

# KyivPost

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## **How America played a central role in Ukraine becoming independent**

Sep 11, 2011 Kyiv Post

| Taras Kuzio

The USA played a central role in the emergence of Ukraine as an independent state. But this story, until now, has never been told. US official documents from the Cold War are only now being released while eyewitnesses are either reluctant to talk or no longer with us.

The US funded the most successful publishing and research operation in the Ukrainian diaspora throughout the Cold War. Washington did the same with the Paris-based Instytut Literackie, which was the publisher of Kultura magazine. Washington therefore supported the two most influential and intellectual magazines in the Polish and Ukrainian diasporas – Kultura and Suchasnist respectively.

This story begins in 1944 when representatives from the UHVR (Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council), one of whom is the legendary Mykola Lebed, are sent to Western Europe to establish contact with the allies. UHVR was established by the underground OUNb (Organisation Ukrainian Nationalists, Stepan Bandera) in Ukraine as an umbrella political body.

One outcome of cooperation between zpUHVR and Western allies were the parachuting of couriers into Ukraine until the early 1950s. They were largely ineffective due to Soviet spies in British intelligence and OUNb. By the early 1950s, the Ukrainian nationalist underground had been defeated.

In 1952, the Americans switched from hard to soft power and began financing zpUHVR through Prolog Research and Publishing Corporation based for most of its four-decade life in New York. From the 1950s Suchanist journal and book publishers were based in Munich and from the 1980s, the Society Soviet Nationality Studies (SSNS) and Ukrainian Press Agency (UPA) were based in London.

American financing of Prolog lasted until the late 1980s, when US covert operations against the USSR

ceased on President George W. Bush's instructions as a gesture to President Mikhail Gorbachev. Prolog closed its doors in 1992, but Suchasnist magazine continued to be published in Ukraine until 2010.

Prolog Vice President Anatol Kaminsky and President Roman Kupchinsky had a close connection to another US-funded operation, Radio Liberty, where they were heads of the Ukrainian service (Radio Svoboda). Bohdan Nahaylo, who cooperated with Prolog in the 1980s, was also head of Radio Svoboda.

American documents from the 1940s show they believed only two émigré groups had influence in Ukraine – zpUHVR and OUNb. These two organisations, the former relying principally on American money and the latter on its mass community networks, were the biggest players vis-à-vis Ukraine over the following four decades.

This was also the view of the Soviet regime as seen by the assassinations of OUNz leader Lev Rebet and OUNb leader Stepan Bandera in Munich in 1957 and 1959, respectively, by KGB agent Bohdan Stashynsky. It is not a coincidence that Stashynsky came out of hiding to give media interviews only after Viktor Yanukovich was elected president last year. OUNz (abroad) was established in 1952 after breaking away from OUNb and supported zpUHVR.

Prolog and OUNb differed in four important ways in their approach to Ukraine.

The first was strategy with only OUNb seeking to establish underground networks in Ukraine. Unfortunately, some of these were run by former OUNb leaders who had been turned by the KGB or by KGB double agents. Because of this they were often a source of provocation as in 1971-1972 when an OUNb courier from Belgium was arrested leading to widespread arrests in what became known as the "Pohrom" of Ukrainian dissent and culture.

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A second was in publishing with OUNb focusing on only nationalist literature. Because Prolog, like InstytutLiterackie, was financially independent of the diaspora, they could publish books and articles from across the entire political spectrum. These included for example national communists from the 1920s and 1960s such as Ivan Dziuba, whose well known "Internationalism or Russification?" was published in the late 1960s. Dziuba, Ukraine's first Minister of Culture, edited Suchasnist magazine in Ukraine.

The third difference lay in attitudes towards developments in Ukraine. OUNb distrusted the non-nationalist opposition, including Rukh in the late 1980s.

Prolog meanwhile embraced different ideological trends in the opposition and factions in the Communist Party of Ukraine. In the late 1980s Prolog therefore provided the greatest amount of financial (stretching into the millions of dollars) and technical resources for the emerging democratic movement in Ukraine.

A final way they were different was in their ability to work with other nationalities oppressed under communism. In the 1980s Prolog and SSNS/UPA closely cooperated with the Czech opposition and Polish underground in the smuggling of books and journals to Ukraine, some of which were reprinted in Poland, and trained Ukrainians in underground printing techniques.

This cooperation built on decades of close ties between Suchasnist and Kultura magazines that had promoted Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation in the decades before it received support from inside Poland by Pope Cardinal Wojtyla and Solidarity. Cooperation with the Polish underground was assisted by Adrian Karatnycky, who was then based at AFL-CIO.

The younger generation of Ukrainian-Americans took control of Prolog in 1978 when Roman Kupchinsky was elected president. This was an opportune moment because American funding grew to its highest levels under President Ronald Reagan in his crusade against the "evil empire." Liberalisation in the USSR from 1985 under Gorbachev also opened up opportunities for covert and overt operations in support of the democratic opposition and splits in the Communist Party of Ukraine.

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Greater American funding permitted the expansion of Prolog activities into Britain with the opening of SSNS/UPA and launch of English-language publications Soviet Nationality Survey, edited by Alexander Motyl and Nadia Diuk, and Soviet Ukrainian Affairs, which was modelled on an earlier Prolog publication, Digest of the Soviet Ukrainian Press, published from the 1950s to the 1970s. UPA issued Ukrainian and English-language press releases and accumulated the largest Western collection of Ukrainian samvydav.

UPA went international opening offices in Warsaw (headed by Roman Kryk), Kyiv and Moscow. Of the three UPA-Kyiv student-journalists, Serhiy Skrypnyk is today editor of Kyiv Weekly, Viktor Tkachuk (Ukolov) is a Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) deputy and Vyacheslav Pikhovshek, a long-time regime apologist. A fourth person was Konstantin Borodin, who today works under Energy Minister Yuriy Boiko.

UPA personal were also instrumental in obtaining a NED (National Endowment Democracy) grant that established Ukraine’s first think tank, the Center for Independent Political Research, which is still going strong two decades later ([www.ucipr.kiev.ua](http://www.ucipr.kiev.ua)).

American funding of Prolog is one of Washington’s most successful covert operations in the Cold War vis-a-vis the USSR and played a central role in achieving Ukrainian independence. In decades to come, US documents will be released that will be able to provide greater detail of this success story.

Prolog archives are deposited in the Center for Research into the Liberation Movement in Lviv, Ukraine (<http://cdvr.org.ua/>). SSNS and UPA archives are located in the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. <http://cdn.calisphere.org/data/13030/fg/kt3m3nd8fg/files/kt3m3nd8fg.pdf>

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