The Kharkiv Writers' House: Ukrainian Culture and Identity in the 1920s and 1930s

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Philip A. Kopatz

Graduate Program in Slavic and East European Studies

The Ohio State University

2022

Thesis Committee

Dr. Nicholas Breyfogle, Advisor

Dr. Angela Brintlinger, Committee Member

Abstract

In 1923, the leadership of the Soviet Union set forth resolutions announcing their commitment to supporting the development of national communities throughout the Union. These resolutions decentralized decision-making and opened a relatively unfettered intellectual space for national development. The policy lasted through the end of the 1920s when the Central Party became disillusioned because of national communities' demands for more autonomy or independence. The Central Party believed national development should be directed toward building a socialist country, but some national communities were wary of Moscow's influence. As a result, the Party began to target the national communities in the late 1920s and turned to terror in the 1930s to centralize power. I argue that the trajectory of the Ukrainian writers in Kharkiv from 1925 to 1934 offers a very personal but also analytically fertile example of changing Soviet policies. Their story sheds light on a generation of hopeful revolutionary writers that experienced two very different realities as the Stalin-led Soviet Union tried to consolidate its power: wide-ranging creative opportunities followed by unfathomable terror. The lives of Mykola Khvylovy, Ostap Vyshnya, and Mike Johansen, and the creation of Slovo House, where they came to live, demonstrate how writers in Kharkiv freely worked to develop a system where Ukraine's fledgling culture and economy could progress within the Soviet system. The Slovo House, which the writers completed in

1930, transformed from their dream home to their prison. The trajectory of the writers, and their eventual arrests and murders, highlights the Soviet state's transformation from a relatively decentralized state with an emphasis on nationalization to a centralized state machine.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all my friends in Ukraine, who are either currently living in a war zone or fled the country, because of Russia's invasion. I became interested in Ukraine because of the fascinating history, but I fell in love with the country because of their extraordinary friendship. To Ann, Nikita, Roma, Anya, Rashid, and Volodya, I love you all.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my undergraduate thesis advisor, Dr. Rachel Constance, who encouraged me to my first historiographical essay on the Bolshevik Revolution and guided my project on the Great Steel Strike of 1919. I would also like to thank my undergraduate major scholarships advisor, Abigail Poeske. She facilitated my internship to Kyiv in 2018 and was instrumental in helping me earn a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. Both took my interest in Eastern Europe seriously and helped me begin my journey into studying Ukraine. I would not be in this graduate program without their mentorship.

I owe a big thank you to my graduate thesis advisor, Dr. Nicholas Breyfogle. He supported this project from the outset and has offered numerous insights throughout the research and writing process. He taught my very first history graduate seminar in the fall of 2020, which greatly influenced how I thought about the writers in Kharkiv in relation to the larger Soviet policies. Thank you also to my committee member, Dr. Angela Brintlinger, who has offered great insight from her perspective as a literary scholar. She has also supported my professional development and has asked me to serve on numerous panels related to Ukraine.

Ann Merrill, whom I stayed with during the summer of 2018 in Kyiv, introduced me to Ukrainian culture and helped me learn to navigate the country. She is a fantastic friend and is my go-to person for all questions related to Ukraine.

My language tutor since 2018, Volodya Kondratyuk, taught me Russian and Ukrainian from scratch and imparted his wisdom about Ukrainian culture and Soviet history. I truly value our friendship.

My friends and family have been a constant source of support throughout my two years in this master's degree, but I want to highlight a few in particular. My future father-in-law, John Dierna, has read and edited numerous term papers over the past four semesters and has taken a keen interest in my studies. My close friend and fellow Fulbright Alumnus, Ryan Wolfe, has spent numerous hours listening to me talk about my research and classes. Rachel Hutchison, a fellow graduate student, has become a great friend as we made our way through the challenging realities of graduate school.

I owe the biggest thank you to my best friend and fiancé, Lillian DeGarmo. Over the last six years, she has been my biggest fan and ecstatically encouraged me to apply for the internship in Kyiv, Fulbright, and graduate school. In addition, she has been unbelievably accommodating to my hectic and stressful schedule while still working full-time as a nurse.

Lastly, I want to recognize Marta Kolomayets, the former director of Fulbright Ukraine. As an intern at America House Kyiv in 2018, I expressed a general interest in Soviet history. She recommended that I investigate the executed renaissance of Soviet

Ukrainian writers in Kharkiv. Four years later, I turned her recommendation into this thesis. Thank you, Marta.

Vita

Personal Information

Education

Bachelor of Arts - History and Psychology, May 2019

- Walsh University, N. Canton, Ohio - GPA: 3.98
    - Summa Cum Laude

Russian Critical Language Scholarship (Remote), **June to August 2021**
Lobachevsky State University in Nizhny Novgorod

- ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview rating: Advanced Mid

Relevant Professional Experience

Fulbright Grantee in Ukraine **09/2019 to 04/2020**

- English Teaching Assistant at V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

America House Kyiv **6/2018 to 08/2018**

- Interned at an American cultural center in Kyiv, Ukraine, for six weeks

Publications

Ukraine Unlocked

- Co-founder and editor of a weekly newsletter about Ukraine's relevant political, economic, and cultural news stories

Fields of Study

Major Field: Slavic and East European Studies

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

> Soviet literature originated on the barricades of October, in the battlefields of the Civil War, and a great wave - the first generation of young writers in October - splashed immediately after the end of the Civil War and the beginning of peacebuilding… The twenties and thirties in our Ukrainian Soviet literature must be written down by all means. After all, over time, precious details escape from memory - just as a dream escapes the imagination, a dream is just seen when you wake up in the morning. After all, "us", the participants of those events, are still not so many - not even a dozen! If only we could write down a part of what we remember! All together - it would be a real chronicle of literature of that time. If there was at least one of us who could remember and record the events chronologically - after all, almost all literary documents of that time perished, lost forever during the Nazi invasion![1]

The innovative and activist community of writers in Kharkiv, like others in the first generation of the Soviet Ukrainian literary world, emerged out of the ashes of war and revolution and were eager to claim a spot for Ukraine both on the world stage and within the Soviet Union. Dedicated to defining what it meant to be simultaneously Ukrainian and Soviet, their cultural explosion and quest for identity emerged from both Soviet indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) policies and the artists' own experiences during World War I and the Russian Civil War.

Most of the writers were born and raised in multi-ethnic border towns in the tsarist and Austro-Hungarian empires in the 1890s. The rural towns distanced them from

[1]. Yuri Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ [A Story of Anxiety]*, 1968. Read at: http://proslovo.com/smolych-nespokiy1. Accessed November 2021.

the imperial cultural centers in St. Petersburg and Vienna. As they came of age during WWI and subsequently joined the Bolshevik Red Army, it was revolutionary Marxist fervor that forged these Soviet Ukrainian writers. The disruptive forces of two major wars meant that most writers were self-educated. However, the Red Army organized theatre troupes and other cultural events that cultivated their worldview. Their formative experiences in adulthood occurred in the Red Army, and most of the writers had distinguished careers as soldiers and officers that gave them the status and legitimacy to write professionally.[2]

Violence marked the writers' professional birth and literal death. Their remarkable literary lives were born in the brutality of the Civil War, and, twenty years later, they died in the unforgiving cruelty of the Soviet state. The Bolshevik authorities offered these young men a path to professional success through military service, but ultimately came to view them as a liability. They arrested the writers in 1934, sent them to labor camps, and then brutally executed them in 1937. In between, the writers' flourished in the relatively unfettered creative spaces of Kharkiv, the first capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

As the Soviets sought to consolidate their power over the vast expanses of the former tsarist Empire in the early 1920s, they prioritized the notion of national self-determination. Minority nationalities vying for autonomy had to adhere to the Soviets' parameters on self-determination, but the Communist Party was willing to give wide-

[2]. Mayhill Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.

ranging freedom and material support to numerous national communities throughout the Soviet Union. Soviet officials introduced an era of national development when they implemented indigenization policies in 1923. As Terry Martin notes, Soviet officials would support "national territories, national languages, national elites, and national cultures."[3] These policies supported the development of minority nationalities by giving them funds and tools to advance their languages, traditions, education, and artistic projects. Leaders believed that these various national cultures would emerge peacefully and that an all-Soviet socialist culture would eventually replace the minority national cultures. The support of these national cultures was a strategy in attaining their goal of industrialization, collectivization, and creating a socialist society.[4] Soviet Ukraine occupied a crucial place within this framework, as it was the largest minority republic and had a long, at times fraught relationship with the Russian core.[5]

However, the autonomy afforded to the minority nationalities was relatively short-lived. By the end of the 1920s, Soviet officials, under the leadership of Party

---

[3]. Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001, p. 10. See also: Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004; Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005; Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s.* Cambridge University Press, 2003; Matthew D. Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014; Serhii Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): pp. 414-452, https://doi.org/10.2307/2501300; Serhy Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2004.

[4]. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* (2001): p. 1-26.

[5]. Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation.* Oxford University Press, 2007; Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus': Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017.

General Secretary Joseph Stalin, began to restrict their freedoms. Soviet authorities were worried that national communities were using the decentralization to move towards independence, which would lead to a loss of territory and resources. They feared revolutionary, separatist aspirations of nationalist intellectuals in minority republics and the possible nefarious influence of foreign agents. Therefore, Soviet leadership began to attack national movements throughout the Union and repeal the opportunities and possibilities of the nativization policies. Beginning in the early 1930s, the Party slowly adopted surveillance methods and unleashed a wave of terror against nationality intellectuals across the Soviet Union.

Intellectuals in Kharkiv were a particular source of anxiety for Stalin because, over the 1920s, they had enunciated a desire to orient themselves towards European culture (in addition to Soviet culture). By 1932, the Party deemed Ukrainianization a failure because of allegations that a growing number of anti-Bolshevik elements within the Party had risen to power because of indigenization policies. These alleged traitors were cast as the driving forces behind the grain requisitioning crisis in Soviet Ukraine in 1932 and other issues.[6] Soviet officials arrested numerous intellectuals in the early 1930s, with a particularly large surge of arrests occurring in 1933 and 1934. During the height of the Great Purges in 1937, officials executed many of these intellectuals, most of whom had long been active and hopeful participants in the Communist nation-building project. In the 1930s, the state turned towards a tight centralized control over every aspect of governance, in part, to protect itself against perceived foreign threats and independence

[6]. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* (2001): p. 302-308.

movements in national communities. At the same time, the Soviet leaders realized that collectivization needed more direct central control.

The simultaneously optimistic and tragic story of the writers in Soviet Kharkiv is a microcosm of these larger Soviet policies. Using the relatively unfettered intellectual freedom afforded under indigenization policies, these Ukrainian-speaking writers set out to try and define what it meant to be Ukrainian in a Soviet context and to destroy traditional literary forms so as to build Ukrainian culture anew. The writers in Soviet Kharkiv viewed traditional Ukrainian culture as rural and folkish. Now, these writers believed that they could carve out a place for Ukraine in the modern and urban cultural world.

To highlight their story, I focus on three writers: Mykola Khvylovy, Mike Johansen, and Ostap Vyshnya. Their lives, which are discussed at length in the available sources, offer insight into the varying experiences of writers operating under indigenization policies. Mykola Khvylovy was the leader of his group who spearheaded a range of ideological developments. Mike Johansen (son of a German father and Ukrainian mother) was a fountain of creative energy whose life allows understanding of the professional and personal relationships of the writers. Third, the experiences of Ostap Vyshnya show how writers tried to advance their careers under indigenization policies.

I argue that the trajectory of the writers from 1925 to 1934 offers a very personal, but also analytically fertile example of the changing Soviet policies. It sheds light on a generation of hopeful revolutionary writers that experienced two very different realities as the Stalin-led Soviet Union tried to consolidate its power: wide-ranging creative

opportunities juxtaposed over time with unfathomable terror. The lives of Mykola Khvylovy, Ostap Vyshnya, and Mike Johansen demonstrate how writers in Kharkiv freely worked to develop a system where Ukraine's fledgling culture and economy could progress within the Soviet system. However, the state's initially decentralized control over republics meant that the Central Party viewed deviation from their cultural development plan as inherently dangerous. The Party hoped indigenization policies would help consolidate their control, but they viewed the resulting dissenting national movements as too risky after several years. Therefore, the Party slowly eliminated any vestiges of decentralized autonomy and turned to surveillance and terror to consolidate their power. The trajectory of the writers highlights the Soviet state's transformation from a decentralized state with an emphasis on nationalization to a centralized state machine.

From 1925 to 1928, the Ukrainian writers in Kharkiv collaborated and clashed with each other and with other Soviet cultural and political leaders on what it meant to be Ukrainian. They quickly formed and disbanded numerous literary organizations under the *laissez-faire* atmosphere of indigenization policies. Notably, a committed group of writers formed around the fiery writer, Mykola Khvylovy. He became the *de facto* leader of the most well-known writers in Kharkiv in the 1920s and drove the discussion on Ukrainian identity. Khvylovy's entourage put forth general foundational ideas about the development of Ukrainian national identity, but Soviet censorship in the late 1920s prevented them from elucidating these vague ideas. First, they argued that Ukraine needed space to develop its culture, and worried that Russian hegemony within the Soviet Union would stifle its cultural development. Khvylovy expressed concern that Russian

culture, centered in Moscow, was too prone to what he called petty-bourgeois values. Furthermore, Khvylovy fretted that Russia's cultural influence would lead to a Soviet Ukrainian identity defined solely by a resurgence of folklore dances, songs, and writings tied together by ideas and writings of 19th-century Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko.[7] The Kharkiv Ukrainian writers wanted to break away from the connection to the perceived provincial nature of the 19th-century Ukrainian literary tradition. Khvylovy and his circle feared that Moscow's cultural influence would continue to resign them to play provincial, second fiddle to Russia, as had been the case for the preceding 100 years.

To overcome their perceived provincial past, the Soviet Ukrainian writers articulated the vague goal of orienting themselves towards 19th-century European culture. In a polemical article published in 1925, Khvylovy described some of the basic attraction Europe had for the writers:

> Europe is the experience of many ages. It is not the Europe that Spengler announced was "in decline," not the one that is rotting and which we despise. It is the Europe of a grandiose civilization, the Europe of Goethe, Darwin, Byron, Newton, Marx and so on and so forth.[8]

The writers believed that the supranational force of European culture offered a destination toward which they could orient themselves. However, even their contemporaries were unsure what they meant by Europe. Khvylovy briefly explained their infatuation:

> Even our friends still fail to understand us; when we speak of Europe, we are thinking of more than its technical expertise. Bare technique is not enough for us; there is something more weighty than the latter. We conceive of Europe also as a

---

[7]. See chapter 2 for further discussion of Khvylovy's criticisms of Russian culture.

[8]. Mykola Khvylovy, "Quo Vadis?" in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), p. 75.

> psychological category which thrusts humanity forward, out of prosvita onto the great highway of progress. Marx, having assimilated the technical skills of Europe, would not have been Marx if the sum of his spiritual values had not entered into the category we have named.[9]

They believed that European culture had produced humanity's greatest achievements and thinkers, including Marx. The intangible spiritual aspect of Europe inspired the writers. In general, they valued two broad characteristics of the European cultural tradition: modernity and urbanity. Khvylovy believed that Soviet Ukraine could use Europe as a cultural inspiration while getting rid of what he (and his group) called the petty bourgeois values.[10] However, they never had the opportunity to fulfill their plan of defining, capturing, or implementing the spiritual values of Europe. The writers only got as far as creating a literary organization that would act as the platform for developing Ukrainian culture and producing some works with Futurist themes.[11]

To understand Khvylovy's infatuation with broad European culture and his disdain for the provincial stereotype of Ukrainian identity, it is necessary to outline some broad themes of national movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Numerous Ukrainian national movements emerged out of the Russian and Austrian imperial jurisdictions in the 19th century. "Little Russian" activists originated in the Dnipro area in the 1860s and then spread throughout the southwest of the Russian Empire. In general, Little Russian activists saw themselves as part of a larger group of East Orthodox Slavs that were the linchpin of the Russian Empire. The proponents of the identity saw

[9]. Khvylovy, "Quo Vadis? (1986): 91.
[10]. Ibid., 59-90.
[11]. Ibid.

themselves as one part of a supernational all-Russian identity. Within the Little Russian ideology, there were numerous competing factions. However, a group of activists from the Little Russian group reinterpreted the distinct characteristics of the Orthodox Christian people as evidence of a distinct Ukrainian identity. [12] Ukrainian nationalists living in Austrian-run Galicia in the late 19th century were also attempting to develop a Ukrainian identity by "…working to distinguish their culture from Polish and Russian claims on it."[13]

The Ukrainian activists that emerged out of right bank Ukraine (lands located west of the Dnipro River) focused on their descendancy from Kyivan' Rus and glorified the peasants' struggle against the tsars and landlords. These lower case "n" nationalists wanted to create a democratic, parliamentary-style independent Ukraine in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In general, the nationalists were the most prominent in the Polish lands of the Austrian empire near the city of Lviv in the first two decades of the 20th century and formed and headed the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic from 1917 to 1918. Capital "N" Nationalists, also known as integral nationalists, valued authoritarian nationalism and became more powerful in the late 1920s and 30s.[14] Myroslav Skandrij argued, "In this collectivist ideology, the nation is imagined as a single individual, and a leadership group, qualified to interpret the nation's will, is seen as entitled to impose its

---

[12]. Faith Hillis, "Children of Rus′: Nationalist Imaginations in Right-Bank Ukraine." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 34, no. 1/4 (2015): 315. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44364498. The term "Little Russian" came over time to take on derogatory meanings when employed by Russian nationalists in the tsarist state to label Ukrainians.

[13]. Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus': Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017, p. 95.

[14]. Miroslav Skandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929-1956*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015, p. 3.

dictatorship on the masses."[15] The Nationalists professed fanatical patriotism and harkened back to the golden era of the 18th-century Cossack state, where Cossacks distinguished themselves as fierce warriors on the fringe of the Russian Empire.

The leading Nationalist philosopher in the 1920s and 30s, Dmytro Dontsov, combined this fanatic mysticism of Ukraine's past with an intent to conceptualize a new modern person and forge a strong and independent Ukrainian nation through violent struggle against imperialist powers. Dontsov valued writing with abstract themes that pushed the limits of human consciousness. Furthermore, he criticized traditions and "was fascinated by futurism and expressionism. He was drawn to their artistic potential, violence, and their disrespect for past forms."[16] Dontsov criticized Ukraine's literary traditions as pitiful and sad and saw Russian culture as backward and oppressive. In the early 1920s, he too revered western Europe's cultural legacy.[17] Therefore, it is unsurprising that Mykola Khvylovy characterized Dontsov as "the most intelligent and consistent of the Ukrainian fascists."[18] Writers living in Soviet Ukraine perceived Ukrainian Nationalist movements as fascist. Khvylovy criticized most other Ukrainian national movements, but he and Dontsov both dreamed of transcending Ukraine's provincial literary past and, abstractly, forging a strong urban Ukrainian national identity.

Khvylovy and his colleagues may have been apprehensive of Russia's cultural influence, but the writers in Kharkiv were still "men of Ukrainianization"[19] and were

---

[15]. Skandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, (2015): p. 3.
[16]. Ibid., p. 84.
[17]. Ibid., p. 80-85.
[18]. Khylovy, *Thoughts Against the Current* (1986): p. 171.
[19]. A specific term for indigenization policies within Ukraine.

invested in creating a new state and a new culture. However, their vision for Soviet Ukraine differed from the Party's prescribed version. Khvylovy thought that some ideological deviation was normal, and that "Socialist construction will only be achieved if there is no such autonomous centre[sic]."[20] The Party allowed for decentralized decision making but imagined a national development that focused on traditional markers of culture, such as dances and songs. The writers in Kharkiv, however, interpreted indigenization policies differently and saw no issue with creating a culturally autonomous Ukrainian republic. Stalin and other officials came to view this interpretation as a dangerous development in the late 1920s.

The Soviet leaders in Moscow in the late 1920s and early 30s began operating on the assumption that these writers in Kharkiv would try to foment a revolution and break away from the Soviet Union. The threat of leaving, even if imagined, was one that the Soviets needed to address because of the agricultural and economic output of Ukraine and the fact that both Austria and Germany had invaded through Ukraine during WWI. Therefore, Stalin labeled them as deviationists to diminish their legitimacy and authority. Initially, Stalin encouraged the creation of an oppositional literary group in Kharkiv that would counter Khvylovy's group's ideas. However, this was only the beginning of the oppressions. By 1929-1930, the Party censored and blacklisted Khvylovy and his circle of writers. As a result, the writers became disillusioned but did not yet grasp the extent of the paranoia of Stalin's regime. Moreover, they could not predict the terror that the Party

[20]. Mykola Khvylovy, "Thoughts Against the Current," in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), p. 210.

was willing to inflict on them to transform the Soviet Union from a decentralized federation to a centralized state.

A transformative moment in the writers' lives occurred when 60 prominent Ukrainian writers moved into a cooperative apartment building, the Slovo House [*Budynok Slovo*], [21] in 1930. The apartment was built in the shape of the English letter "C," which in Ukrainian and Russian makes an "S" sound and is the first letter in the name "Word." When they moved into the house, they still had some faint hopes about their future and the future of Ukraine. The personal stories of their lives in the Slovo House illustrate remnants of their autonomy in the 1920s and help shed light on their last years of relative freedom. However, the building slowly turned into their prison. Working with the Soviet authorities in Kharkiv, Stalin's regime enacted strict surveillance methods that involved recording their phone conversations and placing two full-time guards outside of the building entrance to track movement. When the Party decided to arrest the majority of the occupants in the house, they were all conveniently located under one roof.

Note on Sources

Many of the writers' personal thoughts and writings have been lost to history due to several factors. First, the short period of indigenization followed by oppression and terror meant that many of the writers never got the chance to fully develop their thoughts

[21]. The word "Slovo" is the transliterated version of the word for "Word" in Ukrainian and Russian.

about the future of Soviet Ukraine. Second, the Soviet purges in the 1930s and the Nazi invasion of Kharkiv during WWII destroyed many vital documents and writings. Third, only a handful of Soviet Ukrainian writers from the 1920s lived past WWII; the Soviet state executed most of them at the height of the purges in 1937, and other died during the war.

Despite the limitations, there are memoirs available that can help reconstruct the lives of the Soviet Ukrainian writers. The ProSlovo website[22] has published online the most pertinent Ukrainian-language memoirs and documents related to the writers' apartment building, Slovo House,[23] in Kharkiv. First, several writers lived through to the 1960s and published their memoirs about the 1920's and 30's literary scene in Kharkiv. Second, family members of writers have also published memoirs on the literary landscape from their own perspectives. Therefore, I rely on the online memoirs of the surviving writers, and any family members, to reconstruct the lives of the Soviet Ukrainian writers. Lastly, pagination is absent from the citations of the memoirs because the designers of ProSlovo uploaded the documents onto a continuous scroll format.

[22]. http://proslovo.com/#15/50.00892/36.23515/-17.6/45
[23]. See chapter 3 for a discussion of the Slovo House.

Chapter 2. The "Literary Discussion" and Intellectual Freedom

Intellectuals in Kharkiv had a great deal of autonomy between 1925 and 1928, a period that historians have dubbed the "Literary Discussion."[24] While the Soviet Secret police had already launched an investigation into Ukrainian nationalism by 1926, the writers did not feel the full effects of the repressions until several years later. The intellectual figures participating in the Literary Discussion addressed wide-ranging social, political, and economic questions: including industrialization, collectivization, and how a newly forming Ukrainian identity could exist in relation to the historically dominant Russian identity and the Soviet state apparatus in Moscow. Initially, artists and state officials were not antagonistic but intertwined and circulated in the same social milieu. The following chapter will demonstrate how the writers navigated a decentralized atmosphere through 1929. It contributes to an ongoing scholarly discussion about the fate of these early Soviet writers. As Mayhill Fowler argues, Soviet Ukrainian culture was not implemented from above but was instead the creation of young intellectual elites in the 1920s.[25] Olga Bertlsen, by contrast, deviates from the consensus on the Literary Discussion and argues that counter-Ukrainianism slowly started in 1926 after the Politburo issued a secret article named "On Ukrainian Separatism."[26]

---

[24]. Olga Bertelsen, "The House of Writers in Ukraine, the 1930s: Conceived, Lived, Perceived." *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 2302 (2013). https://doi.org/10.5195/cbp.2013.170; Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1992.

[25]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge*, (2017).

[26]. Bertelsen, "The House of Writers in Ukraine," (2013).

In Kharkiv, the new Soviet Ukrainian artists had three questions to address: how to move away from the two preceding literary traditions: symbolism and modernism; how to organize writers (for e.g., should they be grouped by principles) and how to write for a largely illiterate society; and how to deal with the lack of intellectuals in the socialist republic.[27] Miroslav Shkandrij contends that writers had to create a literary movement that could incorporate communism into Ukrainian national ambitions while simultaneously placing Ukrainian culture into Bolshevism. The Soviet Ukrainian writers began to form organizations in 1924, but the organizations reflected their personal preferences in literature and usually one individual ran the literary organization with a strong will. The Ukrainian Soviet writers did not represent a unified monolith, as a writer with a strong will could easily wield power over an organization and steer its course, which is evident in the life of Mykola Khvylovy.[28]

Following the arguments of Terry Martin's *The Affirmative Action Empire,* Francine Hirsch's *Empire of Nations*, and Mayhill Fowler's *The Beau Monde,* I argue that the Soviet Ukrainian writers had wide-ranging intellectual autonomy in the 1920s and were active participants in defining what it meant to be Ukrainian in a Soviet context. Until the end of World War I and the formation of the Soviet Union, it had been several centuries since a truly independent Ukrainian state and observers outside the Soviet Union were carefully watching to see what the fledgling regime could offer. While they did not have the opportunity to fully develop their literary and philosophical ideas, the

[27]. Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation,* (1992)
[28]. Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism,* (2015).

Ukrainian writers' experiences in the 1920s are a case study/fruitful example of the short-lived freedom under indigenization policies within the USSR.

While most of his peers did not survive the purges of the 1930s, Yuri Smolych lived through the arrests and repressions to write several memoirs in the 1960s. His works have preserved and described the generation of Soviet Ukrainian writers.[29] Smolych maintains that the literary developments of the 1960s were really just slightly different versions of the thoughts of his contemporaries.[30] In writing these memoirs, he was attempting to explain the so-what factor of these early writers; namely, that the ideas that emerged in the 1920s were steeped in the works of preceding generations and then influenced subsequent generations. Soviet Ukrainian writers leaned on dominant European philosophical and literary axioms and the 19th-century Ukrainian literary tradition to try and formulate what exactly it meant to be Ukrainian in a Soviet context.[31]

Smolych's memoirs, while not comprehensive, highlight the professional and personal lives of writers in Kharkiv during the relative freedom of the Literary Discussion. The Soviet government envisioned Kharkiv as the new industrial and proletarian capital that would help break Ukrainian identity away from what they believed were the conservative traditions of Kyiv: namely, its ties to the traditional 19th-century Ukrainian literary movement. First, however, intellectuals believed that Kharkiv had to transcend its provincial past and grow into an industrial city. Hundreds of writers

[29]. Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ*, (1968).
[30]. Ibid.
[31]. George S.N Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine: 1917-1934*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990.

made their way to the new capital after being discharged from the Red Army and quickly began forming proletarian literary organizations and writing newspapers, books, almanacs, and journals.

While numerous writers worked and fought for prominence, a few writers differentiated themselves via their leadership, writing output, personal lives, ideas, or a combination of these characteristics. In describing the professional and personal lives of the writers in Kharkiv during this cultural renaissance in the affirmative-action Soviet Empire, I will focus here on three writers' experiences: Mykola Khvylovy, Mike Johansen, and Ostap Vishnya. Each writer made prolific contributions to the renaissance in different ways: Khvylovy for his leadership and inflammatory writing, Johansen for his personality and creativity, and Vishnya for his ability to traverse the overlapping artistic and political social milieu. Vyshnya, Khvylovy, and Johansen had some core commonalities, but each artist's experiences show how they experimented within the decentralized atmosphere of Ukrainization policies to try and create the foundation that could eventually develop an organic Ukrainian identity.

Mykola Khvylovy: The Leader

Mykola Khvylovy was the most influential writer in Kharkiv and single-handedly steered an influential literary organization, the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature VALPITE. The themes of his writings represent, in many respects, the general beliefs of his colleagues in VALPITE. The writers recognized that Russian culture had stifled Ukrainian culture for hundreds of years. Although the central administration was giving

them room to develop, they believed that Russian culture would ultimately continue to suppress their development because of the Party's mis-interpterion of Marxist theory. Specifically, VAPLITE believed that the Party's emphasis on creating literature for the masses and stepping down to the peasants' level would only stifle national development. They believe that they should not let their attachment to the Revolution stymie their ultimate goal of formulating and creating a vibrant and modern Ukrainian culture based on the "spiritual values" of Europe. During the Literary Discussion, the writers in Khvylovy's group did not simply submit to the state; instead, they actively negotiated with party officials and opposing writers to try and create a system where Ukraine could exist within the Soviet Union while providing its fledgling culture and economy protection to develop organically. The formation of VAPLITE, the views the writers espoused about Ukraine's future as an autonomous republic within the USSR, and Khvylovy's heavy-handed prose writing will highlight this relatively unfettered intellectual sphere.

Ivan Senchenko, another writer that miraculously lived through Stalinism and wrote memoirs, was close with Khvylovy and explained his personality and importance. He described Khvylovy as a dedicated and scrupulous communist and contends that Khvylovy said on multiple occasions that nothing could ever deter his commitment to the communist cause. He was not physically imposing but moved with a light and agile energy that reflected his impressive mental capabilities. His experience as a soldier in the Red Army informed many of his characteristics and preferences, such as his endless drive and his preference to wear a grey soldier's coat. Senchenko recalled that Khvylovy

founded at least six literary organizations and that he almost single-handedly drove the discussion of the literary society in Kharkiv in the 1920s.[32]

The VAPLITE writers were mostly young, fresh out of the military, and driven by a desire to advance the communist project and their own nation-building project and to break from the village traditions from which they came. Nevertheless, they used their autonomy under the fledgling Soviet regime to enjoy the fruits of their labor and indulge in the vibrant social scene in Kharkiv, something most of them had never conceived of during their childhood in small villages in the Russian and Austrian countryside. In portraying the lives of Khvylovy and other writers during the early-to-mid 1920s, Senchenko contends that many writers, himself included, lived a "Bohemian" lifestyle. After publishing a literary piece, usually a poem, the writers would believe themselves to be "free artists who live a life higher than any office and the like."[33] The self-styled Bohemians banded together and wrote newspaper columns espousing their views and sharing their literary projects. Khvylovy and Johansen were part of this group for a while, but their hedonistic lifestyle did not affect their literary output. One writer described Khvylovy and other prominent writers as Bohemians because they took advantage of their self-appointed title of freelance artists to indulge in the city's social scene.[34] These paradoxical portrayals of Khvylovy—a dedicated communist and then a hedonistic Bohemian—highlight the unique position of these writers in the 1920s.

---

[32]. Ivan Senchenko, *Notaky Pro Literaturne Zhittya 20—40-kh Rokiv [Notes on the Literary Life of the 1920s-40]*. Journal of Ukrainian Language and Literature at School, 1988. http://proslovo.com/senchenko-notatky.

[33]. Senchenko, *Notaky Pro Literaturne Zhittya 20—40-kh Rokiv*, (1988).

[34]. Ibid.

In 1925, Khvylovy formed the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature (VALPITE). The literary organization dedicated itself to the principles of Marxism and the Communist party but also sought to forge ties with other similar organizations in different countries and oriented itself towards the literary tradition of Western Europe. Khvylovy recruited and managed a group of the most prominent writers in Kharkiv who shared his core ideology.[35] His bullish leadership of VALPITE defined the functioning of literary organizations in Soviet Ukraine. The most successful organizations usually had a strong-willed writer at its head who steered the mission and work of the other writers.

Regardless of the leadership quality, a quick life and death cycle defined the literary organizations. Most realistic writers realized that an organization would form, put out a few magazine issues, then stop publishing after about a year.[36] The Soviet state provided the writers with a steady salary. Therefore, they did not have to worry about costs or readership, which allowed them to regularly start and disband periodicals.

The writers only used their native Ukrainian language and were determined to fulfill Ukraine's national aspirations and raise their culture to the level of Europe. In this sense, the Soviet leaders' goal to develop minority nationalities' cultures was successful. During this critical development period, the writers had wide-ranging freedom and believed they had every right to develop their culture without interference from Moscow. Up until 1928, they judiciously managed a two-way relationship between themselves and the central state apparatus. However, in Stalin's eyes, this development involved too

[35]. Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation*, (1992).
[36]. Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ*, (1968).

many ties to the bourgeois west and set the stage for a break between Ukraine and the rest of the Soviet Union.

VALPITE's incendiary views dismayed officials in Moscow, which in response, worked behind the scenes to create a writing group that could counter VALPITE's perceived militant Ukrainianization.[37] Khvylovy articulated the stance of the organization in a series of pamphlets named "Apologists of Scribbling," in early 1926. He argued:

> The Ukrainian economy is not the same thing as the Russian economy, and cannot be the same thing, because, for one thing, Ukrainian culture, which grows out of its own economy, has a reciprocal influence on the latter, hence our economy requires a specific form and character. In a word, the Union nonetheless remains a Union and Ukraine is an independent entity…Under the influence of our economy, we are applying to our literature not 'the Slavophile theory of originality,' but the theory of Communist independence. True, this theory might alarm our Moscophile 'Europenkos,' but we communards will not take fight at all; on the contrary. Is Russia an independent state? It is! Well, in that case we too are independent.[38]

Khvylovy believed that Ukraine had a right to have its own unique cultural and economic development based on the right to self-determination within the larger Soviet system. He elucidated his stance on Ukrainian culture:

> Since our literature can at last follow its own path of development, we are faced with the following question: by which of the world's literature should we set our course? On no account by the Russian. This is definite and unconditional. Our political union must not be consumed with literature. Ukrainian poetry must flee as quick as possible from Russian literature and its styles. The Poles would never have produced Mickiewicz had they not stopped orienting themselves toward the art of Moscow. The point is that Russian literature has weighed down upon us for

---

[37]. Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation,* (1992); "Vaplite," Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, accessed November 31, 2021. http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CV%5CA%5C Vaplite.html.

[38]. Mykola Khvylovy, "Apologists of Scribbling," in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), p. 222.

> centuries as the master of the situation, as one that has conditioned our psyche to play the slavish imitator. As so, to nourish our young art on it would be to impede on its development. The proletariat's ideas did not reach us through Muscovite art; on the contrary, we, as representatives of a young nation, can better understand these ideas, better cast them in the appropriate images. Our orientation is to Western European art, its style, its techniques.[39]

Khvylovy was challenging the supremacy of Great Russian chauvinism and believed that Ukraine could only achieve its nation-building project by turning its back on Russification and any strong link to Moscow.

Khvylovy and the others assumed that they were working within the parameters of Soviet policy and that, regardless of backlash from policymakers, Marxist ideology unequivocally supported their claims. Khvylovy said, "it is not surprising that two forces are at war in contemporary literature: the first is orienting itself toward Europe, the second is being exploited by prosvita, in other words the kulak. The first is continuing the old Marxist traditions, the second professes vulgar Marxism."[40] Prosvita was a 19th-century Ukrainian enlightenment organization formed in Galicia which aimed to educate the masses.[41] To Khvylovy, the Party's literary ideology had two problems. First, their emphasis on traditional folk dances, songs, and other antiquated cultural norms only pushed writers toward the bourgeois values of Moscow and was a gross misinterpretation of Marxist ideology. Second, he believed that the Party's literary ideology was rooted in the mass education of peasants, but instead of raising the peasants' cultural level, the

---

[39]. Khyvolvy, *Apologists of Scribbling* (1986): 222.

[40]. Mykola Khvylovy, "Thoughts Against the Current," in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), p. 108.

[41]. For more information, see: Prosvita, http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CP%5CR%5CProsvita.htm. accessed March 1, 2022,

Party wanted the writers to stoop down to the peasant level. Khvylovy contended, "What we need is the raising of the general cultural level of the masses, and you are proposing we play kindergarten."[42] Khvylovy unequivocally believed that VAPLITE would be "an institute of Marxist of aesthetics."[43] In other words, the VAPLITE writers would be responsible for the true development of national culture in the Marxist tradition.

During the lenient times of the Literary Discussion, Khvylovy's convictions permeated into every facet of his writing—not just political pamphlets. He was first and foremost a prose writer and began writing a book about Ukrainian nationality in the mid-1920s. Unfortunately, the Soviet regime censored and blacklisted him before he could finish or publish the work. Regardless, the draft's themes highlight the risks and initiative Khvylovy was willing to take during the Literary Discussion to fulfill the goal of building a strong Ukrainian national identity independent of Moscow.[44] Khvylovy managed to write about fifty pages of a manuscript, "The Woodcocks," before realizing the project was futile and would never be published under the strict grip of the party, which started to tighten in 1929. The main character, Dmytriy, and his wife, Hanna, go to a resort to vacation for two months with their friend, Vovchyk. In Khvylovy's formulation, the main character is representative of the Soviet citizens who felt lost because they still had an affinity and reverence for the original ideals of the Revolution but no longer agreed with the Party's actions in relation to national identity formation.

---

[42]. Khvylovy, "Thoughts Against the Current," (1986): p. 201

[43]. Ibid., 198-199.

[44]. Mykola Khvylovy, "The Woodcocks," in *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s*, ed. George Luckij, trans. Yuri Tkacz (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1986), pp. 15-67.

In the opening scene, Dimi quickly gets into a heated philosophical debate with Vovchyk and claims that he detests his wife because she is too gentle and could not kill someone for the social good. In Dimi's perspective, one must kill to achieve social cleansing and the ultimate Communist victory. Dimi takes great pride in his reputation as a modern and urban new-age man and takes great offense when another vacationer, Algia, describes him as provincial. The author is probably referencing his own life experiences to some degree because, as a committed communist, he believed that terror was necessary to achieve the social revolution. Dimi hints that he, like Khvylovy, is a veteran of the Civil War and knows what it is like to kill in the name of ideology.[45]

Khvylovy also believed the destiny of Ukraine and its national project lay in the urban and modern industrial centers, not in the provincial countryside that historically characterized Ukrainian culture. Nevertheless, he sincerely believed in the Marxist tenets of historical development. Khvylovy posited that Ukraine's communist future lay in the cultivation of a Western-oriented urban social milieu that would claim a place among the sort of legendary intellectual centers that produced figures of Europe such as Darwin, Newton, and Marx. While working in the relatively unfettered intellectual sphere of indigenization policies, Khvylovy's worldview retained the core tenets of Marxist ideology but quickly incorporated the belief that Russian hegemony was a hindrance to Ukrainian development.[46] Dimi's internal struggles and external adventures highlight Khvylovy's evolution.

---

[45]. Mykola Khvylovy, "The Woodcocks," (1986): pp. 15-67.
[46]. Khyvolvy, *Apologists of Scribbling* (1986): 222.

Algia and her aunt turn out to be Muscovites but visit Ukraine often and near-natively speak Ukrainian, viewing it as a musical language. Algia prods Dimi on his political and social views, but he simply regurgitates party lines: that the Revolution needed a vanguard and that the cultural rebirth of Ukraine is just a means to achieving socialism. Moreover, he believes that Shevchenko was an untalented poet who knew nothing about proper culture and actually hurt Ukrainian development. However, the more Algia digs into his beliefs, the more he struggles with internal turmoil over his infatuation for her. Dimi is overcome with this strong attraction to her, which frustrates him, but he ends up dreaming about her that night. Algia may be from Moscow, but her infatuation with Ukrainian culture and concern over its development negates her origins. Algia's character symbolizes nascent Ukrainian nationalism and its reinterpretation of Marxism.

After several days of socializing as a group, Algia resolves that she must meet Dimi's wife, who has stayed in her room for the most part. During their first meetup, Algia interrogates Hannah and asks why Hannah has not fraternized with her and her aunt. Before Hannah can formulate a response, Algia states that it is because she and her aunt are petty bourgeois, and that Hannah cannot stand them. Hannah weakly replies that she barely knows anything about them and drops the subject. The group soon reconvenes for a drink, where Hannah launches into a long rambling speech during the toast, saying that they should drink for insanity and the conquistadors and that she is "…one of those young people growing up like mushrooms around your Communist party cells and whom

you do not notice."[47] Algia seems to be referring to the growth of intellectuals in national communities who are questioning the supremacy of the Party and its interpretation of national development. She asks Dimitri if he knows who she really is but goes onto say that she and others like her need air and cannot be simply crushed. At this point in the story, one can infer that Algia, is trying to convince her interlocutors that the Communist formation of national identity is unnatural and that only organic, bottom-up processes can develop an authentic nation. Here Algia voices Khylovy's ideas. To Khvylovy, the Party's formation of national identity focused on developing low-brow traditional facets of culture, such as folk dances. Khvylovy unequivocally believed that the Party's version of identity formation would undercut Ukraine's development and they would once again become "Little Russia."

Dimi's struggle between the two women is a strong metaphor for the two versions of Ukrainian national identity. Algia's essence and speech hypnotize Dimi, and he resolves that he wants to torment Hannah for not allowing him to have Algia. Here, Algia's metaphorical national lure starts to chip away at Dimi's Communist-party ideology. Hannah represents the status quo of the party line, and Dimi is angry that it is inhibiting his ability to have Algia—an authentic Ukrainian ideology and state that could develop without "the Russian conductor."[48] Despite her origins in Moscow, Algia is committed to the development of a Ukrainian identity without the interference of Russian culture.

---

[47]. Khvylovy, "The Woodcocks," (1986): 48.
[48]. Khvylovy, "Thoughts Against the Current," (1986): p. 124.

After quietly listening to Algia's harangue, Dimi realizes he must have her—in more than just a physical way. He is unsure what this exactly means, but he confronts her and expresses his desires. She listens with intent to his proclamations and tells him that she knows thousands of other men just like him who came of age right after the Revolution and forged their identity in the Russian Civil War. Dimi is taken aback and suddenly realizes that Algia has awoken a thousand-year-old desire in him and that he is reincarnated from an ancient Ukrainian.

The completed part of the story ends before Dimi can fully digest and understand his newfound feelings, but Algia's last conversation with Volvchyk reveals Khvylovy's sentiments. Algia believes that Dimi and other young communists must be disillusioned on a subconscious level because the Communist party is just gathering land for the Russians and had lowered itself to the level of the "philistine bourgeois class."[49] In other words, Khvylovy is asserting that the Party had embraced an ideology that was self-serving to the Party leaders and hostile to the arts. However, the Dimis of the world feel stuck and believe that there is no proper path out because they still have an affinity and reverence for the original ideals of the Revolution but no longer agree with the Party's actions.[50]

While tinges of Khvylovy's overall disillusionment with the communist project became more apparent as the Party attacked him and other "deviationist" writers, the core themes of "The Woodcocks" highlight the author's positions and beliefs. While he

[49]. Khvylovy, "The Woodcocks," (1986): 63.
[50]. Khvylovy, "The Woodcocks," (1986): 15-67.

recognized that indigenization policies opened up a creative intellectual space, he believed the Party still pushed a narrow version of identity formation that would only hold Ukraine back.

Mike Johansen: The Luminous Intellect

While Mykola Khvylovy and several others, such as Ostap Vyshnya, produced numerous literary works, other writers occupied a more peripheral role and were not as prolific. Mike Johansen produced few notable literary pieces, but he occupies a unique place in existing memoirs because of his dazzling personality and unmatched intellect. The insight into his personal and professional life in the 1920s demonstrates the interconnected roles between writers, party officials, and even workers in Kharkiv. The close working relationship between these different spheres supports Mayhill Fowler's argument that there was an overlap between intellectuals and political figures, but goes even further to include everyday workers and professionals.[51] As this section will highlight, the writers operated in a complex web of overlapping relationships between themselves, government officials, and workers. Moreover, Johansen's involvement in the creation of a worker-writer literary organization in 1929 demonstrates that even as the Party started to target national communities, the intellectual scene in Kharkiv was still decentralized and the writers could experiment with literary forms.

Mike Johansen was arguably the most gifted of all the writers but was sufficiently disorganized, careless, and scatter-brained that he produced little notable or memorable.

[51]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge,* (2017).

He would start a project and be absolutely enthralled in it, then get bored and move on. However, his genius was evident to everyone who knew him. For example, he knew at least ten languages and could learn to read a new language within a day. Johansen once commented that he was planning on learning Finnish after lunch so he could read a book he got ahold of. An acquittance asked him bewilderedly how he could accomplish such a feat, and he said that he simply figured out which parts of the language he *did not* know and focused on that. Even though he was not a prolific writer, his peers still regarded him as a shining star. His greatest contributions probably lie in what he started and left for someone else to finish. As Smolych notes, his creative energy and endless reservoir of literary ideas and techniques laid the ground for others, especially Khvylovy, who would simply take the ideas and carry them out.[52]

Johansen found his literary niche in the futuristic camp. Futurism was a literary style that focused on the "the future technological and cosmopolitan society, which was opposed to the old conservative esthetic sensibility of the peasants and petite bourgeoisie."[53] Therefore, the writers were highly urban-oriented and sought to shock conservatives with their depictions of the future and its deformed inventions. This was the ultimate new-age writing style, and Johansen was a firm believer in its role as an art form that could help find the best paths toward socialism and communism. Smolych said that "[Johansen] naively believed that in our country, since the revolution had already taken place and socialism and communism were being built, then all ideological desires

[52]. Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ,* (1968).
[53]. "Futurism." Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Accessed November 31, 2021. http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CV%5CA%5CVaplite.htm.

and intentions can only be good and positive."[54] His belief in the altruistic nature of communism, the creative environment he worked in, and his hectic personality led to some interesting experiments in the Kharkiv literary scene.

In 1929, right as the Literary Discussion came to an end, the writers still hoped that the regime would soften its view toward them. During this transitional period, Khvylovy tried to start a new writers' organization, Prolitfront, to carry on the legacy of VALPITE, and hopefully, counteract the growing power of the party-backed All-Ukrainian Association of Literary Writers (VUSPP). The VUSPP trumpeted the Party's goal of creating a Ukrainian identity for the peasant masses that was steeped in traditional folk rituals.[55] However, Johansen decided to start his own organization that combined writers with blue-collar workers to highlight issues with product quality and industrialization within Kharkiv.

Smolych's memoirs offer an interesting anecdote that illuminates the writers' backroom deals at cafes and highlights how Johansen and other writers formed his new organization. It also underscores the decentralized decision-making common under indigenization policies. Their favorite café was café "Polk," where one magazine had simply set up its headquarters at a small table in the back of the café. Someone broached the idea to Johansen of joining Khvylovy's new brainchild, Prolitfront, but he declined. He said that Khvylovy still had nationalistic tendencies that centered on creating a culturally autonomous Ukraine, and therefore he saw the project as futile. Khvylovy

---

[54]. Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ*, (1968).

[55]. All-Ukrainian Association of Proletarian Writers. Accessed April 1, 2022. http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CA%5CL%5CAll6UkrainianAssociationofProletarianWriters.htm.

pleaded with Smolych to join Prolitfront and then convince Johansen and his camp of writers also to join. Khvylovy was sure that with most of the original VAPLITE members that they could overpower VUSPP. Khvylovy still had hoped that a group of dedicated writers could develop a high-brow Ukrainian culture oriented toward his conception of modern, urban European culture. Smolych refused, a few joined Khvylovy, and the rest opted to stay with Johansen. One writer came from Khvylovy's side of the room and suggested, almost sarcastically, the idea of forming a worker-writer organization. Khvylovy and his entourage had avoided stooping to the intellectual level of the proletarian classes for years, so he probably doubted that Johansen would be interested. The writer was bewildered when Johansen pressed him for details and seemed to be excited about the concept.[56]

The writers conducted such serious and sensitive professional matters in the sanctity of a simple one-room café and were able to do so without conflict. For example, Khvylovy viewed Johansen's willingness to create a new organization as a professional betrayal, but it did not affect their personal lives. They dealt with professional business in their favorite café, with opposing groups merely occupying different sides of the room. But they could seamlessly divorce their professional lives from their personal lives. Even after a falling out professionally, the writers would go ice skating, hunting, or play billiards together.[57] This may seem inconsequential on the surface, but it shows that core writers were not yet cogs in the machine who simply denounced one another over

[56]. Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ,* (1968).
[57]. Ibid.

professional differences. Even as the Party began to condemn ideas that deviated from their push toward a peasant-oriented mass culture, the scene in the café demonstrates that decision-making under Ukrainization policies was still decentralized.

Johansen's idea of a worker-writer organization eventually evolved into a techno-artist magazine. The magazine would pair together an artist with a professional worker to create well-written yet practical publications. Johansen called up his allies and any writer that seemed remotely interested. He decided that, in its final form, there would be multiple groups of techno artists. But before other groups could form, Johansen and his allies had to lay the blueprint. Johansen's group, Group A, consisted of writers, an engineer, the head of the radio station, a member of the people's commissar of labor, a chemist, and members from several other professional sectors. This group met about once a month at a member's house, drank tea, and plowed through internal issues in a matter of hours. They did not have one single leader, and instead had a few de-facto leaders, including Johansen. The group decided that they wanted to transcend the traditional binary of either a magazine or almanac; instead, they would publish the works of the writers in a series. The writers broadly formulated two themes of each book: product quality and modern-day problems. The techno-artist aspect came into play here since each writer was paired with one of the professionals. Smolych, for example, worked with a bicycle manufacturer and spent two days a week at the factory. Although they only ended up producing a few books and then shut down, Smolych viewed this movement as

significant since it was a real collective undertaking, producing work as a team without a single leader.[58]

The group of writers transcended the dialogue solely focusing on Ukrainian identity; instead, they sought to address practical problems in their rapidly changing and modernizing world. As Khvylovy made clear in his polemical pamphlet, economic development was directly tied to cultural development, and Johansen's group planned to use their professional ties to address these everyday issues.

Ostap Vyshnya: The Village Networker

Ostap Vyshnya was a bit of a professional outsider amongst his peers but commanded the admiration of almost everyone. Most of his work focused on theatre stage productions, and these plays usually built in older folk narratives. Even though he did not usually conform to the literary movement, most viewers and artists loved his work. Vyshnya had an unmatchable flair for humor and, according to Johansen, captivated his audiences and left them roaring with laughter. He resisted the pressure to develop plays solely for the new urban, working-class and instead crafted his plays for the everyday person living in Soviet Ukraine, mainly the peasants. He did not necessarily try to formulate a new Ukrainian identity; instead, he wrestled with the effects of Soviet policies in the countryside. In his writings, a narrator from the rural countryside is often seen colliding with an intellectual from the city. Vyshnya believed that since peasants comprised most of the population, someone had to connect with them.[59] Vyshnya's career

[58]. Ibid.
[59]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge*, (2017): 1-102.

in the 1920s highlights how writers navigated the decentralized artistic and political scene to advance their careers.

Critics of Vyshnya called him "…a spokesman for outdated traditions, backward literary forms and techniques, aestheticizer of the vulgar and pseudo-folk themes."[60] Smolych defends Vyshnya, saying:

> Vyshnya had an invaluable feature of a writer - the ability to rediscover and invent long ago discovered or invented things. He was able to notice again and again and show everyone the details he had been observing for a long time - these are the "little things" behind his works which make them great: feelings, ideas, and actions. Vyshnya was also an unsurpassed master of character creation, especially the reproduction of the individualized language of people. He was an incomparable life writer and at the same time was able to express his ideas in the language of his characters.[61]

He had the uncanny ability to make his characters' personalities and actions relatable to all viewers. However, Vyshnya's status and success came from more than just his superb sense of humor.

Two factors in particular contributed to Vyshnya's achievements: first, he used his clever wit to lace his works with themes that everyone could grasp; second, he was cunning and worked behind the scenes to grow his patronage network. Vyshnya's works made people from all different walks of life and different temperaments laugh. However, his work was purely Ukrainian and was, as Smolych claims, an "indisputable masterpiece of Ukrainian national culture."[62] Smolych claims that Vyshnya's works are impossible to reproduce, let alone translate. Vyshnya's works rested purely on how he used the

---

[60]. Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ,* (1968).
[61]. Ibid.
[62]. Ibid.

Ukrainian language and honed in on subtle shared experiences. Smolych wrote: "Vyshnya's humor is almost exclusively through language resources - emphasizing the peculiarities of the Ukrainian language, its unique identity, in its complete original style - a kind of intonation, inherent only in Ukrainian temperament, a kind of vision inherent in the Ukrainian shackles."[63] Vyshnya embraced traditional Ukrainian culture by taking its core elements and reproducing them in a language that was relatable yet incorporated elements of their rapidly changing world. His brand of nationalism was unique as he too was a communist and worked as a medic during the Civil War. In fact, he often expressed his hatred of militant Ukrainian Nationalists, and later expressed his loathing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) that operated in Polish-run Lviv. Vyshnya's works did not conform to the party's or his colleagues' standards and ideology, yet he became a prolific artist under decentralized Ukrainization policies.

Networking may have been Vyshnya's biggest secret to success. He regularly interacted with his audience by responding to their letters. Smolych estimates that he wrote at least two hundred letters a month and at least 15 literary criticisms in the newspapers. Everyone was familiar with his name and good nature. However, he went above and beyond to intervene when necessary in any area of life. Smolych describes his strategy in the following anecdote:

> Vyshnya attended all premieres in all theaters of the city; did not miss a single change of domestic films in cinema; he went to the circus every night, especially behind the scenes - to clowns and the menagerie; artists and sculptors were waiting for him at every opening; no artistic dispute began before the arrival of Vyshnya; when an actor became seriously ill in a theater, Vyshnya went to the social security department or the Red Cross and got them a ticket to the

[63]. Ibid.

> sanitorium; he arranged for elderly artists to go to poorhouses; when he had money, he lent it (without return, of course) to poor figures of all arts; he treated all actors and singers who got into a rut according to his own.[64]

Vyshnya ingratiated himself to everyone and anyone. As Mayhill Fowler noted, artists and intellectuals usually occupied a dual role as both an artist and public official in Kharkiv during the 1920s.[65] Therefore, during the implementation of Ukrainization policies, Vyshnya was on almost universally good terms with his peers and public officials. He was an active agent in crafting his own good fortunes and worked within the Soviet system to produce comedy plays that reflected rural humor, which another artist may have not been able to put on without more backlash from his contemporaries. His plays were both Soviet and Ukrainian, as they satirized the effects of indigenization policies in the countryside; namely, how peasants reckoned with the development of publishing houses and native-language schools. Vyshnya's works wrestled with the reality of Soviet policies, and usually involved a rural man outsmarting the establishment.[66] The decentralized atmosphere under indigenization policies allowed artists like Vyshnya to experiment with artistic mediums and reflect on the ambiguous reality of being Soviet and Ukrainian in the 1920s.

Transnational Connections in Soviet Ukraine

The writers, however, did not work in an echo chamber in the 1920s. They were intimately tied to the outside world, and especially to their Ukrainian contemporaries

---

[64]. Ibid.
[65]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge*, (2017).
[66]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge*, (2017): 95-102.

operating in Galicia. There was a strong connection between the divided Ukrainian lands and the Soviet Ukrainians who dreamed about the day when the Ukrainian republic would stretch all the way to the Carpathian Mountains. Moreover, as Terry Martin highlighted, the Piedmont principle informed Soviet policies in Ukraine and was an attempt to gain political influence in neighboring countries. This policy rested on the idea that openly supporting the Ukrainians from Galicia would attract Ukrainians that resided in Poland, Hungary, and other nations.[67]

One Soviet Ukrainian writer, Myroslav Irchan, established a Ukrainian Galician literary organization in Kharkiv for immigrants from Poland, which published the magazine "Western Ukraine."[68] Many of these immigrant writers had fought for an independent Ukrainian state during WWI but became disillusioned after it failed to materialize and decided to invest their future in the USSR because of the amount of funding and support the Soviets were giving to artists.

Furthermore, Smolych states that writers in Soviet Ukraine were infatuated with the literary scene and lifestyle of people living in western Ukrainian lands. The writers were familiar with Lviv's underground art scene and an unnamed poet who wrote about the post-WWI Ukrainian Revolution. Trevor Erlacher's discussion of the distant professional relationship between Nationalist theorist Dmytro Dontsov and Mykola Khvylovy supports Smolych's description. They shared an admiration for each other. Dontsov's works were widely available in Kyiv and Kharkiv, and Khvylovy gladly read

[67]. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, (2001): p. 1-26.

[68]. The memoir only mentions that the creation of the magazine to highlight the systems set in place for Galician writers in Kharkiv.

them. Dontsov lived in Galicia and was a critic of the Soviet regime, but in the mid-1920s, he admired the polemical articles that Khvylovy and other Soviet Ukrainian writers published.

Dontsov said that Khvylovy's work was militant and fiery and shared some common beliefs: a desire for an anti-Russian and anti-provincial national culture that oriented itself toward 19th-century Germany and the great intellectual figures in European history such as Goethe, Darwin, and Marx. They both were skeptical of democratically oriented Ukrainian nationalists, whom they saw as too passive in the pursuit of creating an independent Ukraine. In their view, democracy would only lead to the revival of Little Russia. However, they had fundamental differences in their solutions: communism vs Nationalism.[69] Regardless of their differences, the connection between the two polarizing writers is just one example of how Soviet Ukrainian writers functioned within a larger transnational framework. Not only did they exercise agency within the Soviet system, but they also transcended political boundaries and were involved with developments outside of the borders of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet reversal of indigenization policies may have had lasting impacts that transcended Soviet Ukraine's border: galvanizing the support of Ukrainian Nationalists. Miroslav Skandrij argues that Ukrainian Nationalism appeared in the late 1920s in response to Soviet actions within the Soviet Ukrainian Republic. Initially, the international community applauded Soviet Ukrainianization policies. While the republic

[69]. Trevor Erlacher, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Age of Extremes: An Intellectual Biography of Dmytro Dontsov*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021.

had no control over its military, industry, or finance, it still had control over agricultural policies, education, and general administration. From the outside, it seemed like a great success, and many Ukrainians returned to the Ukrainian Socialist Republic (SR) from Galicia to experience this cultural renaissance. This in turn helped legitimatize the Soviet nationalization project. In response to the reversal of indigenization policies and the implementation of terror, Ukrainians outside Soviet borders joined Ukrainian Nationalist organizations, such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). As we will see in the next chapter, the transition from decentralized nationalization to centralized Pan-Sovietism had lasting impacts.

Chapter 3. The Slovo House and Centralizing of State Control

During the 1920s, Soviet policy was designed so that national communities throughout the Union could develop and become integral parts of the long-term socialist building project. However, as national movements began to flourish and, in some cases, demand more autonomy, Soviet authorities began to worry that these national communities would break away, leading to a substantial loss of territory and resources. Therefore, Soviet leadership began to target national movements throughout the Union, with particular attention on Soviet Ukraine. Mykola Khvylovy's polemical publications that argued for a culturally autonomous Ukraine oriented towards Europe worried Stalin, because he saw such ideas as a precursor to a desire for independence. The Soviet leadership was under the impression that Ukraine was ripe for a revolution and that the state needed to tighten its control over its republics. Consolidating their control meant stifling any national movements that sought to distance themselves from Moscow.

Some historians have argued that the Soviet Union's use of terror in the 1930s is evidence that they were a weak state, since they had to kill hundreds of thousands of people to rule them.[70] However, I argue that the writers' experiences in Kharkiv demonstrate how the Soviet Union transformed from a decentralized state focused on

[70]. Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004; Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s.* Cambridge University Press, 2003.

nationalization to a centralized Pan-Soviet state that controlled its citizens through the systematic use of terror. Soviet leaders slowly tightened their control over the writers and smothered any form of dissent or hint of national separation. Any form of agency that had existed in the 1920s disappeared as the state censored their writings, monitored and logged movements and communications, and ultimately arrested the majority of the writers. The surveillance state of the 1930s strangled any deviationist Ukrainian national movement and placed Ukraine squarely under the control of Moscow.

The Slovo House, which seemed to be the writers' savior and last hope for a peaceful life, turned into their prison. This chapter traces the lives of the writers who came to live in the Slovo House. It will discuss how the writers funded the construction of the house and their everyday lives before the Soviet terror campaign turned it into their prison. The hobbies, fashion choices, and daily interactions of inhabitants of the Slovo House give a glimpse into the final years of the Soviet Ukrainian writers and highlight how they negotiated the political transition from decentralized nationalism to terror. The core artists (e.g., Khvylovy, Johansen, and Vyshnya) ceased to write, but memoirs from surviving writers and family members can help recreate some aspects of their lives. Unfortunately, as the state sought to centralize their control, the Soviet leaders increasingly viewed nationalist intellectuals as a liability.

Building the Slovo House

The writers began building the Slovo House in 1927 as a cooperative,[71] with Soviet officials pushing for the concept as early as 1924. Soviet leaders worried that state-funded communal living was fomenting anti-Soviet sentiments; therefore, private cooperatives seemed to be a plausible alternative in the nascent country. Moreover, the state would not have to invest nearly as much money into such housing projects since the cooperatives would fund the buildings. The writers had lived a bohemian lifestyle but endured difficult housing conditions up to 1927 and were desperate for new living quarters to enshrine their status as new professional-class intellectuals. The start of the construction project coincided with the peak of Ukrainization policies, but by the time writers finished the house in 1930, the Soviet Union had changed. The Soviet state had resolved to place the house under constant surveillance because of writers' deviationist national approaches.[72]

In his book about Ostap Vyshnya, Stepan Kryzhanivsky claims that the Slovo House was the first exclusive writers' house within the Soviet Union. Vyshnya headed the cooperative, whose membership comprised most well-known writers, artists, and composers living in Kharkiv.[73] Serhiy Pylpenko conceived building the apartment complex, with each shareholder paying an annual fee. After paying for 15 years, the individual would own the apartment outright. Construction was slow and lasted three

[71]. In a cooperative, each person who invests in the project is a shareholder in the building.

[72]. Olga Bertelsen, "Spatial Dimensions of Soviet Repressions in the 1930s: The House of Writers (Kharkiv, Ukraine)," http://proslovo.com/en#15/50.00892/36.23515/-17.6/45, 2013.

[73]. Stepan Kryzhanivsky, "Shcho Sam Bachyv i Chuv" ["What We Saw and Heard"]. Essay. In *About Ostap Vyshnya*. Kharkiv, 1989.

years. The cooperative hired a private company to construct the complex, and these workers often stayed overnight on the site with their food supplies. The presence of open food containers attracted fleas, mice, and rats, which plagued the writers throughout their lives in the complex.[74]

Figure 1. The Slovo House in Kharkiv in 2008[75]

While issues afflicted the construction, the final product had numerous luxuries that were inaccessible to average Soviet citizens. Each apartment had three rooms with ten-foot ceilings, large baths, and telephones. Residents had access to a shared cafeteria, kindergarten, and ice-skating rink in the winter. A janitor lived in the basement and acted as the caretaker. The writers saw the house as a beacon of hope and security after

[74]. Tatiana Kardynalovskaya, *Nevidstupne Mynule [An Inevitable Past]*. 2nd ed. Kharkiv, 2005. Read at: http://proslovo.com/sources. Accessed in November 2021.

[75]. "Slovo Building," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, March 13, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovo_Building#/media/File:Slovo3.jpg.

enduring the revolution, civil war, and struggles with poverty during the 1920s.[76] Even as Ukrainization policies were waning in the late 1920s, the writers were still hopeful that they could carve out a place for themselves within Soviet society and literally build a future for themselves and their families.

In 1929, the cooperative ran out of money for the construction project. Despite their elevated status in Soviet society, the writers still struggled financially. Vyshnya was mulling over solutions to this issue when a group of writers traveled to Moscow in 1929 to meet with Stalin and other Politburo members for Ukrainian Literature week. The events aimed to strengthen the ties between Ukrainian and Russian literature and between Soviet writers. Vyshnya and several other writers met with Stalin to discuss strategies to "organically" improve relations between the two literary groups. While Vyshnya was listening to the various speakers, he had a eureka moment and decided that it could not hurt to ask the Party for money to complete the house.[77] Vyshnya scribbled a note and handed it to Stalin. Volodymyr Kulish described the casual scene, "Stalin slid his eyes over it and waved his pipe affirmatively."[78]

After the meeting, Vyshnya returned to his hotel when he heard a knock on the door. When he opened it, a large man was standing in front of him with a large bag and two revolvers on his hips. The courier asked if he was Vyshnya and when he replied yes, the courier announced that he was ordered to give him money. Dismayed, Vyshnya could

---

[76]. Bertelsen, "Spatial Dimensions of Soviet Repressions in the 1930s" (2013); "Budynok Slovo (Slovo House)," ProSlovo, 2018, http://proslovo.com/en#15/50.00892/36.23515/-17.6/45.

[77]. Kryzhanivsky, "Shcho Sam Bachyv i Chuv," (1989).

[78]. Volodymyr Kulish. *Slovo pro Budynok "Slovo" [A Word about the Slovo House]*. Toronto: Homin Ukrainy, 1966. Read at: http://proslovo.com/kulish-slovoproslovo. Accessed in November 2021.

only ask the man what he was talking about. The courier simply said, "'The money you asked for.' -And then the courier poured on the table packs of bills, which amounted to a solid amount, quite enough to complete the writer's house."[79] Later, when Vyshnya was relaying the story to his fellow writers, he said that the most surprising aspect of the interaction was the fact that there was no formal transfer of money. The courier did not provide a receipt nor ask any further questions. Instead, he simply dumped the cash in Vyshnya's hotel room and left.[80] It seems as though Stalin did not want to leave a paper trail connecting him to the "deviationist" Ukrainian writers.

Volodymyr Kulish, the son of the writer Mykola Kulish, grew up in the Slovo house and interacted with all the major writers as a teenager. While his memoirs are imperfect, they offer insight into the personal lives of the inhabitants. He also provides an interesting theory into why the house was built. Kulish said there was a rumor that an OGPU[81] agent planted the idea of creating a cooperative house amongst the writers. The house was to be built in the central suburbs of Kharkiv and all the major writers were planning to live there. Therefore, the agents could easily monitor and control the personal lives of the writers. Kulish emphasizes that "It would be a mistake to think that Slovo was built (albeit with the permission of the government) on the grounds of creating favorable housing and living conditions for the creative Ukrainian elite, by the way, for the money of the participants on a cooperative basis."[82] Starting in the early 1930s, the

[79]. Ibid.
[80]. Ibid.
[81]. The Joint State Political Directorate, which functioned as the Soviet's secret police from 1923 to 1934.
[82]. Ibid.

OGPU had agents always monitoring the house. But the OGPU had multiple modes of surveillance. First, they recruited the caretaker who lived in the basement as an informant. Second, the agents utilized new groundbreaking technology: telephones. Every apartment had a telephone installed, whether the inhabitants wanted it or not. Kulish claims that "during the investigation against a particular writer, his telephone conversations were cited word for word as evidence for the accusation."[83]

With the help of Stalin, the writers were finally able to finish the house in 1930. The cooperative leaders eschewed egalitarian principles and chose the best apartments for themselves. The other writers and their families were assigned apartments based on a lottery drawing.[84] Some of the writers proposed having average workers and their families share an apartment with the writers. However, the central committee and other writers quickly dismissed this idea. As one inhabitant put it: "Can you imagine what would happen? Does this mean that a writer with a family of 3-4 souls lives in 3 rooms, but next to a working family with 8 people in poverty, destitution, etc.? Of course, the shame of watching would be suffocating."[85] The writers and their families had suffered through WWI and the Russian Civil War, and then struggled with poverty throughout the 1920s, albeit their Bohemian lifestyle alleviated some of the struggles. After that, however, the Soviet administration dashed their hopes of developing a robust Ukrainian republic steeped in 19th-century European culture. Their last hope for living a peaceful

[83]. Ibid.
[84]. Kardynalovskaya, *Nevidstupne Mynule,* (2005).
[85]. *Heritage: Literary Source Studies. Textology. Volume Heritage. Volume VII. This Letter Is in the Archives of the Kharkiv Literary Museum*, 1930, https://doi.org/http://proslovo.com/fragments/1.

and comfortable life in the Soviet Union was the Slovo house, and they would not let low-class workers dampen their dream.

Everyday Life in Slovo

By the time the writers had moved into the house, they had ceased to write their true personal thoughts into diaries because they feared that they could be used against them in the future. Mykola Khvylovy and his inner circle of writers stopped publishing anything of substance because the Soviet authorities blacklisted them. The writers made several public renunciations of their work but were still not allowed to publish. Even if they could write privately, most felt it was hopeless. Some of the writers took up translating or manual labor jobs to survive. Most of the writers' personal experiences in the house are lost because they either never wrote about them, or their writings were destroyed after they were arrested. Fortunately, the memoirs of the writers' children can help recreate the lives inside of the Slovo House.

While the house offered numerous enviable amenities, the inhabitants still had to deal with the realities of maintenance. Most writers chose to equip their apartments with coal stoves instead of natural gas because of widespread fear of gas poisonings in the late 1920s. The inhabitants stored coal in the basement, and they had to regularly carry it up to their apartments. Burnt coal was simply thrown out their windows into the yard, which grew into a real mountainous over the years. The adults were indifferent to it, but the children saw it as a perfect hill for sledding in the winter.[86] The parents must have gone

[86]. Kardynalovskaya, *Nevidstupne Mynule*, (2005).

to great lengths to protect their kids because the children's stories from the early years demonstrate a carefree and fun lifestyle. There seemed to be little understanding of the growing surveillance state that was slowly tightening the noose around their parents' necks.

The children lived in a loving environment and could carry out their fantasies uninhibited. Volodymyr Kulish describes one such adventure in his memoirs. The children came up with the idea to create a carpentry workshop. They went around the building and asked to borrow carpentry tools. Kulish mused that "of course, no one denied us our noble fantasies and in our hands were hammers, forceps, saws, and nails."[87] They lost interest in the carpentry workshop as they gathered the tools and instead decided to make an "Indian camp" in a thicket of weeds in the yard. They quickly constructed teepees and a fireplace and brought in cots. To make the experience more realistic, they even smoked a "peace pipe," the smell of which was blamed on the fireplace.[88] The children's shenanigans were a ray of light for their parents, who were probably well aware that the state had a target on them. It seems that indulging the children's fantasies served as a much-needed distraction for both the children and their parents.

Distractions were abundant in the milieu of the house. The three main hobbies of the inhabitants were sports, fashion, and hunting. For sports, the children organized a volleyball court in the yard and at first just played with some neighbors. But then their

[87]. Kulish, *Slovo pro Budynok "Slovo,"* (1966).
[88]. Ibid.

parents got involved and took it seriously. They competed for beer and constantly joked. As Kulish puts it, "At such moments, our house resembled a sanatorium or rest home. Everything was sporty, jokes were pouring out of the bag, laughter was heard. We, the children, played with the elders and forgot the differences between age and status."[89] The inhabitants got so good at volleyball that when theatre troupes came to Kharkiv, they went out of their way to play the inhabitants of Slovo. The group always gathered "a team of aces…who defended the honor of Ukrainian literature on the court, although not always with equal success."[90] All of the inhabitants were invested in the matches; women eagerly watched from the window and cheered on their husbands and children. If the Slovo team lost, the onlookers quickly closed their windows and went back to their chores with an air of disappointment. These intense tournaments lasted all summer and offered a reprieve for the adults and children.

The festivities did not end in winter. The residents flooded the volleyball court and turned it into an ice-skating rink. Fewer skated than played volleyball because of the size constraints, but there were numerous spectators. Khvylovy regularly visited the ice rink during the night. He was a night owl and would fly around the ice to clear his mind. Then, while resting, he would be thinking over his writing: "Always pensive, with his head down, he stopped for half an hour, lit a cigarette, and then went to the third floor to his apartment, where the light in his room shone for a long, long time."[91] The writers and

[89]. Ibid.
[90]. Ibid.
[91]. Ibid.

their families needed outlets. The state was tightening its restrictions, and the house offered a beacon of hope and solace.

Fashion and hunting were two other hobbies that went hand in hand. Kulish said that "It seemed to me to be completely independent of the official Soviet fashion that so distinguished the citizens of the socialist paradise from the impoverished inhabitants of the globe. Before the Slovo house was built, some writers or artists traveled abroad and brought some things unseen and unknown to Ukraine."[92] Especially in the late 1920s, writers used every opportunity to bring back exotic foreign clothing. If one resident adopted a new fashion, such as white felt boots or a wide-brimmed hat, everyone else had it within a week. They could no longer freely express themselves in writing, so they turned to fashion instead.

Hunting occupied an important place amongst the writers in Kharkiv. They had hunting dogs, such as English setters, and wore the latest clothing while out in the woods. But hunting transcended mere fashion. Volodymyr Kulish described the centrality of hunting to the lives of the writers:

> As my father once told me, on the hunt you could talk freely, speak sincerely and openly, from the heart. It is possible that after such hunts, they returned home younger, with a calm soul for a while. Nature gave relaxation and peace. Therefore, in the difficult moments of a turbulent and eternally restless life, Khvylovy suddenly disappeared for a day, two, or even a week. He wandered over the lakes, sat for long hours in a "trance," slept in tents, and thought, thought, and thought.[93]

[92]. Kulish, *Slovo pro Budynok "Slovo,"* (1966).
[93]. Ibid.

Soviet officials censored their professional lives, and the writers were starting to realize the extent to which officials were monitoring their personal lives. Hunting embodied their last bit of freedom and allowed them to exercise some degree of agency over their lives. The state was slowly increasing its hold on the writers, but they had not yet resigned themselves to just sitting in their apartments and waiting for the authorities to arrest them. Hunting was a therapeutic distraction that offered them the ability to freely speak amongst each other again as they had in the mid-1920s.

From Dream House to Prison

Any illusions of hope the writers may have had disappeared in mid-1932. On April 23rd, the Central Committee liquidated all of the individual literary organizations and created in its place the Union of Writers of the USSR. This was the beginning of the liquidation of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.[94] Soviet officials placed two officers outside of the residence 24/7 and did not even try to hide the fact that they were spying on residents. The tightening of restrictions on writers coincided with the start of the Holodomor, a famine in Soviet Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. It was part of a wider famine within the Soviet Union and mostly affected grain-producing regions.[95] Volodymyr Sosyura described his experiences with the famine in vivid detail:

> There were only single white heads of cabbage and sometimes potatoes in the shop windows. The sellers had nothing to do, and they stood sadly and helplessly, all in white, behind the counters. People walked the streets in the same way as during unemployment during the NEP, only without saws and axes, peasants just in bare threads, my countrymen were hungry, they could no longer walk because

[94]. Smolych, *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ*, (1968).
[95]. Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*. London: Penguin Books, 2018.

> of hunger, and they were taken to their designated places. Sometimes they walked around the apartments of our "Slovo" House, but they could no longer climb to the high floors. I lived on the second floor, and when they came to me, I could only share bread with them, because we had nothing else. We ate only once a day and did our best to make our son eat three times a day.[96]

He offered bread to the peasants when he could but felt intense guilt that he at least had some sustenance to survive. On the other hand, some residents of Slovo were still convinced that the Party could do no wrong. The wife of another famous writer callously remarked, while half-starved herself, that the kulaks deserved to starve.[97] At the marketplace, men gathered around and did their best to procure goods. Merchants no longer accepted paper money; instead, bartering was the only legal tender. One writer described the atmosphere as "cautious, timid, and suspicious."[98] It was a game of survival now.

Despite the widespread suffering, some intellectuals still held onto the party line. Allegedly, during the start of the famine, two police officers in Kharkiv got ahold of some alcohol and drank themselves to death. One writer believed that enemies of the state poisoned the police officers. The writer claimed in 1932, "It is clear that Kharkiv is full of enemies and the Bolshevik agency is acting diligently."[99] The writer believed that enemies within the state caused the grain shortage. While most of the prominent writers seemed to be skeptical and fearful of the state apparatus, there were still many writers, such as Serhii Pylypenko, who worked with the Party and believed that Ukraine's future

---

[96]. Volodymyr Sosyura, *Tretia͡ Rota* [*The Third Company]*, 1988. https://www.ukrlib.com.ua/books/printitzip.php?tid=312.

[97]. Ibid.

[98]. A. Lyubochenko Chodeiik, *Spohady [Memoirs],* (1951), https://diasporiana.org.ua/memuari/7075-lyubchenko-a-shhodennik-t-1/.

[99]. Ibid.

lay in transforming the mass of peasants into Soviets.[100] The existence of loyal Bolsheviks amongst the writers and the intensifying surveillance measures bred an atmosphere of paranoia in the Slovo house.

In the winter of 1932, tensions were high. Guards were stationed outside of the house, and they closed all but one of the entrances to better track movement in and out of the house. Ivan Senchenko had been a mainstay in the Kharkiv literary scene since 1921 and had deep bonds with all the prominent writers. However, the omnipresent surveillance state began to whittle away at these relationships and made everyone deeply paranoid. Senchenko's relationship with Khvylovy and several other writers ended because of the distrust. One evening Senchenko walked into Khvylovy's apartment where several writers had gathered. As soon as he walked in the door, the writer Dosvitny started to interrogate Senchenko, "Who are you? Where did you come from?"[101] He was stunned and retaliated, "How do you ask who I am when I have been trampling the literary field with you since 1921!? How many times have we met over a drink? This is a whole third of my life - 12 years! And suddenly - who are you, where are you from?"[102] The response did not satisfy Dosvitny, who simply repeated that they did not know who or what he truly was. Other writers, such as Mykola Kulish, maintained a relationship with Senchenko, but he was by then an outcast. The constant surveillance, the periodic arrests of residents in the Slovo house, and the uncertainty of their future wore them

[100]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge*, (2017), p 233.
[101]. Senchenko, *Notaky Pro Literaturne Zhittya,* (1988)
[102]. Ibid.

down. Senchenko speculated that they were all exhausted and needed to find a scapegoat. And because of their paranoia, Senchenko seemed like a likely culprit as anybody else.

The writers now felt helpless and cornered. Khvylovy had been blacklisted for several years. He reached his breaking point in May 1933 when Soviet officials arrested his close friend and the former president of VAPLITE, Mykhailo Ialovyi. Soon after, during a conversation with friends, Khvylovy walked into his study, wrote a note, grabbed a revolver, and shot himself in the temple. The note described his horror that the Soviets were killing an entire generation:

> The arrest of Yalovy - this is the murder of an entire generation ... For what? Because we were the most sincere Communists? I don't understand. The responsibility for the actions of Yalovy's generation lies with me, Khvylovy. Today is a beautiful sunny day. I love life - you can't even imagine how much. Today is the 13th. Remember I was in love with this number? Terribly painful. Long live communism. Long live the socialist construction. Long live the Communist Party.[103]

His contemporaries interpreted the note as a protest against the oppressions of the intelligentsia and the famine in the countryside. However, it only sped up and intensified the persecutions. Khvylovy's suicide only strengthened the Party's resolve to persecute the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The OGPU constantly patrolled the front of the house and nailed auxiliary doors shut to allegedly protect the residents from robberies. Residents could not leave the building unnoticed, and if they decided to run, then their family members could easily be held hostage. Residents were even hesitant to walk out in the yard, as the OGPU agent considered two or more people walking together a conspiracy.

---

[103]. Peredsmertna zapyska Mykoly Khvyl′ovoho [Suicide note of Mykola Khvylovy], in Ukrinform. https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/3243000-mikola-hvilovij-1-otce-nas-elektricnoi-sistemi-viku.html. Accessed in March 2022.

One writer went as far as to sleep in his clothes for a whole year because he did not want to be arrested in the nude.[104] Ivan Senchenko returned to the Slovo House in December 1933 from a year-long work trip to Luhansk where he was writing the history of the October Revolution factory. Soviet officials had arrested numerous writers. He described the scene, "Those who remained walked like they were doomed with suitcases at the ready."[105] The writers were confused, paranoid, and dismayed at their fate. Senchenko himself had a suitcase by his side during his visit to Slovo.

A friend of Senchenko's walked into his apartment one evening and said with an air of resignation that agents had arrested almost everyone and that he was probably next. The friend continued: "I will tell you, and know this: nowhere and never have I spoken out against the Soviet government, never, and never have I done anything wrong against it."[106] They had all been committed Communists, had renounced their alleged deviationist views and had tried to live a peaceful life in the Slovo house. They could not grasp why the government was targeting them. But Stalin viewed writers as "engineers of the soul" and ascribed great importance to their role in the Soviet project. Their desire to create a culturally autonomous Ukrainian republic in the 1920s did not align with the Soviet vision of nationalities policy in the 1930s. Under indigenization policies, Soviet officials granted them widespread freedoms. However, they still had to be accountable to the state and work toward a unified socialist project.[107] The power ascribed to artists, coupled with Stalin's fear of foreign threats, meant that the writers had to be silenced. Soviet power

---

[104]. Bertelsen, "Spatial Dimensions of Soviet Repressions in the 1930s," (2013).
[105]. Senchenko, *Notaky Pro Literaturne Zhittya,* (1988)
[106]. Ibid.
[107]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's,* (2017)

was too precarious to tolerate dissidents and had to consolidate its authority through terror.

Senchenko eventually survived the purges, but in mid-1933, he knew that he could be arrested just as easily as any of his colleagues. He told his friend, "Our chances our equal. So, when something happens to me, know that I did not do anything wrong to the Soviet government."[108] Anybody and everybody could be arrested. The fear ran so deep that for Senchenko, it was not a matter of if, but when.

The Fate of Galicians in Soviet Ukraine

And what of the western Ukrainians that had moved to Kharkiv in hopes of building a new Ukrainian future? They too were arrested with all of their other colleagues, which was the trend across the entire Soviet Union. Senchenko claims that it was an act of "Stalinist sabotage."[109] According to Senchenko, Stalin's agents intentionally recruited Ukrainian intellectuals from western Ukraine. However, he believed out of paranoia that Stalin had always planned on exterminating the Ukrainian intelligentsia and saw the opportunity to eliminate the core group of writers living in Poland-controlled Ukraine.[110] Soviet officials started to arrest western Ukrainians as early as 1930, but no one questioned it because of party propaganda about the threat of foreign influence.

[108]. Senchenko, *Notaky Pro Literaturne Zhittya,* (1988)
[109]. Ibid.
[110]. Ibid.

Soviet officials did not arrest Senchenko. When he returned to Kharkiv at the beginning of 1934, most of the writers and their families were gone. Nevertheless, he continued to live his life as if every day was his last. Senchenko attended numerous party-sponsored feasts and banquets where no cost was spared. No one knew where the food came from. The only thing they did know was that they were not produced in Ukraine. The republic had been devastated and "lay unconscious, hungry, and exhausted."[111] At one such feast, Senchenko spent time with a loyal party-member scientist. NVDK[112] officers approached the two, and the scientist screamed that Senchenko would be joining his colleagues in the Gulag. However, when the officers approached the pair, they grabbed the scientist instead. The scientist could only shout as they dragged him away: "I know that you are chasing Senchenko. But I'm not Senchenko, Senchenko is standing next to you, and I am Galushka, with a holy halo over my head!"[113] During the purges, everyone was an enemy.

Only a handful of this generation of writers lived past WWII. Soviet officials arrested most of the writers between 1933 and 1934 and sentenced them to ten years in the Gulag. They spent the next three years working in the camps. At the height of the purges in 1937, Soviet leaders reviewed their cases and sentenced most of them to death. Over four days at the end of October and beginning of November 1937, a single Soviet military officer executed 1,111 people. 135 of these individuals were Ukrainian intellectuals.[114] Soviet leaders eliminated a whole generation of Ukrainian writers, artists,

---

[111]. Ibid.
[112]. The ministry of internal affairs that took over the secret police in 1934.
[113]. Ibid.
[114]. Bertelsen, "Spatial Dimensions of Soviet Repressions in the 1930s," (2013).

poets, composers, and directors. The Soviet state emerged from the 1930s as a centralized Pan-Soviet state through terrifying surveillance methods and brutal executions.

Chapter 4. Conclusions

The lives of the Soviet Ukrainian writers in Kharkiv during the 1920s-1930s reflect the broader trajectory of the lived experience and policies of the Soviet Union. Indigenization policies in the 1920s offered the writers a chance to try and discern the future of Ukraine in a Soviet context. The Soviet Ukrainian writers exercised agency when interacting with each other and with Soviet officials. They did not function in an isolated bubble; instead, they had deep ties to other Ukrainian national movements and looked to western Europe for inspiration. However, the vision they started to forge centered around a culturally autonomous Ukraine that threatened the central Party and the unity and economic foundations of the Soviet state.

In the late 1920s, Soviet officials became disillusioned with decentralized nationalization and began to target the national communities who indicated a desire for independence. In the 1930s, the regime turned to coercive surveillance measures to establish centralized control over all national communities and republics. The writers, unaware of the regime's fear of their power, moved into the Slovo House in 1930. Their last glimpse of hope of obtaining a peaceful existence vanished as the Slovo House turned from their home into their prison. The regime viewed the brutal elimination of all potential enemies as a necessity to transform their fledgling country into a strong nation.

The last years of Ostap Vyshnya are a glum epilogue in the history of the Soviet Ukrainian national movement after the Party executed all of his closest friends and colleagues. Soviet leaders had ordered the execution of Ostap Vyshnya as well, but he fell severely ill while being transported to the execution site. They transported him to a hospital, where he convalesced for several weeks. By the time he recovered, the purges had waned. Instead, Soviet officials reinstated his prison sentence. He stayed in the Gulag until 1943, when Lavrentiy Beria released him to try to boost Ukrainian morale during the war. However, by that time, he was a hollow shell of the lively man he had once been.[115] One of the last members of the Ukrainian-Soviet intellectual tradition lived out his final days in a melancholy depression. Soviet officials had alleviated their paranoia and secured their regime's power within Soviet borders. Vyshnya's defeated and depressing final years serve as a reminder of the price paid for the Soviet officials to repeal decentralized nationalization and turn toward a centralized surveillance state.

[115]. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's*, (2017); Smolych. *Rozpovid' pro Nespokiĭ*, (1968).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Chodeiik, A .Lyubochenko. *Spohady [Memoirs]*. Toronto, 1951. Read at: https://diasporiana.org.ua/memuari/7075-lyubchenko-a-shhodennik-t-1/. Accessed in November 2021.

Heritage: Literary Source Studies. Textology. Volume Heritage. Volume VII. This Letter Is in the Archives of the Kharkiv Literary Museum, 1930, https://doi.org/http://proslovo.com/fragments/1.

Kardynalovskaya, Tatiana. Nevidstupne Mynule [*An Inevitable Past*]. 2nd ed. Kharkiv, 2005.

Khvylovy, Mykola. "Apologists of Scribbling." in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986).

Khvylovy, Mykola. "Quo Vadis?" in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986).

Khvylovy, Mykola. "Thoughts Against the Current." in *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine: Polemical Pamphlets, 1925-1926*, trans. Myroslav Shkandrij (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986).

Khvylovy, Mykola. "The Woodcocks." Essay. In *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s*, edited by George Luckij, translated by Yuri Tkacz, 15–69. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1986.

Kryzhanivsky, Stepan. "Shcho Sam Bachyv i Chuv." ["What We Saw and Heard"]. Essay. In *About Ostap Vyshnya*. Kharkiv, 1989.

Kulish, Volodymyr. *Slovo pro Budynok "Slovo" [A Word about the Slovo House]*. Toronto: Homin Ukrainy, 1966. Read at: http://proslovo.com/kulish-slovoproslovo. Accessed in November 2021.

Peredsmertna zapyska Mykoly Khvyl′ovoho [Suicide note of Mykola Khvylovy], in Ukrinform. https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/3243000-mikola-hvilovij-1-otce-nas-elektricnoi-sistemi-viku.html. Accessed in March 2022.

Senchenko, Ivan. *Notaky Pro Literaturne Zhittya 20—40-kh Rokiv [Notes on the Literary Life of the 1920s-40s]*. Journal of Ukrainian Language and Literature at School, 1988. http://proslovo.com/senchenko-notatky.

Smolych, Yuriy. *Rozpovid' pro nespokiĭ,* [*A story of Anxiety*] 1968. Read at: http://proslovo.com/smolych-nespokiy1. Accessed November 2021.

Sosyura, Volodymyr *Tretia͡ Rota* [*The Third Company*], 1988. https://www.ukrlib.com.ua/books/printitzip.php?tid=312.

Secondary

All-Ukrainian Association of Proletarian Writers. Accessed April 1, 2022. http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CA%5CL%5CAll6UkrainianAssociationofProletarianWriters.htm.

Applebaum, Anne. *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*. London: Penguin Books, 2018.

“Budynok Slovo (Slovo House),” ProSlovo, 2018, http://proslovo.com/en#15/50.00892/36.23515/-17.6/45.

Bertelsen, Olga. “The House of Writers in Ukraine, the 1930s: Conceived, Lived, Perceived.” *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 2302 (2013). https://doi.org/10.5195/cbp.2013.170.

Brown, Kate. *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Erlacher, Trevor. *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Age of Extremes: An Intellectual Biography of Dmytro Dontsov*. Harvard University Press, 2021.

Fowler, Mayhill. *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.

“Futurism.” Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Accessed November 31, 2021. http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CV%5CA%5CVaplite.htm.

Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Hillis, Faith. “Children of Rus′: Nationalist Imaginations in Right-Bank Ukraine.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 34, no. 1/4 (2015): 315. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44364498.

Hillis, Faith. *Children of Rus': Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017.

Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Kuromiya, Hiroaki. *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Luckij, George S.N., ed. *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s*. Translated by Yuri Tkacz. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1986.

Luckyj, George S.N. *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine: 1917-1934*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990.

Luckyj, George S.N. *Ukrainian Literature in the Twentieth Century: A Reader's Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001.

Naimark, Norman M. *Stalin's Genocides*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Pauly, Matthew D. *Breaking the Yongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

Plokhy, Serhii. *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

Shkandrij, Myroslav. *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1992.

Skandrij, Miroslav. *Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929-1956*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Slezkine, Yuri. “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414–52. https://doi.org/10.2307/2501300.

"Slovo Building," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, March 13, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovo_Building#/media/File:Slovo3.jpg.

Tomenko, Taras, and Yaryna Tsymbal. *Budynok 'Slovo' (Slovo House)*, 2017. https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.60b11a12-0de2-9f22-8165-113b19c9051c?ref_=imdbref_tt_wbr_pvt_aiv&tag=imdbtag_tt_wbr_pvt_aiv-20.

"Vaplite." Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Accessed November 31, 2021. http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CV%5CA%5CVaplite.htm.

Yekelchyk, Serhy. *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2004.

Yekelchyk, Serhy. *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation*. Oxford University Press, 2007.