



BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Palko, Olena (2016) Between two powers: the Soviet Ukrainian writer Mykola Khvyl'ovyi. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 64 (4), pp. 575-598. ISSN 0021-4019.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/25503/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

OLENA PALKO

Between Two Powers: a Soviet Ukrainian Writer Mykola Khvyly'ovyi

Mykola Khvyly'ovyi, acclaimed in the early 1920s as “one of the most outstanding writers of the proletarian age,”¹ remains one of the most controversial figures in Ukrainian culture from the early Soviet period. Even more than eighty years after his suicide, Khvyly'ovyi's biography, creative writings, public engagement and political viewpoints receive multiple, often contradictory interpretations. Mainly, this mixed reception originates from an inability to reconcile his Bolshevik affiliation with the outstanding role he played in national intellectual and cultural history. Not surprisingly his political and aesthetic agendas were simplistically placed in an “either... or” paradigm. From the Soviet perspective, Khvyly'ovyi was reproached for his national pursuit gradually evolving into anti-Soviet opposition. From a nationalistic perspective, introduced after the Second World War among émigré researchers and picked up in Ukraine in the late 1980s, an attempt was made to overlook Khvyly'ovyi's communist affiliation and to present him as a martyr of the Soviet terror.

Worth mentioning, however, is that the ambivalence of Khvyly'ovyi only partly comes from the different ideological standpoints of his interpreters: Khvyly'ovyi's activity throughout the 1920s allows for multiple interpretations. This originates from the complex ideological evolution of the writer's views and orientations, reflected in his imaginative writing, primarily of 1921-1924, and political essays, written during the Literary Discussion of 1925-28. In his creative writings he went through a painful experience of adjusting his revolutionary romanticism, a term used by the writer to designate his early literary manner, to the norms of socialist realism. His social and political essays present a gradual process of politicizing the writer's civic stand stirred by the centralizing tendencies of the Communist Party directed from Moscow.

The misinterpretation of the writer also arises from a paucity of primary sources and the unreliability of those available. Thus, commentators often referred to his highly self-referential or *autothematic*² creative writings to fill the blank spots in the writer's biography. It should be admitted that some of Khvyly'ovyi's novels, such as “Vstupna novela” [The Introductory Novel, 1927³], “Redaktor Kark” [Editor Kark, 1923], “Na ozera” [To the Lakes, 1926], and “Arabesky” [Arabesques, 1927], are clearly self-referential. The device of using a first-person voice erases the boundaries between the writer and his characters, disperses the writer's ideas amongst the cues of his characters, and raises questions over the writer's detachment from a fictional story. As a result,

1 DOROSHKEVYCH Pidruchnyk istorii ukrains'koï literatury (1927) quoted in STRUK Tupyk or Blind-Alley, p. 239

2 The term is borrowed from George Grabowicz. See: GRABOWICZ Symbolic Autobiography, pp. 165-180

3 Here and hereafter a year of the first publication

Khvyl'ovyi's prose offers an insight into his personal ideological evolution but yet, in turn, allows even bigger speculations around his life.

This article aims to trace the way the narrative of Khvyl'ovyi was created and used either to vilify or, on the contrary, to glorify the writer. It will demonstrate how the primary sources were manipulated in order to present the required image of Khvyl'ovyi both in the Soviet Union and in the independent Ukraine. In doing so, the article will analyse how Khvyl'ovyi's views on communism, presented in his imaginative and political writing, have changed over time.

“I WANTED TO BE A UKRAINIAN COMMUNIST”

Mykola Khvyl'ovyi (real name Mykola Fityl'ov) was born on 14 December, 1893 in Sumy region to a teacher's family. Abandoning his education, Khvyl'ovyi moved to Donbas to become a worker. In 1914 he joined the army and a year later was sent to the front, which he recalled as “three years of marches, hunger, terrible horror that I would not dare to describe; three years of squared Golgotha on the distant fields of Galicia, Carpathians, Romania and so on and so forth.”⁴ It was during his military service that Khvyl'ovyi got engaged in revolutionary activity resulting in him joining the newly created Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (KP(b)U) party in April, 1919. In 1921 Khvyl'ovyi was demobilized and moved to Kharkiv to start his literary career.

Khvyl'ovyi's early life is surrounded by rumours and speculation. Among his alleged achievements were his holding of high ranking positions in the Red Army⁵ or even serving in the Cheka.⁶ Nonetheless, those revolutionary accomplishments are rebutted by Khvyl'ovyi's contemporaries. For example, his fellow writer Hryhorii Kostiuk stated in his recollections that “all those hints and allegations about the active connection of the young Khvyl'ovyi with the revolutionary underground, [...] his unique heroism and ‘devilism,’ - all these are only inventions and legends.”⁷ Moreover, Kostiuk claimed that as part of Khvyl'ovyi's narrow circle between 1929 and 1933 (years of particularly intense persecution for Khvyl'ovyi) he never heard any facts of Khvyl'ovyi's heroic biography even though those facts (if true) could have brought his reputation in front of the Party leadership.

Such speculation might be caused, firstly, by the tendency to ascribe plots from Khvyl'ovyi's imaginary writings to his own biography (especially “Ia (Romantyka)” [Myself (Romanticism), 1924] and the less well-known “Podiaka pryvatnoho likaria” [Gratitude of the Private Doctor, 1932⁸], and, secondly, the paucity and uncertainty of primary sources covering this period. There are two frequently cited documents which could shed light on Khvyl'ovyi's early revolutionary years: a fragment from an autobiography (first published in 1987⁹) and a short autobiographical note written for a *troika* during a regular

4 Letters to Mykola Zerov in: KHVYL'OVYI Tvory u dvokh tomakh, vol. 2, p. 852

5 GAN Trahedia Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo, p. 31

6 See: PLIUSHCH Pravda pro khvyl'ovizm; Zadesnians'kyi, Shcho nam dav Mykola Khvyl'ovyi

7 KOSTIUK Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, in: KHVYL'OVYI Tvory v 5 tomakh, vol. 1, p. 32

8 This short story, first published in the collection “R. XV. Rik Zhovtnevoi Revolutsii XV” (1932), has not been included to any of Khvyl'ovyi's Selected Works. It was republished for the first time in Kharkiv Almanac Ukraïns'kyi zasiv, No 1 (13) (1994), pp. 47-74

9 KHVYL'OVYI Uryvok z avtobiohrafii, pp. 106-108

KP(b)U purge in 1924 (published in 1990¹⁰). Indeed, in these documents Khvyl'ovyi addressed his conversion into a Bolshevik: his ideology evolved from being a part of a *narodnik* circle and alliance with the Borot'bists up to becoming a card-carrying Bolshevik and a member of the Bohodukviv executive committee.

Notably, these documents are written in a very passionate way, depicting his zeal and attachment to Bolshevik ideology. Needless to say, the documents, prepared for a purge commission, should be regarded as examples of autobiographical writing, deliberately created by its author to shape his revolutionary personality.¹¹ Khvyl'ovyi, although a party member since 1919, attempted to cover himself against possible reproaches concerning his connection with the Ukrainian People's Republic (a brief encounter with members of a Ukrainian council of soldiers), which he called later a "disorder in his un-crystallized ideology."¹² Similarly, Khvyl'ovyi needed to fit his pro-Ukrainian standpoint, which started to develop at around the same time, into his 'exemplary' Bolshevik personality.

Given the actual purpose of the notes, Khvyl'ovyi surprisingly used them to address his qualms about his party membership. While explaining how he felt to be in the Communist ranks, Khvyl'ovyi confessed: "Ideologically [...] I see myself as a consistent Marxist-Communist, but psychologically I do not see myself as such, and I think that I have no right to hide that. [...] I face myself with the question – do I have a right to carry a Party membership card, or am I only a lumber for the party? I do not always answer those questions in the same way."¹³

Notably, this confession presents the reader with the attitude Khvyl'ovyi developed towards the Bolshevik party at the time of key social and economic experiments undertaken by the Communist Party in the early 1920s. Khvyl'ovyi repeatedly expressed his unfavourable opinion about the New Economic Policy, which he saw as a retreat from revolutionary ideals. That "hopeless NEP with its wild bureaucratism and fat NEPmen"¹⁴ created, according to Khvyl'ovyi, a "suffocating atmosphere" forcing him for a time to abandon his literary activity and become a factory worker, to "freshen up."¹⁵ In doing so, Khvyl'ovyi, one may argue, forced himself into a corner: being a Party member means to share its ideology and to agree with its actions, since the Party cannot be mistaken. Hence, Khvyl'ovyi's questioning his compatibility with the party: "do I have a right to carry a Party membership card, or am I only a lumber for the party?" became his personal attempt to reconcile his beliefs with the policies pursued by the Party, with which he fully identified but could not agree.¹⁶

"AM I REALLY SUPERFLUOUS BECAUSE I LOVE UKRAINE MADLY?"

10 Kratkaiia biografiia chlena KP(b)U Nikolaia Grigor'ievicha Fitileva, in: KHVYL'OVYI Tvory u dvokh tomakh, vol. 2, pp. 830-837

11 Based on works of HELLBECK Revolution on my mind and HALFIN, Terror in My Soul; Fitzpatrick, Everyday Stalinism

12 KHVYL'OVYI Kratkaiia biografiia, p. 832

13 KHVYL'OVYI Kratkaiia biografiia, pp. 836-837

14 Khvyl'ovyi's Foreword to the collection of Ellan-Blakytynyi's poems, quoted in: KHVYLIA, Vid ukhlyu u prirvu, p. 596

15 KHVYL'OVYI Kratkaiia biografiia, p. 835

16 For similar questioning of a party loyalty see: HALFIN Popov's apostasy, pp. 223-250

Khvylovyyi entered Ukrainian literature in 1921, when he moved to Kharkiv, the capital of the Ukrainian SSR, from the provincial town Bogodukhiv. The same year, he joined the circle of Vasyli' Ellan-Blakytyni, the editor-in-chief of the Kharkiv government newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* [VUTsVK News], who introduced the young writer to the artistic and intellectual milieu. The first collection of Khvylovyyi's short stories *Blakytyni Etiudy* [Blue Etudes], published in 1923, brought him immediate fame. Volodymyr Koriak, a well-known critic of the time, responded to this first collection as follows: "Genuinely: Khvylovyyi. He is excited and excites all of us, he intoxicates and disquiets, irritates, weakens, captivates and fascinates. [...] He scourges anything that is corrupt in the revolution, seeking after it everywhere in the name of his beloved idea: communism, which he had accepted as an ascetic and a romanticist".¹⁷ The publication of his second collection *Osin'* [Autumn] in 1924 established him as "one of the most outstanding writers of the proletarian age."¹⁸

Khvylovyyi's imaginative writing of the early 1920s demonstrates the complicated process of ideological adaptation for an entire generation of revolutionary youth and Civil War activists to the post-revolutionary realities.¹⁹ By rights, Khvylovyyi, a party member since 1919, an activist of the Red Army and a member of a Bolshevik executive committee, became an inventor and a promoter of a heroic myth of the Revolution and the Civil War in Ukrainian literature. The Civil War is thus regarded as a golden age, to which Khvylovyyi's characters repeatedly referred to in order to oppose the triviality of the NEP years, seen by many as a perversion of the revolution.

For this reason, Khvylovyyi with his early writings was placed on a par with his Russian contemporary Boris Pil'niak (1884-1938), an author of the unorthodox chronicles of the Bolshevik Revolution "Golyi God" [Naked Year, 1922]. Similarly to Pil'niak's most common metaphor for the Revolution as a blizzard, unplanned, uncontrollable element valued for its purgative function,²⁰ Khvylovyyi's revolution is depicted as a cardinal shift, a rebellion against triviality, a call for action and purification from the old false morality. It is described as being "without buttons, with elbow room, room to stretch oneself, to draw a lung-filling breath in the wide open spaces."²¹ Khvylovyyi's expectations from those turbulent years are condensed in metaphors of a "blue Savoy," "intangibile Commune," or a "Commune behind the hills."

In his short stories and novels, written during 1921-1924, Khvylovyyi presented a vivid palette of revolutionary activists and war heroes, snapshoted amidst zealous struggle for a "new unknown." Those characters included revolutionary leaders such as, for example, the main character of the folklore-style story "Legenda" [The Legend], Sten'ka, a partisan's wife who disguised herself as a man to head a detachment of red rebels, whose last words before the execution were full of optimism and expectations: "Listen! Listen! I am dying in the name of freedom. I appeal to you: sharpen the knives. Look, look at the glow: that is our liberation blazing; new outset is coming!"²²

17 Quoted in LEITES, *IASHEK Desiat' rokov* vol. 1, p. 526

18 STRUK Tupyk or Blind-Alley, p. 239

19 On the inability of the revolutionary youth to reunite their aspiration and dreams with the contradictory reality of NEP see, for example, NEUMANN *Youth, It's Your Turn!*

20 On Pil'niak's account of revolution see: MALONEY *Anarchism and Bolshevism*

21 KHVYLOVYY Puss in boots, in: *Stories From the Ukraine*, p. 16

22 KHVYLOVYYI *Legenda*, in: *KHVYLOVYYI Tvory v 5 tomakh*, vol. 1, p. 319

Another example of a revolutionary heroes is Comrade Zhuchok, the central character of “Kit u chobotiakh” [Puss in Boots], a non-partisan cook in a field kitchen who over time is promoted to leader of a communist cell. The Comrade is seen as an ardent promoter of the “crimson revolution,” a revolutionary ant (*mural'*). One of many, this Puss in Boots is “going through the wastes of the revolution” in her cap with a pentagonal star on a shaved head – “not to suit a fashion - but for the march, for convenience.”²³

Khvylovyyi summarized that optimistic revolutionary upheaval through the words of Comrade Uliana, a character of “Sentymental'na istoriia” [The Sentimental Tale]: “Heavens! You cannot imagine what a wonderful country it was. Under its sun, not only the inner world of each one of us was transformed and we were made ideal, but we were physically born anew. I swear to you! Even physically we were ideal men and women.”²⁴

However, the years of the revolution were followed by a peacetime reconstruction requiring new virtues and skills. As stated by Nikolai Bukharin at the Third Congress of the Komsomol in late 1920, while the party still needed “conscious Communists who have both a fiery heart and a burning revolutionary passion,” it was now especially important to develop young Communists “who have calm heads, who know what they want, who can stop when necessary, retreat when necessary, take a step to the side when necessary, move cautiously weighing and calculating each step.”²⁵ This newly promoted image of a young Communist, however, diverged from the idea of socialism, to which militant youth adhered during the Civil War years. Instead, those recently privileged activists with the introduction of NEP became, as Sheila Fitzpatrick noted, outsiders, whose values started to be seen as alien within the society they struggled for.²⁶ Notably, at the time of reversed morals and ethics, death became the way to prove loyalty to former integrity and suicide became a means to protest against the betrayal of the revolution.

The epidemic of suicides among military youth and party members, widely recorded in NEP years,²⁷ was also echoed in Khvylovyyi's novels. Some of his characters in the post-revolutionary hangover mood are portrayed as being on the verge of taking their lives (e.g., the Editor Kark with his Browning (“Editor Kark”) or Mar'iana, who decided to hasten her death by getting infected with syphilis (“Zaulok,” [A Back Street], 1923); others are presented on their deathbeds, happy to be dying in the name of the idea (like, Vadym (“Synii Lystopad” [Blue November], 1923), who asks “what are our tragedies against this great symphony towards the future”²⁸); or simply pushed to suicide being unable to break a cynical cycle of everyday existence (e.g., Khlonia, a former Communist idealist, who understood that “Lenin repeats only once in five hundred years” (“Povist' pro sanatoriinu zonu” [A Novel about a Sanatorium], 1924).

The NEP years witnessed not only the banishing of the old heroes but also set the stage for a new pantheon. With the rise of bureaucracy, loyalty to the party no longer required idealistic sacrifices; loyalty started to be defined through unquestionable service and submission. Thus, those “chaste apostles and saint preachers” were transformed into a

23 KHVYLOVY Puss in Boots, p. 17

24 KHVYLOVY Sentimental tale, in: Stories From the Ukraine, p. 77

25 Quoted from GORSUCH NEP Be Damned! p. 564

26 FITZPATRICK The Legacy of the Civil War, p. 393

27 About suicides in the Soviet Union in the 1920s see, e.g.: PINNOW Lost to the Collective; Violence against the Collective Self, pp. 201-230

28 KHVYL'OVYI Synii lystopad, in: KHVYL'OVYI, Tvory v 5 tomakh, vol. 1, p. 224

group of dishonourable opportunists: “now every former giant is nothing more than a nasty intellectual (*inteligentishka*), parvenu, scum who impudently bristles up and even more impudently avouches ‘we’ (‘we’ to define not those who struggled, but those who are in ‘power’).”²⁹

The bureaucratisation of the Soviet society was derided in Khvyl'ovyi's short story “Ivan Ivanovych,” 1929. This novel is a satire on the entire social order, whose implementers existed in some parallel world, in which, it seemed, Communism had already triumphed. With artificial sincerity and optimism Khvyl'ovyi depicts the lifestyle of an average communist cell leader, who genuinely lives under communism, even more, in Thomas More's Utopia (the symbolic name of the street where the character's family lives). Ivan Ivanovich in his four-room apartment furnished with mahogany, French governess and a cook has already witnessed the “new revolutionary interpretation” of the social order, descending to reality only while changing into shabby clothes (“well aware of the transitory nature of the period in which they lived”³⁰) to take part in a party cell meeting. Thus, in 1929 Khvyl'ovyi exposes the pervasive corruption of the long-anticipated social order, where every opportunist considers himself protected by a membership card, where the absolute truth exists on the pages of a party newspaper, where moral norms are irrelevant, where communism is already flourishing, but only for the chosen.

Yet, there were also other important political developments, to which Khvyl'ovyi responded through his characters, namely the frustration of those numerous Ukrainian communists, for whom Bolshevik authority was meant to bring along national self-determination and cultural flourishing. Those errant dreamers, same as journalist Kark (Editor Kark) in the years to follow could not conceive the discrepancy between the slogans of national free self-determination and the realities of the Soviet national policy. The question Kark repeatedly asked himself (“Am I really superfluous because I love Ukraine madly?”³¹) became the verdict for the KP(b)U members with a distinct national orientation. Moreover, with the Treaty of the workers' and peasants' alliance between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR, signed in December 1920, according to which two republics united certain commissariats (of military and naval affairs, foreign trade, finance, labour, railways, post and telegraph, and Supreme Economic Council) “for defence purposes as well as in the interests of economic development,” the status of the Ukrainian republic was de facto reduced to that of an autonomous Russian region.³² These developments were accurately observed by Khvyl'ovyi in 1927. He concluded that the Communist party from being a vanguard of the proletarian struggle “quietly and gradually was being transformed into an ordinary ‘gatherer of the Russian land’ (*sobiratelia zemli rus'koi*).”³³

“FROM DIVERSION INTO THE ABYSS”³⁴

29 KHVYL'OVYI Sanatoriina Zona, in: KHVYL'OVYI, Tvory v 5 tomakh, vol. 2, p. 133

30 KHVYLOVY Ivan Ivanovich, in: Stories From the Ukraine, p. 184

31 KHVYL'OVYI Redaktor Kark, in: KHVYL'OVYI, Tvory v 5 tomakh, vol. 1, p. 149

32 Adamsky, Kantselyaruk, Dergachov, The Ukrainian Question in Russian Political Strategy in: DERGACHOV Oleksandr (ed.) Ukrainian Statehood, pp. 267-297

33 KHVYLOVY Woodcocks, in: Before the Storm, pp. 63-64

34 Reference to KHVYLIA Vid ukhlyu – u prirvu

In 1927 Khvyl'ovyi declared: “to my arabesques – finis.”³⁵ This meant the end to his lyrics, to his characters full of illusions, to his expectations of future change. In 1925-28 Khvyl'ovyi became involved in the Literary Discussion, debates that started merely over cultural issues but soon shifted into the political domain. Khvyl'ovyi entered those debates agitating for quality in artistic work and a new path for proletarian literature. And yet, over the course of these years he gradually developed his view, eventually calling for distancing from Russia and sovereignty of Ukraine, precisely worded in the dichotomy “Ukraine or Little Russia (*Malorosiiia*),” used as a title for a pamphlet by Khvyl'ovyi, never published in the Soviet Union.

The Literary Discussion, one of the most significant developments of the 1920s in Soviet Ukraine, began with a squib by Hrytsko Iakovenko, entitled “On Critics and Criticism in Literature” published in *Kul'tura i Pobut* (Culture and Daily life), a literary supplement to governmental newspaper *Visti VUTSVK* on April, 30, 1925. A reply by Khvyl'ovyi was published in the same issue. His “First Letter to Literary Youth” (“On ‘Satan in a Barrel,’ Graphomaniacs, Speculators and Other *Prosvita* Types”) initiated a long debate between Khyl'ovyi, his associates and like-minded colleagues and their opponents, representing an official party-authorized position. The most important of them were Andrii Khvyliia³⁶ and Ievhen Hirschak,³⁷ prominent party figures, and Serhii Pelypenko, the leader of the mass literary movements *Pluh* (Plough).³⁸

In his pamphlets from 1925-1926, Khvyl'ovyi developed four central images: *prosvita*, ‘Europe’, art and the Asiatic Renaissance. These concepts, however, had a clear reference to the broader on-going debates around the orientation of Ukrainian culture, the social role of literature and the Ukrainian language as a means of artistic expressionism. Conflicting views on the status of Ukraine and its autonomous cultural development had emerged right after the October Revolution and were brought to the fore by the rivalry between the Russian-led *Proletkult*: an acronym for “proletarian culture” in Russian; a mass movement, resulting from the Bolshevik Revolution, aimed at creating a new proletarian art by forced interference in artistic creativity, and Ukrainian writers. Writers in Ukraine were repelled by Proletkult’s apparent Russian orientation, which “not only failed to acknowledge Ukrainian national art, culture or language, but referred to the [Ukrainian] Soviet Republic as a ‘region’ [*krai*].”³⁹ They received support from the Ukrainian People’s Commissariat of Education. In May 1919, Hnat Mykhailychenko, a newly appointed People’s Commissar of Education, reported at the Vseukrlitkom’s meeting that “proletarian art can reach its international goal only through channels national both in content and form.”⁴⁰

The fight for literature written in the Ukrainian language was ostensibly exhausted with the introduction of *ukrainizatsiia*, the local variant of the all-Soviet nationalities

³⁵ KHVYL'OVYI Arabesky, in: *Tvory v 5 tomakh*, vol. 1, p. 414

³⁶ E.g., KHVYLIA Vid ukhyly u prirvu, in: *KHVYLOVY Tvory*, vol. 5, p. 566-601

³⁷ HIRCHAK Na dva fronta v borbe s natsionalismom, p. 226

³⁸ PYLYPENKO ‘Iak na pravdyvomu shliakhu spoty kaiutsia, *Kultura i Pobut*’, 1926, no 5, in: LEITES, IASHEK Desiat' rokiv, vol. II, pp.177-181

³⁹ Quoted in ILNYTZKYJ Ukrainian Futurism, p.39

⁴⁰ MYKHAILYCHENKO ‘Proletars’ke mystetstvo (tezy na dopovidi Vseukrlitkomu)’ in: LEITES, IASHEK Desiat' rokiv, vol. II, pp.25-28.

policy of *korenizatsiia*, launched at the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923. The new preferential nationalities policy envisaged a number of coercive methods aimed to compel peoples and minorities of the Soviet Union to use their native languages in everyday life. For these purposes, publishing and distribution of books in native languages was prioritised. The process of linguistic *ukrainizatsiia* went hand in hand with another party initiative of the time, *liknep*, or “eradication of illiteracy”. The combined results of these initiatives were two-fold. On the one hand, they created a demand for literature in Ukrainian, whilst granting writers, perhaps for the first time in history, direct access to their audience. On the other hand, however, the 1920s witnessed the emergence of a mass audience with limited artistic demands and aesthetic expectations. The question of meeting its expectations led to new fractions within Ukraine’s literary corpus.

The social developments of the time and their impact on the quality of literature were framed by Khvyl’ovyi in the binary of “Europe vs. *Prostita*” or “Olympus vs. *Prosvita*”. The *prosvity* (enlightenment societies) became the first point of criticism. Under these societies, a network of cultural and educational centres had been established in Ukraine during the 19th century; following the Revolution, the Commissariat of Education had used them to provide basic political education, and for literacy campaigns. In addition, they became centres for propaganda work and for nurturing future proletarian writers. Khvyl’ovyi, in turn, considered ‘*prosvita*’ as a psychological category; for him it became the embodiment of provincialism, parochial and utilitarian attitude towards literature, hackwork and mass culture as opposed to high culture and ‘academism’. Hence, the opposition “Olympus against *Prosvita*”. This opposition also applied to understanding creative writing (a gift or a skill); a writer (a talented individual with his own worldview or a trained one, prepared to reproduce ready-made plots); and a reader (is literature meant to entertain or to inspire?). ‘Olympus’ (or ‘Europe’, another psychological category) in this opposition meant a full-bodied national culture.

The “Olympus vs. *Prosvita*” binary in full represented the state of affairs in Ukrainian letters. In 1925, there were a number of literary organisations in Ukraine. In 1922, an all-Ukrainian peasant writers’ union *Pluh* (Plough) was established by Pylypenko, an editor-in-chief of Kharkiv newspaper *Sil’ski Visti* (Rural news). Focused mainly on “the revolutionary peasantry,” the *Pluh* writers aimed to create mass literature by using “the greatest simplicity and economy of artistic methods.”⁴¹ A similar orientation was adopted by the Association of the Proletarian Writers *Hart* (Tempering), initiated by Ellan-Blakytnyi, the editor-in-chief of the Kharkiv-based governmental newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* in January, 1923. Yet another incarnation of proletarian literature in Soviet Ukraine was the All-Ukrainian Association of Proletarian Writers (*VUAPP*, *Vseukraïns’ka assotsiatsiia proletars’kykh pys’mennykiv*), formed in 1924 under the auspices of the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (*VAPP*). These three organisations promoted the idea of mass culture. This, according to Pylypenko, included orientation towards a mass readership; a simple and accessible style and language; common topics; priority of content over form; and frequent engagement with readers. In general, literature was regarded as a mass movement, composed of “literary forces, from the highest in their

⁴¹ Platforma ideologiczna i khudozhnia Spilky Selianskykh Pys’mennykiv Pluh, in: LEITES, IASHEK Desiat’ rokov, vol. II, p.76

quality and talent to the lowest, to *robsil'kory* [worker and peasant correspondents], contributors to wall newspaper and handwritten journals.”⁴²

The approach of regarding “the sign outside the State Publishing House, the aphorism on a fence, and the verse on the toilet wall” (Khvyl'ovyi)⁴³ as fine literature was confronted by the so called “Olympians,” championed by the *Hart* members Khvyl'ovyi, Dosvitnyi and Ialovyi. They formed a faction with a symbolically named “Urbino,”⁴⁴ arguing that art could not become a substitute to general enlightenment. This group defended the idea that literature should not be diminished to suit middlebrow tastes but, on the contrary, should set up certain standards to encourage readers to raise their preferences. Khvyl'ovyi warned against the devaluation of artistic activity and meeting the tastes of a mass audience. He believed in “the new art [that] is being created by workers and peasants. On condition, however, that they will be intellectually developed and talented, people of genius.”⁴⁵ These three writers formed the core of the new literary organisation, the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature (*Vil'na Akademiia Proletars'koi Literatry*, *VAPLITE*, 1926-1928), which, after *Hart*'s dissolution in 1925, became the only alternative to the state-sponsored writers' unions (especially, the All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers (*Vseukraïns'ka Spilka Proletars'kyh Pys'mennykiv*, *VUSPP*, 1927-1932).

The literary discussion involved many contributors. Essays published by Khvyl'ovyi, his supporters and his opponents were widely discussed and received support from different sections of the Ukrainian public. The main concern of this public discussion was, however, the social role of literature: should art be subordinated to political imperatives and be didactic and useful, or should it merely be imagination's plaything, detached from social conditions? The letter from the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education (formerly Kharkiv University) condemned Khvyl'ovyi's “unpatriotic orientation on literary standards set by Western Europe”. Instead of highbrow writing and elitist literature, the Kharkiv Institute's staff called for “a mass literature accessible to and so badly required by workers”.⁴⁶ Similar opinion was voiced by the members of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv. On May 24, 1925 a public discussion “Paths for the Development of Contemporary Literature” was hosted by this authoritative scientific institution. One of the questions submitted was “Which Europe [does] Khvyl'ovyi wants to follow?” The critique was overwhelming; Khvyl'ovyi was accused of advocating ‘bourgeois, philistine, and hostility to the goals of Communism’ Europe. As one participant questioned: “Should one prefer the Tarzan novel of Edgar Rice Burroughs to the poetry of Maiakovskii?”⁴⁷ Among the Kyivan intellectuals, however, there were those who supported Khvyl'ovyi's stance. Mykola Zerov, a Kyivan poet, translator and literary scholar, made an attempt to deprive Khvyl'ovyi's views of political implications. According to Zerov, ‘Europe’ in Khvyl'ovyi's approach was nothing more than a strong

⁴² PYLYPENKO *Nashi grikhy* in: LEITES, IASHEK *Desiat' rokiv*, vol. II, p. 420

⁴³ KHVYLOVY Thoughts Against the Current, in: KHVYLOVY *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 109

⁴⁴ A reference to the Italian city Urbino which become the predecessor of the Renaissance culture

⁴⁵ KHVYLOVY *Quo Vadis?* in: KHVYLOVY *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 54

⁴⁶ Quote in SHKANDRIJ *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation*, p. 54

⁴⁷ Shliakhy rozvytku suchasnoi literatry: *Dysput 24 travnia 1925 r.* (Kiev, 1925), p. 7

cultural tradition. From this point of view, the opposition of 'Europe vs. Prosvita' was framed as *kultura* vs. *khaltura*, a culture of lasting values vs. hackwork.⁴⁸

Despite attempts to confine Khvyl'ovyi's concepts within the cultural realm, it was the political undertone of the pamphlets which was discerned and picked up by the party officials. In the flow of the debates, the underlying question of Khvyl'ovyi pamphlets, whether any of the cultural advances were possible in a "culturally backward nation", received a clear political sounding: a demanding of political and cultural autonomy. The writer's positioning towards Russia at the early stage of the debates was defined in cultural terms. He agitated against the orientation towards Russian art. It was stated that permanent cultural dependency on Russian patterns "conditioned our psyche to play slavish imitator," converted Ukraine into a "classic country of cultural epigonism" of "servile psychology" continuing to suffer from "cultural backwardness."⁴⁹ Bearing in mind this eternal impediment to comprehensive cultural development, Khvyl'ovyi asked: "by which of the world's literatures should we set our course?" and immediately provided a definite and unconditional answer: "On no account by the Russian. [...] Ukrainian poetry must flee as quickly as possible from Russian literature and its styles."⁵⁰

It was in April 1926 after the letter of Joseph Stalin to "Comrade Kaganovich and the Other Members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, Ukraine K.P.(B.)" that the literary discussion acquired definite political meaning. In this letter, Khvyl'ovyi was attacked not as much for his oppositional views, but for expressing such 'defeatist' ideas while being a Communist party member:

At a time when the proletarians of Western Europe and their Communist Parties are in sympathy with 'Moscow,' this citadel of the international revolutionary movement and of Leninism, at a time when the proletarians of Western Europe look with admiration at the flag that flies over Moscow, the Ukrainian Communist Khvilevoy has nothing better to say in favour of 'Moscow' than to call on the Ukrainian leaders to get away from 'Moscow' 'as fast as possible'.⁵¹

Yet, Khvyl'ovyi's response to this critique was worded even more sharply. In the pamphlet "Ukraina chy Malorosiiia" [Ukraine or Little Russia, 1926] he stated:

We are indeed an independent state whose republican organism is a part of the Soviet Union. And Ukraine is independent not because we, communists, desire this, but because the iron and irresistible will of the laws of history demands it, because only in this way shall we hasten class differentiation in Ukraine. [...] To gloss over independence with a hollow pseudo-Marxism is to fail to understand that Ukraine will continue to be an arena for counter-revolution as long as it does not pass through the natural stage that Western Europe went through during the formation of nation-states.⁵²

Such statements, issued by the card-carrying communist, were seen as surrendering to nationalism. More precisely as if to take into account Khvyl'ovyi party affiliation, Stalin in the above mentioned letter pointed out: "What is to be said of other Ukrainian intellectuals, those of the non-communist camp, if Communists begin to talk, and not only to

⁴⁸ MACE Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation, p. 141

⁴⁹ KHVYLOVY Thoughts Against the Current, in: KHVYLOVY The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine, p. 124

⁵⁰ KHVYLOVY, Apologists of Scribbling, in: KHVYLOVY The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine, p. 222

⁵¹ J. V. STALIN to "Comrade Kaganovich and the Other Members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, Ukraine C.P.(B.)," letter from 26 April, 1926:

<<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1926/04/26.htm>> (Accessed 11 June 2014).

⁵² KHVYLOVY Ukraine or Little Russia, in: KHVYLOVY The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine, p. 227

talk but even to write in our Soviet press, in the language of Khvilevoy?”⁵³ Obviously, “Ukraine or Little Russia” was censored for publication. The writer was denounced as a bourgeois nationalist, and all his work was pejoratively labelled as ‘*khvyl'ovism*.’ Moreover, at the June Plenum of the KP(b)U Central Committee (1-6 June, 1926) Khvyl'ovyi was condemned for eight deviations, including “disseminating ideas of Ukrainian fascism.”⁵⁴ The same year accusatory articles and literary critique, composed by party ideologists Andrii Khvyliia, Vlas Chubar, Volodymyr Zaton'sky, and Sergii Pylypenko, poured on the pages of the official newspapers.

HUNTING FOR A “WOODCOCK”⁵⁵

It was around this time that a new image of an ambivalent irresolute communist Khvyl'ovyi, who succumbed to his deepened nationalist sentiments, started to develop. One of the instruments chosen for this matter was a deliberate manipulation of the documents gathered on Khvyl'ovyi by the secret services, aimed at consolidating this image and making it, so to say, authentic.

Evidence of the party's attempt to create a certain image of the communist Khvyl'ovyi can be found in a recently published collection of declassified documents from the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine.⁵⁶ This collection contains secret service reports and informers' messages to the State Political Directorate of the Ukrainian SSR, anonymous evaluations emphasizing the nationalistic and anti-Soviet content of Khvyl'ovyi's writings, evidence from contemporaries and close acquaintances, reports by informers on the talks surrounding the death of the author, etc. gathered between 1930 and 1933. These documents, whose value for scholarship on Khvyl'ovyi is beyond doubt, nonetheless raise the question of the overall veracity of primary sources compiled by the secret services in the 1930s.⁵⁷ It raises the question of whether a historian can rely overall on documents deliberately prepared by numerous secret agents and if a historian, by attaching scientific value to those fabrications and misinformation, becomes a ‘collaborator’ of these secret services. In the case of Khvyl'ovyi, would a historian retransmit further an intentionally created image of an ambivalent Soviet writer?

The intention behind the personal file S-183 on Khvyl'ovyi can be gauged by bringing this collection into line with other recently published documents on the relationship between the central party leadership and the Ukrainian SSR. In one such document, namely the State Political Directorate (GPU) report “Pro Ukraïns'kyi Separatyzm” [On Ukrainian separatism],⁵⁸ cultural work was equated to an armed struggle for Ukrainian independence. In this official statement, composed in 1926, long before the launch of political nationally-based persecutions it was declared that “the fact that Ukrainian nationalists ceased the open struggle with the Soviet power and formally acknowledged it does not mean that they have definitively reconciled themselves with the present state of affairs and have truly given up their hostile plans.”⁵⁹

⁵³ STALIN's letter to Comrade Kaganovich

⁵⁴ HIRCHAK *Na dva fronta v bor'be s natsionalismom*, p. 50

⁵⁵ Reference to SHAPOVAL and PANCHENKO (eds.) *Poliuvannia na “Val'dshnepa.”*

⁵⁶ SHAPOVAL and PANCHENKO (eds.) *Poliuvannia na “Val'dshnepa.”*

⁵⁷ RÉV *Retroactive Justice*, pp. 1-3

⁵⁸ SHAPOVAL *On Ukrainian Separatism*, pp. 275-302

⁵⁹ SHAPOVAL *On Ukrainian Separatism*, p. 287

This secret GPU document, in which the name of Khvyl'ovyi was also mentioned, encouraged informing on Ukrainian intellectuals, who have treacherously changed their tactics but not their anti-Soviet standpoints. The results of the meticulous work that secret agents conducted on the Ukrainian intellectuals are presented in another collection of declassified documents *Ukraïns'ka Inteligentsia i Vlada: Zvedennia Sekretneho Viddilu DPU USRR 1927-1929 rr.* [Ukrainian Intellectuals and the Authorities. Summaries of the Secret Department of the State Political Administration of Ukrainian SSR for 1927-1929].⁶⁰ This collection features weekly top secret reports (*svodki*), drafted by the Secret Department of the State Political Administration of the Ukrainian SSR during 1927 and 1929 based on operative sources and informers' reports on actions deemed to be of counter-revolutionary or anti-Soviet character. Notably, this collection of documents recounts the methods used to falsify evidence for a 1929 show trial against the so-called Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (*SVU*) consisting of forty-five Ukrainian intellectuals, writers and theologues former politicians and activists.

Khvyl'ovyi only partly escaped charges in 1929. By that time, Khvyl'ovyi had already submitted two open letters of recantation, denouncing his earlier views.⁶¹ Yet, further proof of Khvyl'ovyi's loyalty was required: the writer was assigned to communicate the official party line on the *SVU* case, covering the trial in the party press.⁶² The insight behind this appointment is provided by Kostiuk in his memoirs. Kostiuk recalled that Khvyl'ovyi with his colleagues, right after the arrests of those *SVU* intellectuals became known, went to the TsK to express doubts about the case. Kostiuk speculates that it was the nature of the "evidence in support of the accusation," probably going beyond those forty-five already arrested, which compelled Khvyl'ovyi to agree to take on the role of a party 'spokesman.'⁶³

Taking into account those developments, a question arises why the personal file on Khvyl'ovyi started to be compiled only in 1930. The opening year of the file cast doubts on the underlying motive of the GPU to start surveillance of the writer. In 1930, after several letters of recantation, the dissolution of all the literary groups Khvyl'ovyi was engaged in, and almost total silence over the last years, Khvyl'ovyi, as corroborated by one secret report, began "to behave more quietly." Hence, this personal file was a preparation for further purges against Ukrainian intelligentsia, which could be used either against Khvyl'ovyi himself or to force him, if need be, to testify against his colleagues? The documents put together in File S-183, present an image of the communist Khvyl'ovyi, who was dangerously ambivalent about Soviet authority. It was sufficient ground for further actions, which, however, Khvyl'ovyi avoided by committing suicide on 13 May, 1933.

The image of a weak unsteady communist was consolidated after Khvyl'ovyi's death. The main message of the official obituary notices and Party representative's

60 DANYLENKO (ed.) *Ukraïns'ka Inteligentsia i Vlada*

61 For Khvyl'ovyi's repentant letters see: Zaiava grupy komunistiv chleniv VAPLITE in: *KHVYL'OVYI Tvory v 5 tomakh*, vol. 4, pp. 67-568; Khvyl'ovyi, *Lyst do gazety "Komunist"*, in: *KHVYL'OVYI Tvory*, vol. 4, 571-274

62 As a result, two newspaper articles were written: "A khto shche sydyt na lavi pidsudnyh? (do procesu 'Spilky vyzvolennia Ukrainy')," *Kharkivs'ky proletar* 16 March 1930; and "Za shchodennykom S. O. Iefremova – vozhdia, akademika, 'sovisti zemli ukraïnskoï', shcho palahkotyt' 'velykym polumiam'," *Kharkivs'ky proletar* 21 March 1930; 25 March 1930

63 KOSTIUK *Zustrichi i Proshchannia*, p. 279

speeches was that Khvyl'ovyi lacked revolutionary temper in a time when “proletarians and peasants of the state with enthusiasm fight in all spheres of socialist building”⁶⁴ when “every day, every hour of our struggle put us closer to the triumph of Socialism all over the world.”⁶⁵ Thus, Khvyl'ovyi's decision was perceived as worthless, tragic, and ridiculous, asserting that it had “nothing to do with the membership in the Communist party.”⁶⁶ It was stressed that the Party “always valued him highly and repeatedly tried to disengage him from his old faults and past milieu and to move forward towards communist development.”⁶⁷

Within a short period of time, his life-long activity was labelled counter-revolutionary, his grave was levelled to the ground,⁶⁸ his writings were removed from libraries, and his name disappeared from official literary criticism. Until the early 1980s, Khvyl'ovyi's name in the Soviet Union could only be used in connection with ‘*khvyl'ovism*’ – a general term to define class enemies. The same approach was used for the entry on the writer in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1935).⁶⁹ Moreover, the image of a leader of a “national deviationist group of writers” was introduced outside the Soviet Ukraine: in the English edition of the reference volume about the Soviet Ukraine (1969) Khvyl'ovyi was mentioned only through his “manifestation of local nationalism.”⁷⁰

KHVYL'OVISM IS “A MODERN NATIONALISM OF THE 1930S”

Although forbidden in the Soviet Ukraine, debates about Khvyl'ovyi's contribution to Ukrainian literature and politics flourished among the Ukrainian diaspora. Not surprisingly, the main discussion point became his collaboration with the Bolshevik party and, as its outcome, his suicide. His party membership was presented either as 1) a compelled one, which enabled him to pursue his literary activity (his unique role in the literary discussion in particular) or 2) a voluntary one with all of the negative connotations of this his betrayal and cooperation with the enemy. In other words, for some scholars, Khvyl'ovyi's activity, as well as the series of his pamphlets in the mid-1920s, was “sufficiently revolutionary and explosive to stir at first a great debate, [...] and then to draw down the rage and retribution of the Communist party,”⁷¹ whereas others regarded Khvyl'ovyi as a provocateur who “opened the window for the agents of the occupying power [the Bolshevik party] to see who would be the first to rush to it to catch a breath of fresh air” and “helped the ENKVD to make short work of Ukrainian cultural and public activists either non-Communist or Ukrainian communists.”⁷²

The existing secondary literature on Khvyl'ovyi offers a variety of ideologically loaded approaches to assess his personality, literary activity or public engagement. The way the writer is evaluated depends on the personal convictions of the interpreter or an uncritical interpretation of the entire period of the 1920s both in the diaspora and in the

64 Note on Khvyl'ovyi's suicide in “Visti VUTSVK” 14 May 1933

65 Speech of comrade KYRYLENKO in: KHVYL'OVYI Tvory, vol. 5, p.142

66 Speech of comrade MYKYTENKO in: KHVYL'OVYI Tvory, vol. 5, p.138

67 Speech of comrade MYKYTENKO, p.139

68 Symbolic grave to Mykola Khvyl'ovyi was opened in Kharkiv in April 1995

69 KHVYLEVOI Mykola in Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, vol. 59, p. 488

70 SOVIET UKRAINE, p. 469

71 LUCKYJ Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, p. 62

72 ZADESNIAN'S KYI Shcho nam dav Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, pp. 159-160

national historiography. Yet, all those different ways execute a similar approach highlighting Khvył'ovyi's ideological ambivalence. The emphasis on one or the other side of the 'scale of convictions' often depends on the interpreter's own biases.

The way Khvył'ovyi was evaluated within the diaspora depended significantly on the ideological background of the observer. For a number of émigrés, the Bolsheviks represented the enemy who had crushed the idea of Ukrainian independence by a military offensive. However, there were a large number of those, who due to their earlier socialist orientation as well as political and cultural advance in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s, tended towards reconciliation with the Bolsheviks, seeing the latter as defenders of the idea of a sovereign Ukraine. There was a large number of the so-called Sovietophiles, including such prominent figures as Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi or Volodymyr Vynnychenko, for whom the activity of Khvył'ovyi and of other nationally oriented communists symbolised the possibility of a nationally defined socialist state.

Yet, the recognition granted by the émigré socialists to the Ukrainian SSR hinged on the level of affirmative actions provided by the central government to support the republic's national development. Thereby, new tendencies in the cultural sphere introduced during the period of the so-called cultural revolution of 1928-1931 were regarded by this group, as can be seen from the letter of September 1933 from Vynnychenko to the TsK KP(b)U and TsK VKP(b), as proof of the inconsistent Soviet political practices on the national question, leading to numerous suicides among high-ranking Ukrainian communists.⁷³ The suicides of Khvył'ovyi (13.05.1933) and the then Minister of Education Mykola Skrypnyk (07.07.1933) stem that ideological support granted by the Ukrainian left-oriented emigration to the Bolshevik party in Ukraine.

Khvył'ovyi's activity was assessed differently by Ukrainian right-wing groups abroad. For those observers, Khvył'ovyi represented an on-going national opposition to the Bolshevik authorities. One such evaluation was voiced by the leader of the Ukrainian nationalists in Western Ukraine Dmytro Dontsov, who claimed that Khvył'ovyi was one of those "divided souls that were unable to cope with the problem: to what extent they are Ukrainians, and to what extent they are subject to Russia."⁷⁴ In particular, Khvył'ovyi was praised for his repeated calls to distance Ukraine from the Communist party and orientation towards Moscow. As a result of this, he was seen as a leader of a "modern nationalism of the 1930s",⁷⁵ as *khvył'ovism* was defined.

Appraisals of Ukrainian communists in the emigration also depended heavily on the general ideological orientation of the Ukrainian emigration. The third post-World War II wave of Ukrainian emigration strengthened the nationalistic attitude of the diaspora. This ideological "turn to the right"⁷⁶ consolidated the idea of a united, independent Ukrainian state as the ultimate goal of the national struggle, which, consequently, rejected to leftist sentiments of any kind. The re-orientation in the way the whole generation of the

73 Lyst V. VYNNYCHENKA Politbiuro TsK KP(b)U, TsK VKP(b) i I. Stalinu z krytykoiu natsional'noi polityky bil'shovykiv v Ukraïni ta zasterezhenniam shchodo neobkhidnoi konsolidatsi vsih demokratychnyh syl na vypadok fashysts'koï agresii. In: Ukraïns'ka politychna emigraciia 1919-1945, pp. 484-485

74 RAHMANNYI Dmytro Dontsov i Mykola Khvył'ovyi, p. 23

75 Introduction to DONTSOV Mykola Khvył'ovyi, p. II

76 For the intellectual development within the Ukrainian immigration in the interwar period see: MOTYL The Turn to the Right

1920s was regarded had, nevertheless, dual outcomes. On the one hand, Ukrainian communists or artists, who collaborated with the regime after the October revolution, were seen as definite and inexcusable traitors to the nationalist cause.⁷⁷ On the other hand, however, there was another more significant development for the historiography of the 1920s. A new paradigm of the 'executed renaissance,' was introduced, according to which the 1920s was a unique period of cultural flourishing in Ukraine, which, if it had not been violently interrupted by the Stalinist terror, would have evolved into the highest levels of national cultural development. This approach was applied perhaps for the first time by Viktor Petrov, pen-name Domontovych, a prominent writer, scholar and literary critic, in his manuscript *Ukrains'ka intelihentsiia - zhertva bol'shevys'koho teroru* [Ukrainian intelligentsia – a martyr of the Bolshevik terror], first published in 1949. The paradigm was later refined by Iurii Lavrinenko in the late 1950s.⁷⁸

Undoubtedly, the post-revolutionary decade revealed the greatest creative potential of Ukrainian artists. Years of revolutions, civil war, political instability, and the ideological pluralism of the early Soviet years along with the policy of Ukrainization gave rise to an unprecedented development in all spheres of national cultural life. Nonetheless, such an approach to lamp together the entire generation of the 1920s is doubtful.

Firstly, the main problem of such a martyrological cast, according to Halyna Hryn, was the idea that "national and moral criteria can be brought to bear in the evaluation of authors and their works."⁷⁹ Following this view of the whole generation of Ukrainian artists and cultural workers of the 1920s-1930s as martyrs of the Soviet regime basically praised intellectuals based not on their merit but on the year of their death. Secondly, for those Ukrainian intellectuals, who one way or another survived the terror, their moral right to continue their creative or public activity after the majority of their peers had been executed was questioned. For example, Pavlo Tychyna or Maksym Ryl'skyi, who not only survived the terror but also obtained privileged positions in Ukrainian cultural and political life, became targets for this sort of criticism not only from their contemporaries but also from generations to come.

Finally, this paradigm rests on a rather exclusive approach towards the Ukrainian writers and cultural tendencies of that time. It places Khvyli'ovyi and VAPLITE (Vil'na akademiia proletars'koï literatury; Free Academy of Proletarian Literature, a literary organisation established by Khvyli'ovyi in 1925 for promoting an idea of high-quality proletarian art), at the centre of the literary process. Similarly, the Literary Discussion of 1925-28 is seen as the peak of Ukrainian cultural flowering, the muting of which marked the onset of the violent solution to the national question for the Ukrainian SSR. The idea of VAPLITE's leading position in the cultural development of the 1920s, proposed by Lavrinenko, was pursued further by George S. N. Luckyj (Literary politics in the Soviet Ukraine) and Myroslav Shkandrij (Modernists, Marxists and the Nation).

This status, however, has been questioned in some more recent studies on Ukrainian culture of the period, e.g. Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj's *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930*, arguing that besides the new proletarian literature promoted by Khvyli'ovyi, there were strong avant-garde voices, whose representatives failed to receive the recognition of the Party

77 E.g., PLIUSHCH Pravda pro khvyli'ovizm; ZADESNIANS'KYI Shcho nam dav Mykola Khvyli'ovyi

78 LAVRINENKO Rozstriliane vidrozhennia

79 HRYN The 'Executed Renaissance', p. 68

and were almost totally forgotten thereafter. Furthermore, Lavrinenko's paradigm excluded literature, written either not in Ukrainian or which lacked distinctive national sentiment, for example, the work of the prominent Odessa-born writer Isaac Babel, who, for all his loyalty to the regime, was also purged in the late 1930s.

However, Khvyl'ovyi, despite his suicide in 1933, embodied 'executed renaissance' not only due to his distinct oppositional position towards Soviet policies, but also due to his influence on the whole generation of the 1920s, purged in the following decade. Arguably, Khvyl'ovyi was placed at the centre of Ukrainian culture not as much due to his own efforts, although his literary genius is undeniable, but due to the meticulous work of his interpreters, adjusting his personality and writings to the required model.

“A DAY WHEN MYKOLA KHVYL'OVYI WAS RETURNED TO HIS READERS”⁸⁰

In 1988, after more than a fifty-year ban on his name in the Soviet Ukraine, Khvyl'ovyi was praised from the high Party tribunes of the Ukrainian SSR in connection to his 95th birth and 55th death anniversary. Moreover, a set of cultural events was organised with the TsK approval to commemorate the unjust forgotten Ukrainian writer Khvyl'ovyi.

It should be mentioned that it was only for those celebrations that Khvyl'ovyi's suicide notes were made public. The widely-cited version of Khvyl'ovyi's last words reads as follows:

Arrest of Ialovy - 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 Ialovy's generation lies with me, Khvyl'ovyi. 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.⁸¹

However, there is a less well-known version, offered by Petrov in his 1949 monograph, who claimed that Khvyl'ovyi's last words were:

The arrest of Ialovy convinced me that the persecution of Ukrainian writers has begun. By my blood I can certify that neither Ialovy, nor I have any guilt.”⁸²

These different versions resulted from the fact that Khvyl'ovyi's suicide notes, which, needless to say, should have been preserved as case evidence, exist only in copies, whose authenticity can easily be questioned.⁸³ The fact that Khvyl'ovyi's suicide note was made public in the Soviet Ukraine only at the end of the 1980s once again raises the ques-

80 Reference to the articles published in the late 1980s about the need to return Khvyl'ovyi into Ukrainian literature: GRECHANIUK Den' povernennia Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo, pp. 17-26; DRACH Vystup na plenumi pravlinnya Spilky Pys'mennykiv Ukraïny

81 The second one was addressed to his foster daughter Liubov Umantseva:

“My precious Lovage! Forgive me, my grey-winged dove, for everything. My unfinished novel, by the way, yesterday I destroyed not because I didn't want it to be published, but because I needed to convince myself: destroyed – then I have found enough will to do what I committed now. Goodbye, my precious Lovage. Your father M. Khvyl'ovyi.”

82 PETROV Ukraïns'ki kul'turni diiachy URSR, p. 30

83 Yet, not only the wording but even the existence of those notes can be questioned. According to the memoirs of Mariia Sosiura, who was among the first to enter Khvyl'ovyi's study after the suicide, there were no notes on the desk. See: BURLIAI Pravda pro smert' Khvyl'ovoho, pp. 140-142

tion of possible manipulations of those primary sources in order to polish the writer's biography.

Details behind the disclosure of the notes became known owing to the recent publication of the memoirs of the then TsK Secretary on Ideology, Fedir Ovcharenko.⁸⁴ As is known, on his last day Khvyl'ovyi invited his friend over to listen to his new novel. With a short presentation ("I was struggling with this novel a lot. However, I learned how a writer in the Stalin age should behave. Maybe I could teach you as well,"⁸⁵) the writer withdrew to his study where a moment later he shot himself. Right after the Party Committee was informed about the incident, Khvyl'ovyi's study was sealed: all his library, personal documentation and correspondence were confiscated.

The question over the suicide notes arose for the first time only in 1971, when the Ukrainian Soviet writer Iurii Smolych addressed the TsK and its First Secretary Petro Shelest with a request to access the original suicide notes of Khvyl'ovyi from the Party Archive. Smolych at that time was working on his memoirs⁸⁶ and planned to include his recollections on Khvyl'ovyi, since he was the last to have known him personally. In his request, Smolych wrote down the content of the suicide notes as he remembered them, claiming to have been present in Khvyl'ovyi's apartment at the time of the suicide (although refuted by the testimony of Iuliia Umantseva, Khvyl'ovyi's widow at the day of the event⁸⁷).

Surprisingly, his recollections were confirmed the next week at a meeting between Smolych and Ovcharenko. Yet, the decision was made not to present the original notes to him, since the copies, received from the archive, were not stamped, thus, considered not official under Soviet regulation. Also, according to his memoirs, Ovcharenko had doubts that such statement as "Long live Communism!" more suited to First-of-May demonstrations, would have been all together included in a suicide note. Moreover, the match between Smolych's recollections about the 1933 events and the content of the unstamped copies raised doubts that Smolych could have spoken with the KGB beforehand and those notes could have been deliberately edited.⁸⁸

The question of the suicide notes arose once again in 1988, when Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, a well-known academician and a literary critic, invited Ovcharenko to the commemoration events dedicated to Khvyl'ovyi, with the request finally to make the suicide notes public. The readings from the notes, cited earlier, became the ones widely referred to while addressing Khvyl'ovyi's death. Those words, however, were also read from the copies, whose authenticity, as has been shown, can be questioned. Those notes

84 OVCHARENKO Spogady

85 Quoted from the documentary "TZAR I RAB KHYTROSHCHIV" (script writers IRYNA SHATOKHINA, IURII SHAPOVAL, 2009)

86 SMOLYCH, Rozpovid' pro nespokii, Rozpovid' pro nespokii tryvaie, and Rozpovid' pro nespokii netaie kintsia.

87 Interrogation of Iuliia Umantseva in: Poliuvannia na 'Val'dshnema' 182

88 It should be noted that Smolych's intentions could hardly be trusted. In her letter to Ovcharenko, Liubov Umantseva, Khvyl'ovyi's foster daughter, characterised Smolych as one of those writers who "are playing with 'the topics', flirting, trying to attract readers with cheap, nasty details from the lives of distinguished writers, who died in terrible times of Stalinism." (OVCHARENKO Spogady, p. 284). Smolych, as argued by Ukrainian scholar Serhii Trymbach, was the informer of the state security (TRYMBACH Oleksandr Dovzhenko, p. 84).

simply gained their official status by the fact that they were presented by a high party official.

The copies of the suicide notes offer another aspect of Khvyl'ovyi's ambivalence. On the one hand, his last word, if taken at a face value, can show his disappointment and despair at not being able to match his convictions with the realities of Socialist society. On the other hand, if they were edited by the secret service before being made public, one must question the intentions behind those actions and the idea behind their publication.

It is worth mentioning that Khvyl'ovyi was not rehabilitated in the course of the 'Thaw' liberalisation in the 1950s. At the end of the 1980s, during the so-called *glasnost*, Ukrainian party card-carrying intellectuals started to call for the return of Khvyl'ovyi to his readers.⁸⁹ This was also the time when the autobiographical notes, discussed earlier in the article, were first published. Their initial purpose, however, acquired a new meaning: in the 1920s those autobiographies were used to trace the development of a revolutionary personality, whereas at the end of the 1980s, those texts were used to support a newly emerging narrative of the national communist Khvyl'ovyi. Not surprisingly, it was the excerpt about Khvyl'ovyi attending a congress of soldiers in Romania in October 1917 with two ribbons pinned to his collar: a red and a yellow-and-blue one as well as his justification ("I wanted to be, so to say, a Ukrainian Bolshevik"⁹⁰), which was eagerly picked up and used thereafter. Thus, the image of Khvyl'ovyi as a romantic who became ideologically confused in his pursuit of a better social order was created and became dominant in the discourse.

After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the 'executed renaissance' paradigm, along with the national communist perspective, merged with another approach - to nationalize Ukrainian early Soviet intellectuals, and present them as part of a national opposition to the Communist regime. This contributed to the utopian view that the whole history of Ukraine should be seen as a struggle to build an independent and united country. According to Mark von Hagen,⁹¹ the narrative of history in independent Ukraine replaced the familiar dogmatic approach of Marxism-Leninism and dialectical materialism with a national teleology. Accordingly, the intellectual and political history of Ukraine has been rewritten in a way to make nationalists and separatists out of nearly all prominent Ukrainians. Among modern Ukrainian historians and literary scholars, Khvyl'ovyi has become one of the most researched Ukrainian writers, whose life and writings have been adjusted to the "new dogma of an eternal and unchained nation, whose history was defined by the struggle against a 'national oppressor' for Ukrainian independence and unity."⁹²

This nationalistic approach attempts to rehabilitate and to excuse Khvyl'ovyi for being a communist by finding reasons for his decision to join the party and to remain a party member. In order to cope with the obvious dilemma of him being a talented writer in spite of his party membership, an attempt was made to push the concept of Khvyl'ovyi's "fatal ambivalence,"⁹³ which originates partly from his romantic nature and partly from

89 See, e.g., ZHULYNS'KYI *Talant nezvychainyi i superechlyvyi*, pp. 144–149

90 KHVYL'OVYI *Uryvok z avtobiohrafii*, p. 107

91 HAGEN *Does Ukraine have a history?* pp. 658–673

92 GILLEY *The 'Change of Signposts'*, p. 23

93 SHAPOVAL *Fatal'na Ambivalentnist'*, pp. 41–55; PANCHENKO *Khvyl'ovyi: istoriia iliuzii i prozrin'*. Their analysis in Fowler, *Review on Poliuvannia na "Val'dshnepa"*, pp. 491–500.

his idealistic belief in Bolshevik populism. In addition, an attempt is made to underplay contradictory examples which show Khvył'ovyi's 'true' communist nature, as happened with a highly debated monograph of a Kharkiv poet, editor and literary critic Ihor Bondar-Tereshchenko, *U Zadzerkalli 1910-1930-h rokiv* [Through the Mirror of 1910s-1930s], 2009.

CONCLUSION: A SOVIET UKRAINIAN COMMUNIST MYKOLA KHVYL'OVYI

There are only certain assertions that cannot be contested about Khvył'ovyi. Firstly, he was a prominent writer, whose creative manner was defined by his revolutionary experience. Moreover, he was a proletarian writer, and this was an artistic identity which Khvył'ovyi was trying to preserve, not because of the prevailing ideological expectations, but because of his personal convictions and beliefs in the potential of the working class to begin world history anew. Secondly, he was a member of the Communist Party of the Bolsheviks since 1919 and even during the most severe persecution was faithful to his membership card. Indeed, in a perflustrated letter dated from 1927 Khvył'ovyi affirmed: "I not only was not thinking of giving back my party card, but I will appeal to Stalin himself if anyone should think to take it from me."⁹⁴

Yet, Khvył'ovyi also adhered to an idea of a nationally defined socialist republic, an equal partner in a loose federation with other socialist republics. In the 1920s, with all its inconsistencies and social experiments, this form of statehood could be seen as realistic and feasible. Therefore, Khvył'ovyi was not the only one, who was ambivalent in his personal values, the views, standpoints, and ideology. This ambivalence was a characteristic for an entire generation in the Ukraine of the 1920s caused by the very nature of the relationship between the Moscow centre and the border republics at that time.

Khvył'ovyi can represent an entire generation of disillusioned intellectuals, who witnessed the discrepancy between the ideals of the revolution and their implementation in the Soviet Ukraine. Khvył'ovyi, although a member of the Bolshevik party since 1919, sympathised with the Ukrainian communists, a number of whom, for example, Ellan-Blakytnyi or Oleksandr Shums'kyi, were his close friends, colleagues and defenders in the time of incipient party criticism in 1926. The attempts of the Ukrainian communists to reorganize the power relationship in the Soviet Ukraine along with the cultural flourishing of the 1920s was crushed by the forcible tendencies aimed at consolidating the Bolshevik Party and Stalin's Great turn of 1928/29.

Thereby, the inherent contradictions in Khvył'ovyi's views and his milieu were not entirely between their national and communist aspirations. More accurately, the contradiction originated from them being Ukrainian Communists within a Russian-dominated Bolshevik Party. Thus, it was not an inner ideological ambivalence of every single sympathiser of an independent Ukrainian Socialist Republic, but a political struggle for authority, power and influence between two Soviet Republics and two distinct Communist Parties of the Bolsheviks, which was quelled only through well-elaborated tactics, terror and violence on Moscow's part.

The figure of Khvył'ovyi returned to Ukrainian literature and culture layered with contradictory interpretations. The question is: how much do we know about Khvył'ovyi besides those misinterpretations and manipulations with the writer's biography and per-

94 Poliuvannia na 'Val'dshnepa', p. 95

sonality? Yet, Khvyl'ovyi left behind a significant literary contribution, presenting his complex development as a proletarian writer, a Bolshevik and a Soviet Ukrainian.

Abbreviations:

VUTsVK	Vseukraïns'kyi Tsentral'nyi Vykonavchyi Komitet (All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee)
KP(b)U	Komunistychna Partiiia Bil'shovykiv Ukraïny (Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine)
TsK VKP(b)	Tsentral'nyi Komitet Vserosiiskoi Komunisticheskoi Partii Bol'shevikov (Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks)
NEP	Novaia Ekonomicheskaia Politika (New Economic Policy)
GPU	Gosudarstvennoie Politicheskoe Upravleniie (State Political Directorate)
SVU	Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukraïny (Union for the Liberation of Ukraine)
VAPLITE	Vil'na akademiia proletars'koï literatury; Free Academy of Proletarian Literature

Bibliography:

- ADAMSKY, VIKTOR, KANTSELYARUK, BORYS, DERGACHOV, OLEKSANDR The Ukrainian Question In Russian Political Strategy In: DERGACHOV, OLEKSANDR (Ed.) Ukrainian Statehood In The Twentieth Century: Historical And Political Analysis. Kyiv 1996.
- BOL'SHAIA SOVETSKAIA ENTSYKLOPEDIIA, vol. 59. Moscow 1935.
- BONDAR-TERESHCHENKO, IHOR U Zadzerkalli 1910-1930-h rokiv. Kyiv 2009.
- BURLIAI, Iurii Pravda pro smert' Khvyl'ovoho, in: Kyiv, 6 (1995), pp. 140-142.
- DANYLENKO, Vasyl (ed.) Ukraïns'ka Inteligentsia i Vlada: Zvedennia Sekretneho Viddilu DPU USRR 1927-1929 rr. Kyiv 2012.
- DONTSOV, DMYTRO Mykola Khvyl'ovyi. [b.m.] 1947.
- DOROSHKEVYCH, OLEKSANDR, Pidruchnyk istorii Ukraïns'koï literatury (1927) quoted from STRUK, Danylo H. Tupyk or Blind-Alley: "Val'dshnepy" of M. Khvyl'ovyi, in: Canadian Slavic Studies, vol. II, 2 (Summer, 1968), pp.239-251.
- DRACH, Ivan Vystup na plenumi pravlinnya Spilky Pys'mennykiv Ukraïny pro neobpidnist' povernennia chytacham tvoriv M. Khvyl'ovogo, Literaturna Ukraïna, 9 July, 1987.
- FITZPATRICK, SHEILA Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s. Oxford 2000.
- FITZPATRICK, SHEILA The Legacy of the Civil War, in: KOENKER DIANE P., ROSENBERG, WILLIAM G. and SUNY RONALD GRIGOR (eds.) Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War. Bloomington 1989.
- FOWLER, Mayhill C. Review on Poliuvannia na "Val'dshnepa". Rozsekrechenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, in: Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, Volume 13, 2, Spring 2012 (New Series), pp. 491-500.
- GAN, O.Trahedia Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo. [b.m.] 1947.

- GILLEY, CHRISTOPHER The 'Change of Signposts' in the Ukrainian Emigration. A Contribution to the History of Sovietophilism in the 1920s. Stuttgart 2009.
- GORSUCH, ANNE E. "NEP Be Damned! Young Militants in the 1920s and the Culture of Civil War," *Russian Review*, Vol. 56, 4 (Oct., 1997), pp. 564-580.
- GRABOWICZ, GEORGE Symbolic Autobiography in the Prose of Mykola Khvyl'ovyi (Some Preliminary Observations), in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 22, Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe (1998), pp. 165-180.
- GRECHANIUK, SERHII Den' povernennia Mykoly Khvyl'ovogo, *Ukraïnska mova i literatura u shkoli*, 2 (1987), pp. 17-26.
- HAGEN VON, MARK Does Ukraine have a history? In: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 658-673.
- HALFIN, IGAL Popov's apostasy and the Right Opposition: A Drama in Three Letters (and two Interrogations), in: HELLBECK, JOCHEN and HELLER, KLAUS (eds.), *Autobiographische Praktiken in Russland*. Göttingen 2004, pp. 223-250.
- HALFIN, IGAL *Terror in My Soul. Communist Autobiographies on Trial*. Cambridge, Mass. 2003.
- HELLBECK, JOCHEN *Revolution on my mind: writing a diary under Stalin*. Cambridge, Mass. 2006.
- HIRCHAK, IEVGENII *Na dva fronta v bor'be s natsionalismom*. Moscow, Leningrad 1930
- HRYN, HALYNA The 'Executed Renaissance' Paradigm Revisited, in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 27 (2004-5), pp. 67-96.
- ILNYTZKYJ, OLEH S. *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930. A historical and Critical Study*. Cambridge, Mass. 1997.
- KHVYLIA, ANDRII *Vid ukhylu – u prirvu (pro "Val'dshnepy" Khvyl'ovogo)*. Kharkiv 1928
- KHVYL'OVYI, MYKOLA *Podiaka pryvatnoho likaria* in: *Ukraïns'kyi zasiv*, 1 (13) (1994), pp. 47-74.
- KHVYL'OVYI, MYKOLA *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*. Edmonton 1986.
- KHVYL'OVYI, MYKOLA *Tvory v 2 tomakh*, vol. 2. Kyiv 1990.
- KHVYL'OVYI, MYKOLA *Tvory v 5 tomakh*, vol. 1. New York-Baltimore-Toronto 1978.
- KHVYL'OVYI, MYKOLA *Uryvok z avtobiohrafii*, in: *Vitchyzna*, 12 (1987), pp. 106-108.
- KHVYL'OVYI, MYKOLA *Stories from the Ukraine*. New York 1960.
- KOSTIUK HRYHORII *Zustrichi i Proshchannia: Spohady u dvokh knykhakh*. Kyiv 2008.
- KOSTIUK, HRYHORII "Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: zhyttia, doba, tvorchist'," in *KHVYL'OVYI MYKOLA Tvory v 5 tomakh*, vol. 1. New York-Baltimore-Toronto 1978.
- Kratkaia biografiia chlena KP(b)U Nikolaia Grigor'ievicha Fitileva*, in *KHVYL'OVYI MYKOLA Tvory u dvokh tomakh*, vol. 2. Kyiv 1991. pp. 830-837.
- LAVRINENKO IURII *Rozstriliane vidrozhennia. Antolohiia 1917-1933*. Kyiv, 2007. (First published by Paris, Instytut Literacki, 1959).
- LEITES, OLEKSANDER, IASHEK, MYKOLA *Desiat' rokiv Ukraïnskoï literatury (1917-1927)*, vol. 1. Kharkiv 1928.
- LUCKYJ, GEORGE (ed.) *Before the Storm: Soviet Ukrainian Fiction of the 1920s*. Ann Arbor 1986.
- LUCKYJ, GEORGE S. N. *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934*. Durham-London 1990.
- MACE, JAMES *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: national communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* Cambridge, Mass. 1983

- MALONEY, PHILIP Anarchism and Bolshevism in the Works of Boris Pilnyak, in: *Russian Review*, Vol. 32, 1 (Jan., 1973), pp. 43-53.
- MOTYL ALEXANDER J. *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929*. Boulder, New York 1980.
- MYKHAILYCHENKO, HNAT Proletars'ke mystetstvo (tezy na dopovidi Vseukrlitkomu) LEITES, OLEKSANDER, IASHEK, MYKOLA Desiat' rokiv ukraïnskoï literatury, vol. II, pp. 25-28.
- NEUMANN, MATTHIAS "Youth, It's Your Turn!": Generations and the Fate of the Russian Revolution (1917-1932), in: *Journal of Social History*, vol. 46 2 (2012), pp. 273-304
- OVCHARENKO, FEDIR Spogady. Kyiv 2000.
- PETROV VIKTOR Ukraïns'ki kul'turni diiachy URSR 1920-1940 zhertyv bil'shovys'koho teroru. New York 1959.
- PINNOW, KENNETH M. *Lost to the Collective: Suicide and the Promise of Soviet Socialism, 1921–1929*. Ithaca; London 2010.
- PINNOW, KENNETH M. Violence against the Collective Self: Suicide and the Problem of Social Integration in Early Bolshevik Russia, in: WEAVER JOHN and WRIGHT DAVID (eds.) *Histories of Suicide: International Perspectives on Self-Destruction in the Modern World*. Toronto 2009, pp. 201-230.
- Platforma ideologichna i khudozhnia Spilky Selianskykh Pys'mennykiv Pluh, In LEITES, OLEKSANDER, IASHEK, MYKOLA Desiat' rokiv ukraïnskoï literatury, vol. II, pp. 73-77
- PLIUSHCH, VASYL' Pravda pro khvyl'ovizm. Munich 1954.
- PYLYPENKO, SERHII *Nashi grikhy* LEITES, OLEKSANDER, IASHEK, MYKOLA Desiat' rokiv ukraïnskoï literatury, vol. II, pp. 420-421
- PYLYPENKO, SERHII Iak na pravdyvomu shliakhu spotykaiutsia, *Kultura i Pobut*, 1926, no 5, LEITES, OLEKSANDER, IASHEK, MYKOLA Desiat' rokiv ukraïnskoï literatury, vol. II, pp.177-181
- RAHMANNYI, ROMAN Dmytro Dontsov i Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, 1923-1933. London 1984.
- RÉV, ISTVÁN *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-Communism*. Stanford 2005.
- SHAPOVAL IURII and PANCHENKO VOLODYMYR (eds.) *Poliuvannia na "Val'dshnepa."* Rozsekrechenyi Mykola Khvyl'ovyi. Kyiv 2010.
- SHAPOVAL, IURII 'On Ukrainian Separatism' A GPU Circular of 1926, in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. XVIII, 3/4 (1994), pp. 275-302.
- SHKANDRIJ, MYROSLAV *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: the Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*. Edmonton 1992
- Shliakhy rozvytku suchasnoi literatury: Dysput 24 travnia 1925 r. Kiev 1925
- SMOLYCH, IURII *Rozpovid' pro nespokii neme kintsia*. Kyiv 1970.
- SMOLYCH, IURII *Rozpovid' pro nespokii tryvaie*. Kyiv1969.
- SMOLYCH, IURII *Rozpovid' pro nespokii*. Kyiv1968.
- Soviet Ukraine*. Kiev 1969.
- TRYMBACH, SERHII Oleksandr Dovzhenko: *Zahybel' bohiv*. Vinnytsia 2007.
- Ukraïns'ka politychna emigraciia 1919-1945: Dokumenty i materialy*. Kyiv 2008.
- ZADESNIANS'KYI, ROMAN *Shcho nam dav Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*. [b.m.] 1979.
- ZHULYNS'KYI, MYKOLA *Talant nezvychainyi i superechlyvyi*, in: *Vitchyzna*, 12 (1987), pp. 144–149.

Summary

Between Two Powers: a Soviet Ukrainian Writer Mykola Khvyl'ovyi

The article examines the way in which Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, one of the most outstanding Ukrainian writers and yet one of the most controversial figures of early Soviet history, was assessed in national and diaspora historiography. It is argued that the self-referential character of Khvyl'ovyi's short stories along with a scarcity and unreliability of the primary sources have contributed to creating a narrative of an ambivalent writer and a communist Mykola Khvyl'ovyi. A simplistic approach to place the writer's political and aesthetic agendas in an "either... or" paradigm, artificially fitting his convictions into a communist or a nationalistic framework, is contested by the author. The aim of this examination is, thus, to justify the choices of those national intellectuals of the 1920s, for whom being both Ukrainians and communists did not seem contradictory. This brings the discussion of the ideological development of Khvyl'ovyi into a broader context, namely what it meant to be a national intellectual and what choices one was faced with, not in Moscow, but in a border republic, where any application of a national sentiment was seen as a thread to the Soviet legacy.