a cultural society, various ecological groups, *Memorial*, the Ukrainian branch of an all-Soviet organization based at the Cinematographers' Union whose objective is to commemorate victims of Stalinism, the *Ukrains'ka Hel'sins'ka Spilka* (Ukrainian Helsinki Union), the current incarnation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group which has monitored Soviet observance of the Helsinki human rights accord since 1976, and the *Ukrains'ka Demokratychna Spilka* (Ukrainian Democratic Union-UDS), the Ukrainian branch of the self-styled political opposition party in the Soviet Union.

These groups have espoused diverse causes. *Hromada* has worked for the preservation of historical monuments; *Spadshchyna* has sponsored numerous lectures on historical and literary topics; the various greens held a protest last summer concerning the felling of the Holosiev forest in Kiev. But they are no longer satisfied with these piecemeal actions. Some were radicalized by the incaltrance of the government. "Through our conflicts with the administration (during a campaign for the preservation of historical monuments) we realized that without raising political issues we could not solve other problems," says V. T., a member of *Hromada*. For others, working on specific local causes has been a strategic first step in a plan to mount a larger political challenge. An example of this tactic is the November ecological demonstration. One of the motives the members of *Spadshchyna* and *Hromada*, groups not centrally concerned with ecology, had for organizing the demonstration was to gain access to a public tribunal from which to begin the formation of a popular front.

The decision to precede a general political critique with work on smaller issues is not just a product of restraints imposed by the regime. In addition to the practical consideration that a meeting on ecology will be tolerated but would-be participants in an opposition party congress will be arrested (as the detention of UDS

members on January 22 demonstrates) there is a wide-spread belief that the opposition must win the peoples' support with a track-record of positive action. "The political resources to form a popular front have long existed in Ukraine," explains Oles' Shevchenko of the *Ukrains'ka Hel'sins'ka Spilka*, "but first we have wanted to earn the support of the people." A *Spadshchyna* member agrees that "for a political challenge to be successful, we must build up the consciousness of the people."

After doing months or years of leg-work the independent social groups are perfectly willing to let the officially recognized writers take the lead in the formation of a popular movement. Rather than resent the writers for the relatively privileged positions they occupy, the unofficial groups are, in the words of a *Hromada* member, "very grateful to the writers." "We need the involvement of the writers," says Shevchenko. Their national prominence gives them a measure of political immunity: no movement led by Ivan Drach can be repressed as openly as were the summer demonstrations in L'viv. In their turn, the independent social groups have facilitated the work of the writers. A member of the initiative group says that government resistance to the group's formation subsided when it was pointed out that if the writers were not allowed to form a popular movement, independent activists would eventually do so on their own.

Shcherbyts'ky's government (Shcherbyts'ky is the conservative General Secretary of Ukraine) has opposed the formation of a popular movement with all the means at its disposal: arrest and detention of the independent activists, remonstrations behind closed doors for the official vanguard. The most recent episodes in the melodrama of police repression that Ukraine has become known for, were the detention of 60 activists on January 21 to prevent the UDS from holding a scheduled congress and the 15 day jail sentence given to dissident Stefan Khmara for his participation on January 20 in unsanctioned attempts in Chervonohrad to freely select candidates for the March elections. Public figures are subject to more subtle harassment. The morning after the initiative group for the formation of a popular movement was created, Ivan Drach, its head, was called in to Communist Party headquarters, presumably to justify his action. Other members of the initiative group have been questioned about their involvement at their workplaces.

The Kremlin's reaction to the formation of a popular movement in Ukraine is another matter. Ukrainians, like Oles' Shevchenko, are quick to point out that stagnation in their republic spells stability for Moscow. Recent events, however, suggest that Gorbachev may be casing Shcherbyts'ky out. Shcherbyts'ky is the only politburo member not to be guaranteed a seat in the March elections. Moreover, in December his second-in-command, and reputedly chief ideologue, was replaced by a Gorbachev loyalist. Moscow News has ventured where no Ukrainian publication has dared to go, printing on January 15 an article in which Ivan Dziuba, a member of the initiative group, openly advocates "the establishment of a popular front" which "could work on the solution of general political and socio-

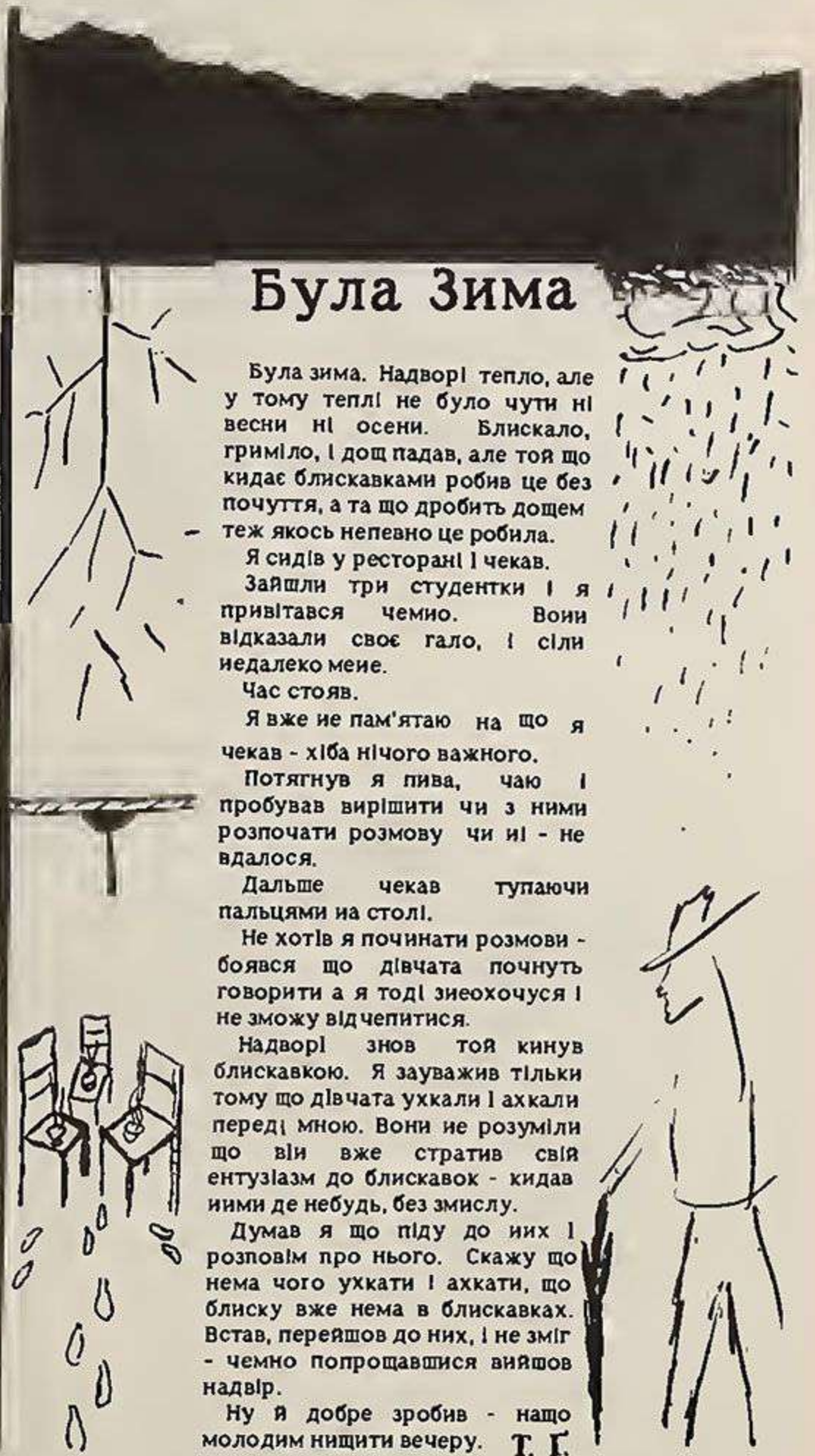
economic problems and on the realization and practical 'advancement' of problems of national-cultural development".

Dziuba does not specify what sort of solutions a Ukrainian popular movement will propose to these "general political and socio-economic problems"; no one has. The Ukrainian opposition's tolerance for a diversity of opinion may prove a serious hurdle when it comes to developing a unified program. Even on so central an issue as the role of the Communist Party there is no consensus. Vasyl Iaremko, a professor of literature at Kiev University and member of the initiative group, makes a point of the fact that "we (members of the initiative group) are communists". One member of *Hromada* agrees. He became a communist in 1985 after Gorbachev came to power and says he does not regret it. But another *Hromada* member thinks this is naive: "we know what to expect from the Communist Party and it is not good." The decision to call the proposed organization a popular movement rather than a popular front reflects an understanding of this multiplicity of opinions. Dmytro Pavlychko first proposed the term 'movement' at the press conference which preceded the ecological meeting to guarantee "an internal democracy. Each member-group can have its own platform."

One position that the member-groups, including the initiative group of writers, will certainly share is a commitment to Ukrainian language and culture.

Though Ukrainian is still infrequently spoken on the streets of Kiev, there is not a single active opposition group in the capital which carries on its activities in Russian. The advocacy of Ukrainian is not an anomaly of the political sub-culture. Members of the most popular rock group in Kiev have chosen - despite their poor command of the language - to sing only in Ukrainian. Savvy enough not to be diverted by "a smoke-screen campaign for Ukrainianization" which Oles' Shevchenko predicts will be launched by the government this spring, opposition groups reject central rule from Moscow with their conscious and conscientious use of Ukrainian.

Ecology, the preservation of historical monuments, national language, democratization - these, the issues used to lay the groundwork for the formation of a popular movement, are said by members of the initiative group to be the key points of the program they have drafted. More significant than this piecemeal list of causes which even Shcherbyts'ky spokespeople now purport to endorse is the political challenge to the hegemony of the Communist Party and to Soviet centralization which an independent popular movement would constitute. Ukrainians wryly joke that closet Brezhnevites seeking a respite from the upheavals in Moscow take vacations to Ukraine. They will be looking for a new holiday spot once a Ukrainian popular movement has been formed.



## Була Зима

Була зима. Надворі тепло, але у тому теплі не було чути ні весни ні осени. Блискало, гриміло, і дощ падав, але той що кидає блискавками робив це без почуття, а та що дробить дощем - теж якось непевно це робила.

Я сидів у ресторані і чекав. Зайшли три студентки і я привітався чемно. Вони відказали своє гало, і сіли недалеко мене.

Час стояв.

Я вже не пам'ятаю на що я чекав - хіба нічого важного. Потягнув я пива, чаю і пробував вирішити чи з ними розпочати розмову чи ні - не вдалося.

Дальше чекав тупаючи пальцями на столі.

Не хотів я починати розмови - боявся що дівчата почнуть говорити а я тоді знеохочуюся і не зможу відчепитися.

Надворі знов той кинув блискавкою. Я зауважив тільки тому що дівчата ухкали і ахкали переді мною. Вони не розуміли що ви вже стратив свій ентузіазм до блискавок - кидав ними де небудь, без змислу.

Думав я що піду до них і розповім про нього. Скажу що нема чого ухкати і ахкати, що блиску вже нема в блискавках. Встав, перейшов до них, і не зміг - чемно попрощавшись вийшов надвір.

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