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Emigre strategies face Soviet and Ukrainian realities

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After the liquidation of the organized nationalist underground in Ukraine (UHVR [Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council], UPA [Ukrainian Insurgent Army], OUN [Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists]) by the early 1950s, emigre nationalists followed two different strategies in the next four decades towards their goal of liberating Ukraine. Both strategies had their own rationale but they also had positive and negative consequences.

The external representation (zp) UHVR, and the Prolog Research and Publishing House it established in 1952, understood that this was a new era and adopted a strategy of not establishing underground groups in Soviet Ukraine. They adopted a new strategy aimed at the development of “peaceful revolution” and strengthening of the opposition’s potential through non-violent means, decades before this same strategy was adopted in the Orange Revolution.

Two Prolog leaders also headed the U.S. government-funded Radio Svoboda which played an important role in the provision of independent information to Soviet Ukraine.

In contrast OUNb pursued a strategy common to all organized emigre political parties of building underground structures in Soviet Ukraine. As developments showed, the KGB was only too happy to assist them in this endeavour.

Prolog was not a typical emigre organization but a research think tank and publishing company that also undertook covert activities vis-a-vis Soviet Ukraine. zpUHVR/Prolog supported opposition groups and dissident movements, including national communist tendencies within the Communist Party of Ukraine. National communism was an important factor in Soviet Ukrainian politics from the late 1950s to the early 1970s and in the second half of the 1980s.

From the 1950s through to the 1980s the two emigre publishing houses that published the greatest volume of dissident literature and samvydav, that ranged across the ideological spectrum from national communist, liberal to nationalist, were Prolog and Suchanist, its Munich publishing arm, and the Baltimore-based Smoloskyp publishing house run by Osyp Zinkevych. The only samvydav published by OUNb came from a narrower spectrum of dissidents, nationalists based in Western Ukraine.

Soviet intelligence service infiltration of OUNb

Soviet security services infiltrated OUNb on many occasions from the 1950s to the 1980s, as revealed by existing information and former KGB documents in the SBU archives on these operations. Many of these documents are now in the West and will be useful for researchers working in the future on the history of emigre inter-action with Soviet Ukraine from the 1950s to 1980s. The OUNb will never be transparent about its activities and will therefore not publish its own objective account of this period.

In 1951 the head of OUNb's Security Service, Myron Matviyko, was parachuted by the British intelligence service into western Ukraine. In the parachuted group headed by Matviyko was a KGB agent and they were "delivered" directly into the KGB's hands. zpUHVR courier Vasyl khrymovych, who was parachuted at the same time by the CIA was captured by the KGB on Oct. 6, 1952 and after his refusal to co-operate was executed in May 1954.

Matviyko agreed to cooperate with the KGB and played the role of a double agent until the early 1960s. Why the head of OUNb SB, one of the most senior positions in the emigre nationalist organization, was sent on such a dangerous mission remains unclear. If he was caught he could reveal everything to the KGB about the émigré OUNb – which is what he did.

Matviyko's capture and agreement to work for the KGB provided them with the intelligence to plan the assassinations of OUNz leader Lev Rebet and OUNb leader Stepan Bandera in 1957 and 1959 respectively in Munich. OUNz (OUN abroad) professed allegiance to the democratic program adopted by OUN in Ukraine in 1943, split from OUNb in 1954 and supported zpUHVR.

KGB assassin Bohdan Stashynsky defected to Germany in 1961 and after a brief period of imprisonment allegedly returned to the USSR. He continues to live in Kyiv and collects a pension from independent Ukraine, the country that under President Viktor Yushchenko awarded state awards to Bandera, the person Stashynsky assassinated.

One of OUNb's underground leaders in the following decade, Sviatoslav Panchyshyn, was a Soviet agent for the next three decades. At the end of the 1960s the emigre OUNb approached Panchyshyn to be head of its Lviv underground. Panchyshyn agreed to the proposal but promptly informed the KGB and became a double agent until the late 1980s.

Panchyshyn was elevated to a position within the ruling council of OUNb (Provid) which gave him secrets at the very core of the émigré organization. He was appointed head of the Organized Court (Organizatsiynoho Sudu) of OUNb and Chief of the OUNb Security Service (SB) in Ukraine. Panchyshyn therefore followed in the footsteps of Matviyko.

Panchyshyn's work on behalf of the émigré OUNb was seen as so "valuable" that the organization awarded him with the "Golden Cross" medal and "Bandera Silver Medal".

In September 1988, Panchyshyn and Yuriy Ivanchenko, head of the Kyiv OUNb underground, who was also a KGB double agent, held a press conference in Kyiv where they revealed their life as Soviet agents. The KGB strategy of building a controlled, artificial OUNb underground in Ukraine was codenamed 'Operation Boomerang.'

Panchyshyn and Ivanchenko gloated at the press conference at how they had "neutralized" 20 OUNb emissaries from the US, Britain, France, and Western Germany. One of the "neutralized" emissaries was the Belgian young emigre Jaroslav Dobush from the Association of Ukrainian Youth (SUM).

Dovbush was arrested in January 1972 by the KGB and charged with 'espionage.' His public confession, prepared by the KGB, linked Ukraine's dissidents and cultural activists to émigré nationalists. This false allegation was used to launch the 1972 wave of arrests in Ukraine described as a 'pohrom' (pogrom) by the samvydav journal Ukrainski Visnyk (Ukrainian Herald).

The Communist Party of Ukraine required "proof" of the alleged ties between emigre nationalists and Ukrainian dissidents and cultural activists to provide ideological justification for their campaign of arrests. Communist strategy was facilitated by KGB control of the fake "OUNb underground" in Soviet Ukraine. The Dobush affair had all the hallmarks of an inside provocation organized by KGB double agent whom the OUNb believed were working for them over two decades.

KGB becomes SBU in independent Ukraine

When Ukraine became an independent state the emigre OUNb aligned with the small DSU (State Independence of Ukraine) party whose leaders had links to the National Front that had been active in Western Ukraine in the 1960s and 1970s.

OUNb distanced itself from the largest, at that time, home grown nationalist group, the Inter-Party Assembly (which became the Ukrainian National Assembly [UNA]) and its paramilitary arm, UNSO (Ukrainian Peoples Self Defense Force). OUNb therefore did not support UNA leader Yuriy Shukhevych's candidacy in Ukraine's December 1991 presidential elections. Yuriy Shukhevych had spent thirty years in the Gulag for being the son of the legendary UPA commander Roman Shukhevych who died in a 1950 shootout with KGB troops.

In 1992 the OUNb continued its four decade-long strategy of establishing political structures in Ukraine. the only Ukrainian émigré political group to establish a new political party in independent Ukraine, the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN). OUNz/zpUHVR and OUNm (Andrei Melnyk), which was registered as a NGO, continued their different four decade non-violent strategy of focusing on educational and civil society work. The émigré Smoloskyp publishing house moved its publishing operations to Kyiv where they still exist.

KUN was headed by OUNb leader Yaroslava Stetsko from 1992 until she passed away in 2003. Throughout this period KUN was plagued by rumors of infiltration by the SBU, the KGB's successor structure. KUN deputy leader Serhiy Zhizhko successfully ejected Roman Zvarych, an OUNb activist from New York, in 1995. Zvarych and many other members of KUN believed that Zhizhko was a SBU agent but Stetsko always supported Zhizhko.

Zvarych was elected to parliament in 1998 in Rukh, then in Our Ukraine in 2006 and 2007 and more recently has joined Front for Change. Zvarych was briefly Minister of Justice in 2005 but this ended in scandal when it was revealed he had falsely claimed on his CV to having an MA and PhD from Columbia University.

It has also long been suspected that leaders of the Social National Party of Ukraine/Svoboda had links to the SBU. More recently, rumors persist that Svoboda receives funding from the Party of Regions, a claim even the pro-Yanukovich American Institute of Ukraine criticized in two reports.

After Stetsko passed away, KUN's new leader became gas trader Oleksiy Ivchenko who had been active with other Western Ukrainians in the gas trade since the 1990s. In 2005 Ivchenko was appointed head of the state gas company Naftohaz Ukrainy but was disgraced by his purchase of a \$250,000 Mercedes and was replaced by President Yushchenko.

KUN failed to enter parliament in the 1998 elections when it was one of three parties in the National Front bloc. KUN with its new leader entered parliament in Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc in the 2002 and 2006 elections but did not join the Our Ukraine-Peoples Self Defense bloc in the 2007 pre-term elections.

In the second half of the last decade KUN led by Ivchenko has cut earlier ties to OUNb which has been led by second generation Ukrainians from Germany and (currently) Australia. The Stepan Bandera Sports-Patriotic Association “Tryzub” (Trident), split from KUN in the late 1990s and is today a separate structure.

The main nationalist party in Ukraine today is Svoboda (Freedom) which is home grown, not imported from the Ukrainian diaspora. OUNb meanwhile has resumed its life as an émigré organization.

The supreme irony is that today in Ukraine and the diaspora there are four organizations and parties that claim to be “Banderite” (i.e. followers of Stepan Bandera) in Ukraine - Svoboda, KUN, OUNb “Tryzub” – but they do not work with each other. Emigre OUNb has poor relations with all three. Ukrainian nationalists are therefore as fractured as national democrats.

OUNb pursued a misconceived strategy of establishing underground groups in Soviet Ukraine and a political party in independent Ukraine. In both cases this led to infiltration by the KGB and its successor structure, the SBU.

Émigré groups and parties that pursued a different strategy of educational and cultural work vis-a-vis Soviet Ukraine and independent Ukraine, such as zpUHVR/Prolog, Smoloskyp and the OUNm Olzhych Foundation, have been far more successful. They, in contrast, have not given the KGB or SBU the means to infiltrate and subvert their work.

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