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Polarity in Ukrainian Intellectual Dissent

GEORGE S. N. LUCKYJ

To interpret contemporary intellectual dissent in the Ukraine for Canadians is difficult for several reasons. First of all it is not easy to sense from this distance the various directions and fluctuations of this dissent. Someone in the Ukraine may be more knowledgeable in this respect. On the other hand, distance has certain advantages. For example, recent Canadian experience with Quebec may provide a good background for dealing with the Ukraine. To be sure, the comparison between the Ukrainians and the FLQ, made last summer by the Prime Minister Trudeau, is far-fetched, yet there is a point at which Quebec and the Ukraine are comparable. Both are culturally and historically distinct from the country of which they are a part and both have shown dissatisfaction with the present policies of the central governments in Ottawa and Moscow respectively. Where they differ is precisely in the nature of their dissent. In Quebec it has taken the form of political and economic nationalism and occasional resorts to terrorism (FLQ); in the Ukraine the main thrust is still in the direction of cultural and political independence, with a strong plea for civil rights and no terrorist activity. The separatist Quebecois are out-and-out nationalists; the Ukrainians, in addition to national freedom, want to secure those liberties which the Quebecois already possess.

The peculiar quality of Ukrainian nationalism is difficult to analyze from a distance of 4,000 miles. Most Ukrainian émigrés in the Western world would have us believe that Ukrainian dissent aims solely at a fully independent Ukraine, but a study of the dissent documents does not support this view. Three years ago,¹ I tried to point out that Ukrainian dissenters in the mid-sixties were motivated just as much by a desire to secure civil liberties as to obtain national rights. Indeed, the simplistic émigré interpretation has much in common with the official Soviet view, which labelled the dissenters "bourgeois nationalists." Viacheslav Chornovil and Ivan Dziuba, to take only the two most prominent dissenters

¹ George S. N. Luckyj, "Turmoil in the Ukraine," *Problems of Communism*, July-August, 1968.

of that period, attacked the abuses of the Soviet state and court system just as vehemently as they did the Russification of the Ukraine. While they demanded political liberties for the Ukraine, they did so only within the framework of a reformed Soviet Union, revitalized by what they hoped would be a rediscovery of true Leninist principles. Their call was for reform, not for revolution or separation. In the above mentioned article I also touched on the possible relation of Ukrainian dissent to the ferment in Russia: "Dziuba also raises — indirectly — perhaps the most important issue of all: the failure of the Russian non-conformist intellectuals of today to support the demands of non-Russian nationalities."² In 1968 this was still an open question. Today, three years later, this is no longer so. Some Russian dissenters have taken a stand on the nationalist question and have thereby added a new dimension to the intellectual unrest in the USSR. For the Ukrainians these Russian pronouncements are of the greatest importance because they have indirectly contributed to the polarization within the Ukrainian movement itself.

Occasional Russian voices raised in sympathy with the Ukraine were heard throughout the last decade. They came from writers and intellectuals of different views and loyalties, including academician Andrei Sakharov, who wrote of Stalinist "Ukrainophobia"³; Alexander Tvardovskii, who published Ivan Dziuba in *Novy mir* long after Ukrainian journals refused to print his work; Vladimir Soloukhin, who declared that "if he had been born Ukrainian he would never try to become a Russian"⁴; and Iuli Daniel, the translator of some poems by Ivan Drach. All these pro-Ukrainian sympathies were of a general nature, chiefly motivated by a desire to help the underdog. It was in 1969 that a Russian dissenter first touched on the Ukrainian issue in a new and clearly political connotation. This was Andrei Amalrik in his *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?* It would perhaps be unfair to Amalrik to ignore the central message of his book and to concentrate solely on what he says about the Ukraine. Yet however small the Ukrainian issue may be in his book it remains a part of the general conception. Amalrik offers both an analysis of contemporary Soviet society and a

² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³ A. D. Sakharov, *Progress, Co-existence and Intellectual Freedom* (New York, 1968), p. 54.

⁴ As quoted in *Ukrainskyi visnyk* (Paris-Baltimore, 1971), p. 45.

vision of the possible future of that society. In each section he refers to the Ukraine, marginally, but not merely in passing. He admits what is generally known, that the non-Russian nationalities, the Ukrainians among them, are dissatisfied, and then he goes on to speculate that in the event of a war between the USSR and China, which he thinks is unavoidable, the "nationalist tendencies of the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union will intensify sharply, first in the Baltic area, the Caucasus and the Ukraine, then in Central Asia and along the Volga."⁵ In the course of this probable war with China Amalrik foresees that "Russian nationalism will decline while non-Russian nationalism will rise."⁶ And finally, he says, "it is even possible that the Ukraine, the Baltic Republics and European Russia will enter a Pan-European federation as independent units."⁷

The prospect of the disintegration of the Soviet empire does not worry Amalrik. On the contrary, in his vision of the future he remains a detached observer of things to come. Indeed, there is much in Amalrik's book which could and has been taken as an expression of his Russophobia. The quality of Russian life, its morality and purpose are seriously questioned by Amalrik, who is quite ready to see his country ravaged by future wars and deserted by her one-time allies. With unprecedented frankness this Russian intellectual is ready to sacrifice traditional national preconceptions for the sake of intellectual honesty and integrity. This must strike a responsive chord in many quarters, not least among those Ukrainians who strive for independence from Russia. There is no doubt, therefore, that Amalrik's stand was welcomed by Ukrainian dissenters who, incidentally, might have learned from him that criticism of one's own country is indispensable to intellectual honesty.

An even more striking document which shows concern with the fate of the nationalities in the USSR is the program of the Democratic Movement of the Soviet Union. The Movement itself is mentioned several times in Amalrik's book, but its program came out as a separate publication of the *samizdat*.⁸ Signed simply by the "democrats of Russia, the Ukraine and Baltic lands," the program offers a most far-reaching

⁵ Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (New York, 1970), p. 63.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁸ Published in the West as *Programma demokraticeskogo dvizhenia Sovetskogo Soiuz*a (Amsterdam, 1970).

and thorough plan for a reorganization of the entire Soviet system. It openly declares its preference for the Western democratic system and tries to emulate it in its prescription for the future Soviet order. One of the chief targets of criticism is Soviet imperialism and Russian chauvinism. The Soviet nationalities should be able, the program pleads, to exercise in reality their right to self-determination. It envisages that a referendum conducted for this purpose might lead some Soviet republics to separation and independence, but it hopes that some kind of a new Union of Democratic Republics might still be possible among the ruins of the Soviet Union. It is adamant that "without freedom for the nationalities there can be no freedom of the individual,"⁹ while on the other hand it warns that "the path of national liberation leads through the democratization of Soviet society as a whole and national freedom will come only through personal freedom."¹⁰ The political order of the future should be based on Western models. To achieve these goals would be impossible through a new revolution (could revolution be so discredited in the Soviet Union?). Only by peaceful non-violent means can the great changeover be brought about.¹¹

The Ukrainians who presumably participated in the drafting of the program are nameless, but clearly identifiable by their political orientation. They do not belong to the nationalist but rather incline to the federalist camp. There may be many upholders of this view, since the federal idea (with the provision of equal rights for all the partners) was and still is popular in the Ukraine. Even during the time of the Ukrainian national revolution in 1917-18, the idea of a completely separate and independent Ukrainian Republic did not emerge clearly until January 1918, in the so-called "Fourth Universal." It remains a matter for debate whether the idea of a federation of Soviet states has been completely discredited by the old disreputable Stalinist policies. It is not impossible that the idea of federation may still have some appeal.

On the other hand, there are good reasons for believing that it is the nationalist and not the federalist concept of dissent that is now gaining more and more momentum both among the Ukrainians and the Rus-

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹ This idea is regarded as Utopian by J. Mieroszewski in his foreword to *Głosy stamtąd* (Paris: Kultura, 1970), p. 9.

sians.¹² This is happening primarily because of the increasingly repressive nature of today's regime in the Ukraine and because of a nationalist resurgence in Russia. With all channels toward gradual reform firmly blocked by the present rulers what hope can Ukrainian dissidents have but a revolution? Even those who do not speak of it openly begin to demand a radical change in the system. *Amalrik* takes refuge in the vision of a violent war with China, and the Democratic Movement too, in its later document, recognizes the need for conspiracy and underground resistance.¹³ The nationalists, therefore, have a better chance of attracting followers, simply because they are more radical than the federalists. But there are also other reasons why dissent in the Ukraine is tending to turn towards a nationalist course.

Although there is no denying that basic civil liberties (freedom of speech, press, assembly, travel, elections) are flouted in the Ukraine just as much as in other parts of the Soviet Union, there is a special grievance in the Ukraine from which Russia is free. This is national repression. While paying lip service to equal linguistic and cultural rights, Soviet practices heavily discriminate against Ukrainian language and culture. Economically and politically the Ukrainian SSR is treated as a province of Russia and not as a separate republic — that designation exists only on paper. It is no wonder, therefore, that Ukrainians are demanding these national rights guaranteed to them by the Soviet Constitution. The modern national revival in the Ukraine is now almost a century and a half old and despite its ups and downs it is today a vital force, unspent because its goals remain unachieved. There is no doubt that despite their enforced isolation from the outside world the Ukrainians gained fresh impetus from the successful liberation of foreign countries once under colonial rule. They and the other nationalities of the USSR regard the powerseat in Moscow as the centre of the last world empire. All this finds confirmation in the regularity with which the slogan of "indestructible friendship of Soviet peoples" is chanted in the Soviet press.

What, then, are the basic demands of Ukrainian dissenters today? They can be summed up briefly as a plea for cultural freedom, political and economic autonomy, and civil liberty. It is only when we

¹² See also the recent "Voice of the People; Manifesto of Russian Patriots" (*samizdat*) with its Russian chauvinist point of view as reported in *Kultura*, No. 10 (1971), pp. 51-56.

¹³ *Ukrainske slovo* (Paris), 1 November 1970.

analyse how these are to be brought about that, naturally enough, we encounter different sets of attitudes. For although there is a unity in their demands, there is a refreshing diversity in their voices.

The two best known dissenters of the last decade, Viacheslav Chornovil and Ivan Dziuba show a similar approach to the disagreement they have with the Soviet regime. They are both careful and detached critics of Soviet theory and practice, pointing out rather meticulously and very skilfully the discrepancy between the former and the latter. Chornovil is particularly successful in describing the abuses of the Soviet legal system, while Dziuba specializes in dissecting the evil practices of the Soviet nationality policy from 1917 on. There is a scholarly air to their disputations. They laboriously collect their material, document their statements with examples and quotations and appeal to the reader's rational judgement. Dziuba, in particular, is very convincing in demonstrating Soviet hypocrisy and in corroborating what many intelligent Soviet citizens already know, namely that in their policy, especially towards the non-Russian nationalities, the Soviets are continuing the most reactionary practices of the tsars. Dziuba's debunking of the Soviet myth of "multinational friendship" is particularly effective and sophisticated. It is worth noting that no Western study of a Soviet republic measures up to his *Internationalism or Russification*,¹⁴ although the facts "revealed" by Dziuba have been known in the West for a long time. The remarkable thing is not only that this study comes from the pen of a Soviet writer, but that it shows such fine academic acumen.

Dziuba is also open to criticism, but not of the kind offered by official Soviet publications, characteristically enough unobtainable in the Soviet Union and only sold abroad.¹⁵ Serious criticism may be advanced against some of Dziuba's premises. Why does he devote so much space to an analysis of Lenin's nationality policy? Was not Lenin's theory merely a weapon in the arsenal of the Party? Hence, to claim in 1968 that there still exist unshakable foundations of a nationalistic policy in the USSR may be a little naïve for a man of Dziuba's stature. The logic of his argument is comprehensible only when one reminds oneself that he is a Marxist and is still intent on restoring the purity of the original faith. He represents, therefore, that group of Ukrainian dissenters who have not lost their belief in communism and who wish to restore the

¹⁴ Ivan Dziuba, *Internationalism or Russification* (London, 1968).

¹⁵ Bohdan Stenchuk, *Shcho i yak obstoiuie I. Dziuba* (Kiev, 1969).

Leninist creed. They are reformists or "revisionists" who believe in the possibility of a dialogue with Petro Shelest, the Ukrainian Party boss, to whom they address their petitions. One can only wish them good luck.

Other Ukrainian dissenters rely less on Marx and Lenin and more on their own responses to the injustices they observe. To be sure, their protests are addressed to the Soviet authorities, but not so much out of respect as out of habit. The tone of their voices is different from Dziuba's. Their main exponent is Valentyn Moroz who in 1971 was sentenced to a new prison term of fourteen years. The severity of this sentence, which caused a storm of protest in the Ukraine and abroad,¹⁶ indicates the degree of official displeasure with his activities. These were limited to the writing of several articles which were allegedly of an anti-Soviet character. Copies of these articles have now been published in the West and offer a good source for a study of Valentyn Moroz's outlook.

In 1967 Moroz wrote his first long essay, "A Report from the Beria Reservation."¹⁷ This at once marked him as a distinguished writer. Beneath the erudite style there is hidden a great passion and an intellectual honesty reminiscent of George Orwell. The chapter dealing with the "cog," the man-automaton produced by the Soviet system, is particularly Orwellian. Yet Moroz is a great optimist. He believes that the unrest in the USSR and especially in the Ukraine is profound and that both the regime and the KGB are on the defensive. People are no longer afraid and they are ready, he claims, for a great awakening. He ends his brilliant essay by reiterating the old proverb that "a lie has short legs" but he adds "truth has long arms!"

Underlying Moroz's faith in a better future for the Ukraine is his abiding belief in the victory of human individuality over Soviet tyranny. Besides references to Skovoroda and Shevchenko he uses Western sources (Plato, Shaw, Brecht). Himself a historian by training, he foresees the wheel of history overtaking the present Soviet system. At no time can his main argument be labelled nationalist, for national freedom is for Moroz a part of human freedom and it is to the latter that he addresses himself.

¹⁶ Some of them were reprinted in *Suchasnist*, June 1971.

¹⁷ Available in English translation in Michael Browne, ed., *Ferment in the Ukraine* (London, 1971).

In a few years, however, the emphasis in Moroz's writings changed radically. Although his main target remained the same, he became an ardent nationalist. It may be that the events of the years 1967-70 propelled him in that direction. From late 1965 until 1 September 1969 he was under arrest and spent some time in the Mordovian concentration camps. In June 1970 he was rearrested. During the nine months when he was free he wrote three essays: "The Chronicle of Resistance," "Moses and Datan," and "Amid the Snows," which soon circulated clandestinely and made their way to the West, where they have since been published. Ideologically, they form a triptych on the theme "Ukrainian, know thyself," to use an expression of one of the characters in a play by Mykola Kulish.

The immediate reason for writing "Chronicle of Resistance" was provided by an incident in the Hutsul village of Kosmach. An ancient iconostasis from the local church was borrowed by the producers of the film "The Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" and was never returned. This brazen act on the part of Soviet authorities gives Moroz an opportunity to extol the virtues of the cultural tradition of a nation which, according to him, is a poor guardian of this tradition. The Kosmach iconostasis becomes a symbol of Ukrainian culture which the Soviet authorities denigrate and Ukrainian intellectuals themselves are not prepared to defend. Only the local villagers are up in arms for they have lost a relic, not merely a beautiful object. Moroz admits that this is a religious relic and argues that in that part of the Ukraine ecclesiastical culture is a vital part of the national heritage. Awareness of one's heritage is for Moroz the central core in a person's life and he calls on Ukrainians to preserve this against all pressures. Russia, like America, he argues, is trying to uproot the national cultures of other peoples and then to assimilate them. By defending their culture Ukrainians may turn the tide of modern civilization with its mass culture and faceless existence; they will help to reverse today's trend towards "deculturation, dehumanization and rootlessness."¹⁸ Here Moroz may evoke the sympathy not only of patriotic Ukrainians but also of those who are disenchanted with the modern post-industrial era. Cultural nationalism, after all, may be an antidote for alienation.

In the available extracts from the essay "Moses and Datan" the theme of national consciousness is developed further. The essay is a rebuttal

¹⁸ V. Moroz, "Khronika sprotyvu," *Ukrainskyi samostiinyk*, October 1970, p. 15.

of an article by the Belorussian writer Evdokia Los in which she expressed her friendly feelings for Russia. To Moroz, anyone trying to transcend the national consciousness is a renegade. Universal values can only be built on national foundations. "Truth is national," he writes, "that is, it is the same for all, but with millions of facets. It faces each nation with one, unique facet. The task of a nation is to find its own facet, something it alone can do, and then enrich humanity with it."¹⁹

An even clearer definition of Moroz's brand of nationalism is available in his essay "Amid the Snows." Describing the end of the long dark night of Stalinism in the mid-1950's, Moroz underlines one feature of the awakening among the Ukrainian writers of that time — their possessedness" (*oderzhymist*). The term was used originally by Lesia Ukrainka and Moroz defines it as follows: "The crux is the degree of emotion with which a person perceives a certain truth. One person simply knows it, another person lives it. For one a certain truth is a piece of information, knowledge. For another it is a revelation, without which life has no meaning. Truth, heated in the soul to a certain degree becomes value. Knowledge is transformed into faith. Only then does a person begin to be alive."²⁰

One could hardly wish for a better definition of the "true believer" in Eric Hoffer's terms. Moroz's gospel of fanaticism reads like a chapter from Hoffer's book on mass movements. It illustrates very well the latter's thesis that totalitarianism may be more easily opposed by another kind of group fanaticism (nationalism). No doubt Moroz himself might be classed as fanatic, but then perhaps only those in the Soviet Union who are truly "possessed" may be brave enough to raise their voices against the Kremlin.

The main thrust of Moroz's article, however, is directed elsewhere. Having established *oderzhymist* as the prime virtue he now attacks those who lack it. His main quarrel is with another prominent dissident, Ivan Dziuba. After the publication of his book Dziuba was in serious trouble with the Soviet authorities. He was expelled from the Writers' Union and was not allowed to publish. Then, in December 1969, at a special meeting of the presidium of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, Dziuba was reinstated as a member. This happened only after he had printed an

¹⁹ V. Moroz, "Moisei i Datan," *Ukrainskyi visnyk* (Paris-Baltimore, 1971), p. 225.

²⁰ V. Moroz, "Sered snihiv," *Suchasnist*, March 1971, p. 66.

open declaration of loyalty to the regime in which he rejected all insinuations that he was a nationalist.²¹ It is this declaration by Dziuba which became the target for Moroz. Dziuba's step, Moroz claimed, was a betrayal of the Ukrainian resistance, a capitulation to the Russians. Moroz must have been well aware that Dziuba's breastbeating was really a tactical move. Like so many Ukrainian deviationists before him (notably Mykola Khvylovyi in the 1920's), Dziuba's declaration must be regarded as part of the well-practised strategy of those dissidents who hope to influence public opinion not by going underground, like Moroz, but by remaining afloat as loyalists. Sometimes, as in the case of Khvylovyi, this strategy is useful for it allows a certain elbowroom for continued resistance. In the long run, however, these moves are doomed. So, at least, believes Moroz, to whom behaviour such as this is not only deeply distasteful but also ineffective in terms of the political aims it wants to achieve.

The divergence between Dziuba's and Moroz's views exemplifies not only the rift in the Ukrainian resistance but also the dilemma of the intellectual dissent in general. It is only possible to say that at the moment there is room in the Ukraine for both points of view and that the polarity between them is a positive fact. It enables many dissenters to express differing opinions which do not necessarily coincide with those of either Dziuba or of Moroz. The literary critic Ievhen Sverstiuk, for instance, is chiefly concerned with the problems of Ukrainian literary history and literary criticism, expressing a new national awareness in these fields. Often a protest originates not among individuals but within groups, as in the case of "the creative youth of Dnipropetrovsk"²² complaining about the deliberate policy of denigrating Ukrainian culture in that city. Another area of dissent, beyond the scope of the present article, could be found among the young poets (Ihor Kalynets, Vasyl Stus, Hryhorii Chubai, Vasyl Holoborodko and others) whose verses now circulate in the Ukrainian *samvydav*. There is a lively atmosphere of creativity in these underground circles which sharply contrasts with the stagnation in art and letters above ground. Nationalist dissent in the Ukraine today is both buoyant and intellectually attractive precisely because of its polarization. It springs from a wider, rather than a narrow, concern

²¹ Dziuba's declaration was printed in *Literaturna Ukraina*, 6 January 1970.

²² See *Ukrainskyi visnyk* (Paris-Baltimore, 1971) pp. 39-50.

with the fate of Ukrainian men and women²³ in the modern world. The tone is rarely parochial and is always aware of the general problems of human freedom. It is a force to be reckoned with.

RÉSUMÉ/ABSTRACT

Polarity in Ukrainian Intellectual Dissent

Au cours des dernières années l'opposition intellectuelle en Ukraine s'est polarisée. D'un côté il y a les Marxistes-Léninistes qui, dans leurs oeuvres inédites, préconisent le retour à une politique léniniste dans le domaine des nationalités soviétiques. C'est Ivan Dziuba qui s'est fait le porte-parole par excellence de ce groupe. De l'autre côté l'on trouve ceux qui prônent un nationalisme à outrance (Valentyn Moroz). Ceux-ci croient en l'affirmation des valeurs culturelles nationales et ils déplorent tout compromis avec le régime actuel. Ils se manifestent par un fanatisme national tout court. Jusqu'à ce jour il y a eu peu de discussion entre les deux tendances d'opposition. Toutefois, il y a un effet intéressant qui touche à la nature de l'opposition en général dans l'Union soviétique. Les attitudes des Ukrainiens se reflètent dans le mouvement de l'opposition en Russie. En ce moment la polarisation de l'opposition ukrainienne exerce une influence féconde sur la vie littéraire et intellectuelle ukrainienne.

G. L.

²³ Among the Ukrainian dissidents are many women (A. Horska, M. Kotsiubynska, N. Svitlychna, K. Zarytska).