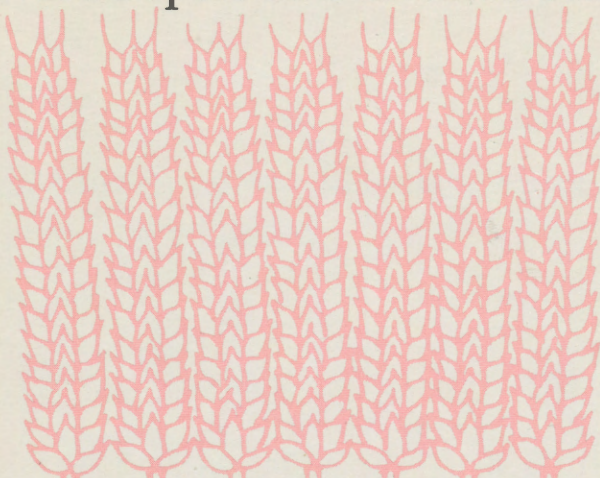


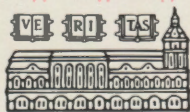
Harvard Papers in Ukrainian Studies



Political Communities and Gendered
Ideologies in Contemporary Ukraine

The Petryshyn Memorial Lecture
Harvard University, 26 April 1994

Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak



The Ukrainian Research Institute
Harvard University

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The Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute was established in 1973 as an integral part of Harvard University. It supports research associates and visiting scholars who are engaged in projects concerned with all aspects of Ukrainian studies. The Institute also works in close cooperation with the Committee on Ukrainian Studies, which supervises and coordinates the teaching of Ukrainian history, language, and literature at Harvard University.

Editorial Statement

The Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University has established the series Harvard Papers in Ukrainian Studies as a medium for occasional papers, reports, reprints, and long articles. The series is dedicated to a broad vision of Ukrainian studies. It thus will include works that have Ukraine alone as their central focus, others that deal with Ukraine in relation to its neighbors, and still others that focus mainly on Ukraine's neighbors, in as much as that focus ultimately is relevant to an understanding of Ukrainian history, culture, language, or politics. This last aspect of the series is meant to foster an understanding of Ukraine's place within the different spheres of its existence: as part of East Central Europe, as part of the Black Sea littoral, as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as part of the Russian Empire. By understanding these different but interrelated spheres of Ukrainian existence, both past and present, it is hoped that a fuller understanding of an independent Ukraine will arise, both for specialists in Ukrainian studies and in other areas.

Introductory Remarks by Dr. Bohachevsky-Chomiak

It is appropriate that this first Petryshyn Memorial Lecture be held on the solemn anniversary of the nuclear accident in Chernobyl. A memorial lecture is perforce a sad occasion, and one held on the day of the world's worst nuclear disaster even more so. But yet, the work of Maria and Vasyl Petryshyn continues, in the scholarship and exchange of ideas their bequest will sponsor. The lives of the Petryshyn family personify the vitality of the Ukrainian community, a dedication to the people from whom they stemmed and of the community work they fostered and supported. And the tragedy of Chernobyl itself marked the beginning of the emergence of the modern Ukrainian state. I am honored to be the first Petryshyn Lecturer, and would like the generous honorarium of the lecture to be used to support other distinguished lecturers in the series.

My topic today in a real sense is related to the civic-mindedness of the founders of this series, and the generous dedication of their children and grandchildren to the study of Ukraine, its history, culture, and people.



Ukraine: Oblasts and Cities with Population over 200,000

Political Communities and Gendered Ideologies in Contemporary Ukraine

Let me begin by summarizing briefly the four points to which I want to call your attention in this paper:

First, Ukraine has a tradition of community self-help organizations, mainly because it had neither state nor for the most part major philanthropic support for activities in any manner related to its needs.

Second, community organizations, once they articulate their views— as contrasted with the actual activities in which they engage—present their programs in the accepted terminology, be it romanticism, nationalism, or communism. The articulation does not reflect the activities of the organization, but rather favors the rhetoric of lofty principles. This also is true for women's organizations.

Third, articulated ideologies, including those of women, do not take a woman's perspective into consideration; moreover, when women do formulate their "programs" they do so in accepted male terms.

Finally, the discrepancy between the activity of the organizations and their stated programs makes it difficult for Ukrainians to gauge their social and economic situation realistically and to act in an organized fashion in their own interest. It also stunts Ukraine's intellectual development and the study of its own past.

If Ukraine is at all known by the broad public, it is as a victim of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl and as the intransigent heir to some of the Soviet nuclear arsenal.

Specialists (the old Kremlinologists or Sovietologists) invariably bring nationalism into any discussion of Ukraine—as if Ukraine had no existence beyond its being "Ukrainian," hence being nationalistic. In their analysis of politics in Ukraine, however, these same Kremlinologists point to the weakness of nationalism in Ukraine and question the unity of the country. In other words, nationalism is used to define Ukraine, while at the same time its weakness is taken for granted. Ukrainians have not produced a nationalist leader or thinker who would place the movement on the world map, nor have they in any meaningful fashion defined what nationalism means to them.

Should we define nationalism to understand Ukraine? What is this nationalism, of which Ukraine is generally accused and of whose absence it is equally faulted? And is it indeed nationalism that is the determining phenomenon in the country?

The automatic channeling of discussion about Ukraine into nationalism, the failure to define the specifics of the term, leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes that in themselves hamper the study of the real issues. The dual nature of nationalism—as ideology and as activity—makes the analysis of this phenomenon particularly difficult. Scholars write of nationalism as being primarily an intellectual and emotive condition implicitly limited to subject nationalities. Judging by much of the available literature, dominant nations, such as Germans or Russians, produce only fringe nationalist movements. For instance, the disintegration of the USSR was immediately viewed in terms of the rise of nationalism everywhere but in Russia.¹

Historically, the major progenitors of articulated nationalism had been philosophers who presented their views in a non-academic style that professional philosophers faulted for lacking a system and hence an analytical approach that would make it scientific. The enunciators of nationalism have been poets exhorting the people to future greatness by recounting an idealized and often mythic past. Historians have studied the written documents of nationalist activists as the basis for understanding nationalism. The implication is that the manifestos, the programs, the exhortations to action, as well as the memoirs written by the protagonists reflect the activities of the individuals or the groups involved.

Social scientists write about issues they can define, order and articulate. But the attempt to explain or systematize phenomena even to only an organizational scheme often obfuscates the story by its very desire for clarity. Systematization, so necessary in any coherent presentation, can shroud reality by endowing it with philosophical transcendence.² In the nineteenth century the accepted historical model was national or state history, often supplemented by intellectual history that focused on discernible thinkers and the schools of thought they influenced. Scholars

¹ Even the first victories of Vladimir Zhirinovsky were not considered a popular phenomenon but simply a sign of popular disaffection. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, still considered by many to be the conscience of Russia, has not seen fit to denounce Zhirinovsky, seeing in him legitimate disaffection of the Russian population.

² That in turn makes reality more difficult to change. In the case of contemporary Eastern Europe, it has made it even more difficult to understand the changes and the alacrity with which they came.

systematized knowledge and wrote order into the most chaotic events, while national ideology and the articulation of its underlying symbolism was the preserve of philosophers, poets, or other literary figures. Traditional political (hence also national) history divorced the public from the personal even in areas where some degree of participatory politics was possible. Traditional approaches tended to stress the systematic rational or reasoned articulated explanation or paradigm for a series of events, not necessarily the events themselves. This then favors a generalized and potentially ideological approach.

In the two years of its most recent independence, Ukraine has been a country of surprises. The overwhelming vote for independence was a surprise even to its staunchest adherents. Conventional wisdom had Ukrainians hitched to the Russian star. Then there were predictions of rapid economic reforms, which proved totally wrong. The March 1994 elections were to have seen an apathetic electorate, but the electorate swarmed to the polls in all areas of the country. The popularity of the communists in the run-off election was also a surprise, as was the number of independents who were elected. According to our pundits, we now await another tearing asunder of the broad Ukrainian landmass. Will that indeed be the case, or will this prediction go the way all other predictions have gone?

What the elections proved was that the people of Ukraine want economic opportunity. If ties with Moscow bring in a cash flow, then ties with Moscow it will be. But for the man in the street—and it is for the most part man, since women rarely take on an open position to political debates—there is no talk of spiritual unity with Russia, rather a unity of misery. Russia's turn to the right, the unwillingness of even its liberal factions to reconcile themselves to the loss of the empire, especially of Ukraine, is threatening to destabilize the area, but seems to have done nothing for the relative value of the *ruble* vis-à-vis the *karbovanets*'. The Ukrainian electorate behaves as any other electorate: it looks out for itself. Mykhailo Pohrebenskyi, a Kiev sociologist, commented on the recent elections: "People are pragmatic. Most understand you cannot return to the past. They are looking for future stability, which necessitates reforms."³

While Russia slipped from the Soviet cocoon into its underlying Russian identity and state structure, Ukraine's post-totalitarian difficulties

³ As quoted in Lida Poletz, "Struggling Ukrainians Vote for Change," *Christian Science Monitor* 29 March 1994: 4.

are compounded by its colonial status. Ukrainians struggle with building a new state on the collapsed ruins of the USSR, not with reforming existing structures. The country's natural resources are depleted, its economic infrastructure directed at the needs of the erstwhile center, its management and work-force conditioned to receiving orders rather than to taking initiative, both its old and new leadership appear unable to break out of their respective molds. Yet perhaps more invidious than the incipient corruption and pervading inefficiency in Ukraine is the increasingly evident lack of empowerment. Naturally, it could be an excuse for inefficiency, or a cover-up for misappropriation of funds, but the evidence we have before us is a real sense of powerlessness, similar to that felt by groups disenfranchised because of race or gender experience.⁴

Discussions of identity flourish only in the cities and there among the intelligentsia.⁵ The United States has proven that it is possible to forge a

⁴ Kostiantyn Morozov is a case in point. He resigned as defense minister after President Kravchuk's apparently unilateral decision at Massandra to give up the Black Sea Fleet to Russia because, as Morozov poignantly phrased it in his memoirs, "Ukraine is not in a position to maintain the fleet." Morozov is plagued by a sense of Ukraine's weakness and the price of friendship with Russia, a friendship of the strong with the weak. He does not use the term colonial, but in stressing that the model of international friendly relations for Russia is the supplicant position Georgia is in vis-à-vis Russia provides us with an example. There is a telling footnote to Morozov's fears—the same issue of the newspaper, *Ukrains'ka Hazeta*, March, 1994, that began serializing his memoirs ran a lengthy article by the historian Olena Apanovych on the fateful Pereiaslav agreement of 1654 by which Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nytskyi entered into what amounted to vassal status with Muscovy. Seventy-five years later, with Muscovy now transformed into the Russian Empire, Ukraine was no longer viewed as a vassal state by the Russians, but as an integral part of Russia itself. Apanovych traces the subservient mentality of Ukrainians toward Russia to this treaty, bemoaning the servility into which Khmel'nytskyi plunged Ukraine. What is implied in the argument is that Khmel'nytskyi needed to validate his own rule, having rebelled against the Polish monarch, by another legitimate authority, and the then weak Orthodox Russian tsar served that purpose. Not only was the Russian tsar the sole Orthodox sovereign in the world, Russia's weakness when compared to the self-confidence of the gentry Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was seen by the Hetman as a safe path for Ukraine to follow. Oliver Cromwell, Khmel'nytskyi's contemporary, validated his rule through a direct edict from God, as did, a few decades later, Peter the First of Russia, eviscerating, with the help of western-trained Ukrainian clerics, the church as an independent source of authority.

⁵ Somewhat facetiously and very provocatively Thomas Sowell writes in his *Is Reality Optional*: "The curse of the intelligentsia is their ability to rationalize and re-define. Ordinary people, lacking that gift, are forced to face reality." *Is Reality Optional? and Other Essays* (Stanford, 1993), p. 191.

de facto unity without full fledged declarations of principle and definition without a stated doctrine of national unity. We can wonder if identity in Eastern Europe is possible without interminable conscious searches for identity. Early in the decade, Ukrainians decided that all residents of Ukraine are Ukrainians and proceeded to act accordingly. Thus, Ukraine began its pragmatic quest for normalcy; whether it will be able to pursue it is an open question. In the first years of independence, even the fringe parties stressed moderation and tolerance. Now the question will be whether the growth in popularity of the communists on the one hand and the nationalists on the other will cause the bifurcation of the country.

A major problem in studying events in the former Soviet Union is the subversion of the language of political discourse that was practiced by the communist regime. All of the attributes of democracy have been at one time or another appropriated by that regime, so, as the saying used to go, it was no accident that one of the first slogans of the poets of the 1960s was a plea to return to the word its original meaning. The layerings upon such terms as "participation," "free elections," "democracy," "popular opinion" makes it easy to switch from one ideology to another. Much of politicking is a hubris of sloganeering. The new party rallies have an air of revival meetings, emotionally satisfying to the believers but showing little concrete results among the non-converted.

The current situation in Eastern Europe has shown the limitations of an exclusively political or ideological approach to history and of the difficulty of terminology. The collapse of the USSR was not ideological, since no one really took the ideology seriously in its later stages. Indeed, in the last decades of the Soviet Union we have seen nationalities without historically recognized entities that have developed specific political entities for themselves with little theorizing. In their wish for integration into recognized society, the so-called new republics are ready to embrace whatever the progressively fashionable political label of the time is.

When Michael Clough wrote of the failure within the American context of the foreign policy of the "wise men," he predicted the replacement of the policy of the professionals and the pundits with that of local communities.⁶ The question that can be raised is: are there local

⁶ Michael Clough, "Grassroots Policymaking Bids Farewell to the "Wise Men," *Foreign Affairs*, January-February, 1994: 2-7.

communities that somehow emerged from the atomized society and tight political control of the Soviet state?

Let us review how political parties are formed. One way is to gather like-minded individuals who draft a comprehensive statement of their goals, demands, and methods of achieving those goals. This variant enables the intelligentsia—the politically engaged segment of the educated and somewhat privileged population—to play a leading role in the shaping of the political party.⁷ Such parties speak in the name of a broad group of the population, if not for the entire nation or peoples, regardless of the size of the party. Parties formed in this manner stress “a principled approach” that diminishes the practical elements of the program and makes inter-party cooperation less likely. Such parties, spanning the gamut from ultra-democratic to ultra-rightist, stress an ideological approach to politics. Ukrainians refer to the “conceptualization” (концепція) of a political course of action.

The other type of political party is one organized for a specific goal. In a sense, this party can be considered an English-model party. An ad-hoc group, devised to achieve a specific result, may decide that joint pressure can be more effective than individual efforts. The accretion of goals and the habit of common action thus leads to a gradual formation of a political party. The so-called program and ideology of this type of party emerge after the party is established. Stress is placed not so much upon a principled ideological position as upon reaching the desired goal or amassing power and influence, or both.

A third way for organizing parties is through community organizations. We rarely see community organizations as a potential kernel of political parties because their level of activity appears to be exclusively local with little generalization of broader significance. Moreover, when they do articulate their programs, they do so in the accepted ideological terms and not as a reflection of their actual policies.

⁷ The definition of the intelligentsia is as hotly debated an issue as is the definition of nationalism. The term, coined in the middle of the nineteenth century in Central Europe, is generally used in that area to refer to the politically engaged and articulate activist “workers of the mind” who usually oppose the existing social and political system. The tendency is to consider as the intelligentsia only those thinkers on the left of the social and political spectrum, but the combination of popularizing intellectual approaches to political issues, reaching a wide reading and listening audience, and speaking in the name of the people is not limited to the so-called leftists. In the former USSR the intelligentsia was elevated to a legitimate class and became the toiling intelligentsia. By supporting writers, educators and popularizes of knowledge, the USSR was able to muster a fairly articulate base of support for its policies.

Nationalist parties are generally typed under the first rubric, since their ideology and program are usually enunciated and widely popularized. The problem, as I see it, is that the organizations that precede the formation of some of the nationalist parties may be of the second variety—associations established for a practical purpose. The archeology of the party thus vitiates its apparent typology. Since we look at self-definition and at programs of groups in eastern Europe rather than at their activities we tend to accept the ideology of the party as a genuine reflection of its policies, rather than its rationalizations. Would it be possible to see the Communist Party in Ukraine as an interest group, now that its political power is changed?

When we assess the activity of the community organizations, which form the basis of many women's groups as well as of some nationalist ones (and, *horribile dictu*, even a few communist ones), we see that the immediate goals of the nationalist movement, especially among the peasants, were very practical rather than ideological. I wonder whether we indeed are correct in simply pinning a label of nationalism upon them. Is nationalism as we define it in terms of European ideology and politics an *ex post facto* motivation developed by those who wrote memoirs in much the same fashion as women who in the nineteenth century wrote memoirs of their experiences not in their own authentic voice, but in the language which they learned in school? Will the study of the community organizations of the cities on the peripheries of the Russian Empire provide information that suggests an unarticulated liberalism or a nascent community activism? I suspect it might. When we separate the demands of the current movement for greater autonomy or independence within former Yugoslavia or the former Soviet Union from the rhetoric we see that they are as much economically as nationally motivated. The economic exploitation of the peripheries by the center is as much a factor in the discontent as is national discrimination. Closely connected are ecological concerns of the areas which also strive toward decentralized control, since the central government is seen as having destroyed the resources and polluted the atmosphere of the "provinces."⁸

⁸ The most dramatic example of the "center" disregarding the danger to the "peripheries" is the nuclear accident in Chernobyl, when Moscow denied the magnitude of the disaster and had the local population march in the May Day parade despite the high levels of radiation. This high-handed action of placing the local population at risk was one of the major factors stimulating the Ukrainian population to demand the devolution of the central structure in Moscow to local structures in Ukraine.

Nationalism remains popular because it offers a prospect for a better life without reducing those who seek it to purely materialist goals. Its popularity declines when its parties do not deliver the goods. The last elections in Ukraine graphically demonstrated this truism.

Historically, whenever practitioners of nationalism wrote about it or about themselves, they stressed the selfless nature of the creed and the pristine love of land and love of people that motivated the writer in the first place to become an adherent of nationalism. Moreover, nationalists generally focused not on the strength and popularity of the movement, but on the difficulties they faced in implementing their ideas. Even in territories where a particular nationalism spread quickly, the leaders tended to single out the difficulties of the movement. But I submit that the motivation described in the memoirs of nationalists is not necessarily true. Not that the writers prevaricated. Rather, they did not delve into all of the aspects of their motivation and by stressing only the lofty ones overlooked the important mundane reality. What is surprising in the Ukrainian case—and what is even more surprising is that the Ukrainians do not note it about themselves, even when contrasting themselves with Russians—is the lack of feeling of alienation of the intelligentsia vis-à-vis the people. The issue is not whether the Ukrainian intelligentsia reflects better the needs of the population than the Russian intelligentsia, but the fact that the Ukrainians did not and do not express the same feelings of alienation from the folk, from the common people, as the Russian intelligentsia did and does.

A major difference between Ukraine and Russia is the tradition of community organizations in Ukraine. Since Ukraine rarely had a government or suitably endowed upper classes that would support activities aimed at bettering the lot of Ukrainians, Ukrainians relied on self-help societies to pursue their goals. The tradition of community organizations was more firmly rooted in Western Ukraine, where the Austrian regime and the later Polish state tolerated (and in the Austrian case even supported) community organizations, but it was not limited to the western areas. In Eastern Ukraine after the loss in the eighteenth century of administrative local power, the community organizations were usually self-help rather than philanthropic ones.

The historical role the humanities have played in Ukraine in large measure reinforced a type of approach to history and politics as legacy, rather than history as inquiry and politics as policy. Ideology explains, justifies, and empowers. But ideology rarely reflects accurately what exists. Thus, while the activities of the so-called nationalists often had a

practical bent, the explanation of these activities was not in terms of the politics of praxis, but statements of belief. Attack of these groups in polemics, or their forceful liquidation, strengthened the rhetoric, not the practicality of the group.⁹

Even as Ukraine was subordinated to Russia, its thinkers defined Ukraine in its relationship to Europe. Europe continues to play a symbolic role in a culture that thrived on symbols—either covert or overt. While in Russia the discussion of whether Russia is Europe is periodically resurrected, Ukrainian thinkers do not question Ukraine being in Europe. Many, for instance stress that the geographical center of Europe lies within Ukraine's borders. Of course, Ukrainians do not delve into the definition of Europe, nor do they need to. For them Europe is culture, political diversity, a high standard of living, and toleration. Most political parties slip into their program some mention of a European polity or culture. The definition of Ukrainian politics by its parties is in terms of their notions of understanding European politics. The proposed constitution and its attendant debates, drafts, alternate formulations are all based on articulation of the tacit understanding of a European welfare state that can guarantee not only individual security, as the dissidents wanted, but also economic well-being, as the masses expect. The deference to "cultured Europe" stands in the way of recognizing the colonial status of Ukraine, its essentially underdeveloped economy, and its similarity to third world countries, rather than to those who need no assurances of their thousand-year existence.

The point is—and this is important for the study of contemporary Eastern Europe also—that development in economic and social sense, or modernization in the political usage, was too dry, too abstract an idea for even its practitioners to realize that this is what they were doing. They called it nationalism. This is the nationalism of the Eastern Europeans, in large measure a precursor of the nationalism of the peoples of Asia and Africa. But we are so attuned to nationalism as an outgrowth of European philosophy, as being based on Herder, Schelling, on the German Romantics, that we fail to perceive the genuinely practical nature of the movement. Here women's studies, which force us to look

⁹ For instance, the Cyrillo-Methodian Brotherhood of 1847 has gone down in Ukrainian historiography as a patriotically idealistic group. The practical views of the "brothers" on such mundane matters as income tax, etc. remained sealed in the vaults of the secret police until the 1980s. Hence, the continued tendency to see nationalism as selfless and largely impractical dedication to the Cause writ large.

at the so called “small deeds” rather than the grandiose explanations, can help us discover the reality behind the accepted terminology.

Ukraine’s authentic political development—as contrasted with whatever explanatory myth one may have about it—is in large measure determined by the role its various community organizations played in defining, preserving, and transmitting a sense of Ukrainian identity, even as the country remained within the colonial confines of the dominant power. Great stress is placed in contemporary Ukraine on symbols, tradition, rediscovery of a lost or misplaced past. Folklore, music, literature, religion, and historical lore were the vehicles of national identity. What is more, political discourse was in some measure shaped by the venue in which it developed. Disenfranchised and unempowered groups generally do not develop an ideology, regardless of what they themselves may think. Usually, they take an articulation of ideology devised by others. Certainly, Ukraine did not devise an indigenous ideology, nor did it even develop an articulate coherent version of an ideology its groups thought they professed—national communism, Dmytro Dontsov, or even Viacheslav Lypyns’kyi to the contrary notwithstanding.

Focusing upon community work and on the history of community organizations, which often have a major women’s component, enables us to see the roots of Ukrainian society and the patterns of public activity better than the study of written manifestos can. Life in Ukraine by its very nature demands a series of interlocking spheres that make the demands of modern ideologies, both Marxism and integral, chauvinist nationalism impossible. Women find ideologies that impose an exclusive identity uncomfortable.¹⁰ Community interests in Ukraine developed often in opposition to the state, rather than being co-opted by it. Political changes and economic dislocations resulted in an archeology of social and ethnic layers that further contributed toward the heterogeneity of the population and toward the mutual distrust by the government of its own citizens, and *vice versa*. In nationalism the language of political discourse is geared toward exclusive identity that does not reflect the layers of identity with which women enveloped themselves. While most men (and some of the women active within the male organizations) used their chosen ideologies to polish a clearly delineated identity, many women

¹⁰ Let me illustrate by a women’s organization in Kiev, the historic capital of Ukraine and a major city in the Russian Empire. At the turn of the century Kiev had a large Russian, Polish, and Jewish as well as Ukrainian population. At that time women in Kiev

drew comfort from a multiplicity of identities, a practice most men derided as sloppy and ignorant.

Historically, women in Ukraine were less prone to ideological thinking and their organizations appear to have been less exclusive than ideologically determined political parties. Women seemed to be able to function in a number of spheres simultaneously. Since they generally identified themselves relationally towards others, the many layers of existence appeared natural to them.¹¹

As in all pre- and post- Communist states in Eastern Europe, Ukraine spawned a whole slew of political parties. All devised political programs with appropriate platforms. It is a rare party that does not mention Europe, European cultural traditions, and call upon the family of cultured peoples. It is difficult to gauge the strength of the parties, for all of them appear to stress the upper organization and its publications over grassroots mobilization. While all parties, even the so-called nationalist ones, appeal to the democratic traditions of the people, all seem to know what the people want rather than rely on the will of the people to work itself out. The more patriotic parties talk of the need to raise the consciousness of the people especially in the villages, while the more socially conscious parties also speak of the need to mobilize the urban masses. There is little political stumping in the electoral districts themselves.

The genesis of the originally popular *Rukh* (Movement for Reconstruction), which served as the crucible for most political parties, was a seemingly unlikely combination of cultural Communist Party activists and the monitors of the Helsinki Accord. What is surprising about the latter was their practicality. It is sometimes difficult to see if the parties are genuine political parties, or if they represent emerging or actual interest groups. So far no one single party has captured either the power or the popularity. What is also significant is that a strong chauvinist party has not emerged, although this appears to be changing. The

established organizations that fostered tolerance and active cooperation among national and religious groups, demonstrating their ability to work with each other for the welfare of needy women, and to practice the art of the possible in their relations with the police. Best documented is the Kiev branch of the Society for the Protection of Women. Its toleration, practicality, and lack of bombastic rhetoric belies the stereotype image of East Europeans.

¹¹ Karen Offen's attempt at defining "relational feminism," to characterize women's activity that is not necessarily articulated, is especially relevant for the study of Eastern European women's movements. See her "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* XIV (1) 1988: 119-98.

initial—rather atypical for Eastern Europe—decision to consider each resident of Ukraine a citizen, without any regard to ethnic or religious origin was also a major achievement of Ukraine.

Ironically, the Soviet experience, and Marxism itself in the former USSR, has worked against the emergence of an independent women's movement. The erosion of Soviet totalitarianism has generated a deep distrust of women, women's leaders, and feminism in general.¹² Women, nevertheless, were among the first groups to organize, even at the time when it was not clear if community organizations were sanctioned by the regime and when it was far from evident that the regime would not move against them.

Distrust of the Communist system was evident in the inability of the official women's organizations to restructure themselves and to reflect the needs of women. On 30 January 1987, Gorbachev authorized the formation of Women's Councils of the Union and in the republics as a means of rallying support for his policies. The resolution marking the establishment of the new organizations noted that "women [in the USSR], who continually experience the paternal care of the party, with all their heart support its policy of speeding up the socio-economic development of the country."¹³ In Ukraine, the Council of Women of

¹² Distrust of women, who are seen as having profited from the Communist system, is evident in the fact that few women ran for the democratic assemblies. The issue was serious enough to be addressed by the Soviet representatives to the Regional Seminar on the Impact of Economic and Political Reform on the Status of Women in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Vienna, 8–12 April 1991. See especially the papers by Natalia Rimachevskaia, USSR, Nina Koval'ska, Ukrainian SSR, and Valentyna Zlenko, Ukrainian SSR. In contrast to earlier presentations, these paint a realistic and predictably depressing picture of life of women, focusing graphically on the double burden of work in the home and the necessity to work outside the home.

¹³ "Vsesoiuzna Konferentsiia Zhinok," *Visti z Ukraïny* 1987 (6): 2. The Left, including the Communist parties, had always supported its version of women's emancipation and promoted the careers of at least some women. All social democrats had historically espoused the rights of workers and the rights of women and most were genuine in their convictions. But as many reformers, they felt that their convictions placed upon them both the duty and the knowledge to speak on behalf of the workers and of women. Women have been used, often willingly, to help build Communist societies that promised them equality. Especially in the first years of Communist regimes the gains of women in opportunities of employment and education, as well as in equality in law have been significant. But the reality of the Communist political system negated these rights in practice. In effect, therefore, for women in Eastern Europe equality meant a double burden: work outside the home to earn the salary necessary to keep the family alive, and work in the home in a paternalistic society in which consumer goods were scarce, the economy being subject to centralized planning that did not take any women's or family

Ukraine, headed by Mariia A. Orlyk, a longtime party functionary and, at the time, vice president of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine, was not able to muster women's support for Gorbachev. A few years later, in March, 1991, Orlyk ostensibly began working with other women's organizations, but the cooperation appears to have been rather desultory.¹⁴ On the other side of the spectrum, Olha Horyn, a political activist, former dissident in her own right, but usually identified as the wife of Mykhailo Horyn, tried to organize, in 1991, a Christian Women's Democratic Party. That party also did not garner much support.

Several historical factors contributed to a somewhat different development of women in Ukraine and in Russia, where a small but politically cohesive movement of Russian urban women is developing. In Ukraine, several independent popular women's movements have emerged and seem to be spreading. All focus upon practical work with the elderly, the sick, and the children, although there is a growing tendency among some of the organizations to become politically active.¹⁵

needs into consideration. Marxism, as all social democratic approaches, defined women in the terms of its own ideology, which, while purporting to be gender-blind, was nonetheless formulated by males and was essentially male oriented. Klara Zetkin's March 8 Day of Women celebration became one more meaningless political hoopla for the overworked Soviet and East European woman. In Ukraine, the Communists specifically rejected existing women's organizations, accusing them of bourgeois nationalism and relied on non-Ukrainian women to create women's organizations. Galina Semenova, elected to the Soviet Communist Party Politburo for what Gorbachev described as "the women-family-children- portfolio, "could not even conceive of addressing any women's issues before solving "very tough, very real problems." The woman chosen by Gorbachev to act as the spokesperson for women's concerns was not yet ready to conceptualize them in her country.

¹⁴ Allegations were made that the Women's Councils were established to launder party coffers, see *Samostiina Ukraïna* 13 (September, 1991): 3.

¹⁵ In medieval times, even in the period of Mongol rule, the upper classes in Ukraine did not adapt Mongol customs in the treatment of women. And although the role of the frontier does not seem to have made much of a dramatic impact on women's equality, historically, Ukrainian women stressed the rough-hewn equality dangerous life in the steppe engendered. More importantly, on the eve of Ukraine accepting suzerainty of Russia, its women played an active role in the establishment of schools and publishing houses for the defense of their Orthodox or Uniate faiths. Finally, Western Ukraine was not incorporated into the Soviet Union until the period of the Second World War. In the inter-war years, Ukrainian women in the western territories established a large community-oriented women's organization that linked all classes in its modernization programs. Since the Ukrainians almost never had a state capable and willing to support even rudimentary welfare programs, Ukrainian communities devised a whole network of community cultural, economic, educational, and social organizations to address those needs. The traditions of community activism and volunteerism were still alive when the communists assumed control in the country.

One unwritten effect of the Soviet political system has been the destruction of the belief in the efficacy of grassroots political action. The reestablishment of the women's movement must be viewed within the context of the regeneration of political life in the country and in conscious attempts at regenerating social life. Women in Kiev noticed that few women participated actively in the popular democratic movement, writing it off as yet another futile attempt of the government to galvanize the population. They formed a Women's Society in Support of *Rukh*, the umbrella popular reform movement. In contrast to the Committee of Mothers of Soldiers, the *Rukh* Women's Society is a major women's organization that seeks to ensure that the needs of women not be overlooked again in this latest attempt at reforming the country.

Rukh women spearheaded a major women's demonstration in Kiev on 8 March 1991, to underscore the demands of women and stress that a continuation of a show holiday on International Women's Day was no longer adequate for women in Ukraine. Aided by the strong support of the Mothers of Soldiers, with the cooperation of the newly formed "Great Family," a society of mothers who have more than five children, and "Mother-86," a group of mothers whose children were born at the time of the Chernobyl disaster and immediately afterwards, as well as the Union of Ukrainian Women, this rally was the largest women's gathering in Kiev.¹⁶ The *Rukh* women, reorganized into the *Hromada* (Community), have embarked on an active campaign to involve women in political activity. The women voted to establish a representative and all-encompassing Council of Women of Ukraine; it will seek international recognition.

¹⁶ It had its share of rhetoric and emotion. A reporter noted that "Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, Jewish, Bulgarian, Korean women chanted how difficult it is to live in slavery, and in unison, humbly, repeated the words of Our Father." Hennadii Kyrnydiasov, "Choho khoche zhinka, toho khoche Boh," *Vechirnyi Kyiv* 11 March 1991. The title translated one of the slogans of the meeting: The will of the woman is the will of God. The meeting was opened by Laryssa Skoryk, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament, who pointed out that women want to be mistresses of their own land and not hired hands of some central authority. Speaker upon speaker noted the sad condition of women and the fact that no one will help citizens of Ukraine unless they help themselves. See also Volodymyr Skania, "Povernemo im sviato," *Holos Ukrainy* 12 March 1991; also Stanislav Yatsenko, "Zovsim ne sviatkovi mitynh," *Molod' Ukrainy* 12 March 1991. To underscore its political character, the meeting was held at the October Square which was renamed Independence Square after a hunger strike staged by students in October, 1990 (this resulted in the resignation of the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Vitalii Masol—the only such case in the history of the whole USSR).

At the same time, the *Soiuz Ukraïnok* (Union of Ukrainian Women), with its center of gravity in western Ukraine, proclaimed itself heir to the inter-war organization of that name. But the program of the renewed Women's Union reflects the changed nature of this organization from its predecessor. The stress on cultural and educational values points to its present middle class constituency, no longer in need of the self-help programs that characterized the inter-war Union that flourished in the villages of Ukraine's western lands. Ironically, the Soviet system, directed against the middle class and against nationalism, strengthened the middle class in Ukraine, thereby providing it with the natural supporters of nationalism.

It is much too early to hazard predictions on the women's movement in Ukraine. But its rise leads us to pose the question of whether empowerment—or in its old incarnation—validation of authority—can occur without ideology. That is the basic weakness of community organizations. They often reflect the needs of society, they even form the basis of a potential political party, but when the chips are down, they leave the articulation of their policies to the intelligentsia, which is not used to seeing the dynamics of community action. That is also often a weakness of women's organizations: rather than focusing upon the actual work performed in the organizations, the women, once they start writing, stress their selflessness and dedication to the cause. Men, or women outside the women's group, in turn view the women's organization as selfish. They identify feminism with egotism, in much the same fashion as early Marxists saw nationalism as egotism. Russians are hurt by the very act of the self-definition of Ukrainians, just as Ibsen's males were personally hurt by any desire of their females to have an identity of their own. Why should the Doll's House of brotherly coexistence in a supra-national Union not be enough for the Ukrainians? At the same time we can wonder whether women in Ukraine will develop a feminist agenda, or will selfless nationalism suffice for them as the stated creed for the time being?

On a broader scale, the integration of women into the consciousness of society predicates acceptance of the notion of the other. Women, by their very existence, force the possibility of the other as valid in itself. This is an essential precondition for toleration, the recognition that the other may have not only the right to equal existence, but also a just claim to an alternative formulation of truth. Democracy depends on toleration and not exclusively on majority rule. The attempt to fit women into the picture forces rethinking of issues which in turn promote acceptance of toleration and of heterogeneity.

Furthermore, when we study women's organizations we are confronted with the limitations inherent in accepted definitions of political ideologies and movements. In a movement such as liberalism one expects a certain fuzziness of concepts and a broad spectrum of adherents. In the East European context liberal organizations reflect the multiplicity of societal layers that do not demand exclusive choices of its practitioners. Women's organizations are good examples of this type of liberalism.

Political events in Ukraine demonstrate that the ideology of nationalism had little impact on the growth of the sentiment for independence, regardless of the claims made by marginal émigré groups. Rather, economic, political, and ecological considerations pushed even the ethnic Russians in Ukraine to vote for Ukrainian independence. The independence of Ukraine is thus a matter of statehood, not of nationalism. The growth of women's organizations also is predicated on economic, ecological and societal concerns, although it is often expressed in patriotic rhetoric. The problems facing Ukrainians are the same as those facing all former Soviets. The national factor is only an additional complication, since for generations the Russian Imperial and Soviet governments pursued policies inimical to the development of Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian society. Women's organizations in Ukraine, in the nineteenth century and today, emerged for the same reasons women organize the world over: to address pressing issues of their community, rather than to assert their rights. Nationalists do likewise. It is only the frustration of not achieving a practical program that drives community nationalist movements into their restructuring as ideological parties.

Since Europeans define—or defined—history in political terms and organized it within the state confines, historians of Ukraine focus upon various reasons and explanations for statehood or its lack thereof in Ukraine. This focus sometimes makes them overlook rather distinctive elements in Ukraine's development.

The pervasiveness of the problems confronting the area, the inability of the regime to provide long term solutions, the lack of a powerful voice that would reflect the needs of the population are the sad facts of contemporary Ukraine. A focus upon ideology—be it religion, or autocracy, nationalism, or Marxism—by definition must deal with the articulate elite or the oppositional intelligentsia, even if ostensibly the topic is the common people. An attempt to move beyond the small circle of the intelligentsia confronts us again with the need to see what exactly is meant by this label of convenience.

A gendered ideology, whatever its other faults, is incomplete and therefore basically not only flawed, but ineffective. For Ukraine to

remain an independent state, it must move beyond ideology into pragmatic politics of the whole society. It must recognize its own practice, rather than attempt to fit itself into the Procrustean bed fashioned by grand-sounding rhetoric.

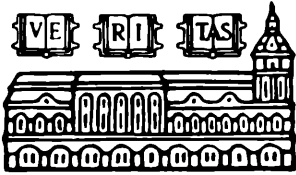
Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, after retiring from the History Department at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York, joined the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington as a Program officer in the Division of Research Programs. She continues teaching at George Washington University. Previously she taught at Johns Hopkins, Catholic, Harvard, Seton Hall, and Fairleigh Dickinson Universities. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, she earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1968. She has received numerous fellowships and awards, including Fulbright scholarships to Poland and Ukraine. She has published widely on topics in Eastern European, Russian, and Ukrainian history. Her work on the history of the women's movements in Ukraine has defined the field.

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