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Final Report

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Research Project: *Shades and Facets of "Dissent" in Soviet Ukraine: Contextualization, Comparisons, and Entanglements*

Background of the research

Recently, several scholars have started challenging the classical powerful narrative that describes the dissident movement in the Soviet Union. Within this narrative, dissidents and the Soviet authorities emerge in almost strictly binary opposition. Such terms as, for instance, "resistance", "oppression" and "domination" describe the relations between these actors. At the same time, as Serguei Oushakine observed, the "dissident" discourse often "echoed and amplified the rhetoric of the regime, rather than positioning itself outside of or underneath it."[1] Benjamin Nathans also points out that the main weapon of the Soviet dissidents from the mid-1960s onwards was not civil disobedience but vice versa "the radical civil obedience." [2]

The suggested project on different trends within the "dissent" in Soviet Ukraine also attempts to go beyond the narrative of the binary opposition. The goal is to contextualize the "dissidence" in Ukraine in its relations to Soviet policies and ideology in the 1960s to 1980s. To this end, I undertake an analysis of the interrelations of "dissident" texts, their authors, and the relevant Soviet context. One of the aims of the research is to check the applicability of latest observations in the research on the Soviet "dissent" (some examples mentioned above) in the context of a national Soviet republic. Mostly, the cited publications on "dissent" rely on the Soviet Russian materials. At the same time, other Soviet republics had a particularly prominent role of the national element. The role of the national element in

[1] Serguei Alex. Oushakine, "The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat," *Public Culture* 13, no. 2 (2001): 192.

[2] Benjamin Nathans, "The Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'Pin and the Idea of Rights under "Developed Socialism"," *Slavic Review*, 2007, 630. See also, Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

the interrelations of the "dissident" and power discourse in Soviet Ukraine is a key issue of the research project. It is important to emphasize that the national dimension was prominent not only in "dissident" writings but also in the Soviet policies. Beginning with the 1960s, the Soviet policies in Soviet Western republics incorporate in various forms and degrees the elements of national communism. In Ukraine, this trend is most closely associated with the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine Petro Shelest (1963-1972). The dynamics between the accepted Soviet form of Ukrainian nationalism and the discussions about it and their "dissident" and "oppositional" forms is a crucial part of the context throughout the analyzed decades.

Research carried out at the OSA

Due to the objectives of the research, there were two main directions of the choice of the sources, consulted at the OSA. The first group of the sources consisted of the dissident samizdat materials. The other cluster of materials was formed of various subject files. The latter included document collections on such topics as national question in the Soviet Union, party issues in Soviet Ukraine, materials on the Ukrainian samizdat, Ukrainian regional developments etc. The collections of newspapers clips and RFE/RL research reports topics on these topics proved to be especially useful.

The main chronological focus in the research at the OSA was on the 1960s, the period when some of the most interesting "dissident" texts appeared in Soviet Ukraine. I have also worked with the materials on the 1970s when the "legalist" trend in Soviet Ukrainian "dissidence" became prominent and the 1980s particularly with the emphasis on the developments during the Perestroika.

Originally, the main goal of the research was to attempt to contextualize the Soviet Ukrainian "dissidence" within the context and developments in Soviet Ukraine. The key emphasis was to be on Soviet nationality policies in Ukraine from the 1960s to the 1980s and the ambitions of some of the Soviet Ukrainian leaders to exploit the national question to their political benefit within the republic and in the Soviet Union. As mentioned above, the latter particularly referred to Petro Shelest. To this end, for instance, I have analyzed the Soviet Ukrainian samizdat of the 1960s, juxtaposing it to the publications on the national question that appeared in the Soviet Ukrainian press, including the speeches and articles of the leading Soviet Ukrainian officials. The preliminary research suggests many intersections and overlapping themes and similarities in the used language between the Soviet

Ukrainian samizdat and the Soviet Ukrainian official discourse on the national question in the 1960s. In many respects, these existed in one symbolic and discursive space. That is especially relevant for the national-communist trend within the Soviet Ukrainian "dissidence", represented most notably by Ivan Dzyuba and his writings. A significant number of the early Soviet Ukrainian samizdat in the 1960s was actually addressing the Soviet authorities, being an attempt rather of a dialogue than a conflict. The trend in the dissidence which rather drew its inspiration in the integral nationalist tradition of Dmytro Dontsov's type in that sense fitted better to the classical narrative of the dissident movement in Ukraine. Yet, even there one can find interconnections with the Soviet official rhetoric and policies. To what extent these similarities and interconnections are also the function of the limited discursive possibilities for self-expression within the rather ideologically closed system is an important question, which requires further investigation.

Importantly, the collections, consulted at the OSA, allowed me to go beyond my originally planned focus on the Soviet Ukrainian level. They gave me the possibility to attempt to contextualize the Soviet Ukrainian dissidence within some of the All-Soviet trends and developments. For instance, for the 1960s it became clear that it may make sense to contextualize the Soviet Ukrainian samizdat's take on the national question within the debates on the role of the "national specificity" in the Soviet context and the "rapproachment/merger of the nations" which were taking place in the Soviet official press in the 1960s. Evidently, Soviet Ukrainian dissidents were well familiar with these debates which appeared in the main Soviet newspapers and literary and theoretical journals. One can view their writings also as a reaction and/or even a part of these debates, even though produced outside of the official Soviet channels. A crucial issue here is also the analysis and perception of the official Soviet rhetoric, to what extent was it homogeneous and monolith and how one perceived the possibilities and limits of the discussion in the Soviet context. Some of the materials, found at the OSA, put these questions to the fore.

The other direction of the possible contextualization of the Soviet Ukrainian "dissidence" that attracted my attention during my research stay at the OSA was the Soviet debates and publications on the decolonization processes which took place in the world. The Bolshevik and Soviet rhetoric always had an anti-imperial and decolonizing dimension. In the post World War II context, it became actualized, as many colonies were fighting for and receiving independence. Of course, this process

intersected with the Soviet geopolitical goals to become the champion of the "oppressed" peoples in (former) colonies. Multiple publications on the problems and prospects of the decolonization in the world appeared in the official Soviet press. Yet, the same discourse in certain respect could be applied also to the multinational Soviet state. One can find similarities between the official discourse on the decolonization and the Soviet Ukrainian "dissident" analysis of the Soviet Union as an "empire" and the "colonial" character of the national republics. I will check and look into this connection, noticed during my stay at the OSA, further in my research.

While a number of interesting findings support a closer interrelation of the "dissident" and power discourses in Soviet Ukraine, one type of the Soviet Ukraine "dissent" rather stood outside of the rhetoric of the regime. The religious "dissent" in Soviet Ukraine had a language of their own in many respects. At the same time, a closer look at the Soviet official rhetoric on the religious issues in Ukraine may provide new insights on this complex web of interrelations.

Overall, the visit to the OSA with the support of the Visegrad Scholarship proved to be very productive and exceeded the original plans. Collections, found at the OSA, allowed me to find new potential tropes (which I paid little attention previously) for the contextualization and interpretation of the Soviet Ukrainian "dissidence" in its relations to the Soviet official rhetoric and policies. I plan to build on these findings and explore them in my further research.

List of consulted archival materials

300 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute
300-80 Soviet Red Archives
300-80-1 Old Code Subject Files
300-80-1-384
300-80-1-607
300-80-1-619
300-80-1-884
300-80-1-1060
300-80-1-1062
300-80-1-1073
300-80-1-1074
300-80-1-1076

300 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute
300-85 Samizdat Archives
300-85-9 Published Samizdat
300-85-9-1
300-85-9-2
300-85-9-4
300-85-9-6
300-85-9-7
300-85-9-10
300-85-9-12
300-85-9-15
300-85-9-22
300-85-9-23
300-85-9-24
300-85-9-30
300-85-9-44
300-85-9-45
300-85-9-145
300-85-9-148

300 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute
300-85 Samizdat Archives
300-85-12 Subject Files
300-85-12-53
300-85-12-66
300-85-12-72
300-85-12-73
300-85-12-74
300-85-12-81
300-85-12-82
300-85-12-83
300-85-12-178
300-85-12-260
300-85-12-261

300 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute
300-85 Samizdat Archives
300-85-44 Unpublished Samizdat: Subject Files
300-85-44-8
300-85-44-9
300-85-44-10
300-85-44-15
300-85-44-20
300-85-44-21
300-85-44-24

300-85-44-28
300-85-44-29
300-85-44-30
300-85-44-31
300-85-44-32
300-85-44-33