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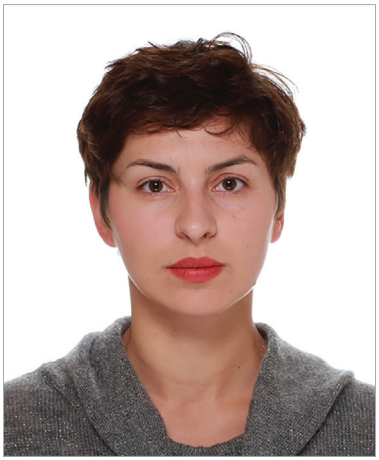

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Biographical note

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MYKOLA KHVYLOVYI'S "ASIAN RENAISSANCE": CULTURAL TRANSFER IN THE TIMES OF SOVIET NATION-BUILDING IN UKRAINE (1920S)[1]

Galina Babak

Abstract

This article is dedicated to an analysis of the historiosophic concept of "Asian Renaissance," as elaborated by the writer and polemist Mykola Khvylovyi, who was an ideologist of Ukrainian national communism. It will focus on his ideas expressed during the *Literary Discussion* of the 1925–1928 period in Soviet Ukraine. The objective of this article is to examine Khvylovyi's ideas within the broader context of the most significant ideological constructs that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These include Nikolai Danilevsky's "Bible of Pan-Slavism," "Europe and Russia," Oswald Spengler's concept of "The Decline of the West," the circle of ideas known as "Yellow Peril," Russian "Scythianism," and the Marxist-Leninist approach to history and politics. All of these concepts found their further development within Russian Symbolism and Futurists. It has been largely overlooked by scholars that Khvylovyi's call for "psychological Europe" and his concept of "Asian Renaissance" can be situated within the broader ideological context of the evolution of Pan-Mongolism. The article also contextualizes Khvylovyi's concept of "Europe" and its further political and ideological applications in the contemporary Ukrainian media. Finally, Khvylovyi's writings are discussed in the context of Ukrainian nation building of the 1920s within a broader frame of Soviet modernization.

Keywords: Mykola Khvylovyi, Literary Discussion, Asian Renaissance, national cultural revival, Soviet Ukraine, Marxism

1. Introduction

Mykola Khvylovyi (1893–1933)[2] can be considered one of the most renowned Ukrainian writers of the 1920s. He was identified as "the founder of a truly new Ukrainian prose"[3] already during his lifetime.

His ideas of "psychological Europe" and "Asian Renaissance" not only shaped the cultural, political, and ideological development of Ukrainian culture in the 1920s, but also established a strong national narrative and influenced further perceptions of Ukrainian political history in the early Soviet period. This is supported by numerous publications on his work and aesthetic ideas during his lifetime and in contemporary Ukrainian studies.[4]

The Ukrainian media today are flooded with quotations from Mykola Khvylovyi's writings of the 1920s. "Psychological Europe!" and "Away from Moscow!"[5] were coined by the writer almost a century ago. These slogans are widely used in discussions about the cultural and geopolitical orientation of contemporary Ukraine. They appeal not only to Ukrainian journalists and politicians, but also to international historians. For example, in July 2014, *Radio Free Europe* Ukrainian Service published on its website an article titled "Away from Moscow! – Khvylovyi on the orientation of the intelligentsia of the 1920s".[6] Even the renowned historian Timothy Snyder, in an essay published in *The New York Review of Books* in July 2015 entitled "Edge of Europe, End of Europe," discusses the problem of the political and cultural choice of Ukrainian society by referring to Khvylovyi in his retrospective view of Ukrainian history:

> Ukrainians in 2013 demonstrated, in their revolution, a strong commitment to the idea of European integration […]. Khvylovyi's main idea as a critic and sponsor of new literature was that Ukraine could leap forward to what he called a "psychological Europe" by way of a new Ukrainian high culture that offered fearless meditations on the predicaments of modern life.[7]

All these examples raise the question of what Khvylovyi meant when he spoke of an orientation towards "psychological Europe." In the Ukrainian literary tradition, Khvylovyi's appeal to European culture and the future of Asia is discussed within the framework of anti-imperial and/or postcolonial discourses, as an attempt to consider Soviet Ukraine outside the sphere of Russian domination.[8] However, in order to understand Khvylovyi's ideas properly, it is necessary to see how the logical interaction of these concepts was perceived and to identify the historical, cultural, and (not least) political roots of his set of ideas.

The analysis of Khvylovy's idea uses the strategy of close reading. The main theoretical framework of my research refers to the theory of "cultural transfer" developed by the French historian Michel Espagne, which is based on the idea of an active rather than passive role of an

importer-recipient who consciously chooses certain elements of a foreign culture.[9]

2. The historical context

The territory of modern Ukraine has often been considered a kind of borderland, a place where two cultural and political traditions intersect. These are usually defined as "Western" and "Eastern". According to historian Serhii Plokhy, the territory of today's Ukraine has been a bridge between Europe and Asia for many centuries.[10] Such a symbolic positioning has determined the country's history and ideological landmarks for centuries. The development of Ukrainian culture in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries was based on relations between the "great imperial cultures" (Austrian, then Austro-Hungarian, and Russian), based on the universal principles of multinational empires, on the one hand, and national culture, on the other.[11] The latter was based on particularistic principles, typical of any "national cultural revival".[12] In other words, the imperial culture in its attitude to national cultures could be described as one that has "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging," as Edward Said notes.[13] The latter statement could be easily illustrated by the attempts of the Russian Empire to prevent the Ukrainian cultural revival of the 19th century, through the policies of Russification and censorship:[14] "Throughout the 19th century, Ukrainians in the Russian Empire were not perceived as a distinct nation, but as part of the pan-Russian world; cultural and ethnographic differences were considered as a regional variation of pan-Russian development."[15] Thus, Ukrainian culture existed for a long time under the control and pressure of metropolitan culture and was relegated to the status of "second class" and "backward".[16]

The 19th century in Ukrainian history could be characterized as the beginning of the "grand narrative" (Lyotard)[17] of national emancipation, in which culture was seen as the source of identity, something that should distinguish "us" from "them." This grand narrative began as early as in the end of the 18th century, with the first attempt to mythologize national history (i.e. *Istoriia Rusov*)[18] and continued with the efforts of the *Kharkiv Romantic School*[19] and the Galician literary group *Ruska Triitsia* (*Ruthenian Triad*)[20] to invent the national tradition[21] by collecting, imitating and publishing folk songs, legends, poems and stories. These efforts were legitimized by the figure of the first Ukrainian national poet, Taras

Sevchenko, who became an icon of the Ukrainian liberation movement already during his lifetime.[22]

The struggle for cultural recognition in the first half of the 19th century culminated in a national movement for cultural and political autonomy that began to gain strength in the mid-1840s.[23] The model of the Ukrainian liberation movement is that described by Ernest Gellner in his *Nation and Nationalism*:

> Nationalism usually conquers in the name of putative folk culture. Its symbolism is drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the Volk, the narod. If the nationalism prospers it eliminates the alien high culture, but it does not then replace by the old local low culture; it revives, or invents a local high culture (literate, specialist-transmitted) culture of its own, though admittedly one which will have some links with the local earlier local folk styles and dialects.[24]

The urgent need for a national "high culture" had already manifested itself strongly in the 1880s. Modernism as an aesthetic process "pointed to the crisis of an educational-rationalist model of progress […]. On the other hand, it functioned and spread-out precisely because of the internationalist (European-centred) concept of literary development that was formed in the time of Enlightenment."[25]

The literary and critical works of the authors of the late 19th century (e.g. Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Olha Kobylians'ka, etc.) outlined a new paradigm for the development of national literature that would serve the idea of the consolidation and emancipation of their people. As the literary historian Myroslav Shkandrij puts it, "in the estimation of modernists, their politically fragmented nation required a tradition of high art (a coherent, normative culture) precisely in order to forge a unified consciousness".[26] Modernism in Ukraine was not only an artistic movement that sought to establish a new aesthetic (the case of Western European culture), but it also manifested an intellectual program aimed at freeing art from the 19th-century Ukrainian populist canons *(prosvitianstvo*). This idea can be supported if we look at the ideological and aesthetic position of the modernist journal *Ukrainska khata*, published in Kyiv from 1909 to 1914. The main point of the journal's agenda was the modernization of Ukrainian culture, and most of its pages were devoted to a critique of the populist canon and Ukrainophilia. But at the same time, the magazine's idea of cultural and social modernization was based on a clear national position:

new art needs a new personality and a new identity.[27] As Oleh Ilnytzkyj points out, "if one examines the parameters and context of *Ukrainska khata*'s discourse on art, one finds that 'art' is always conceptually joined to an array of other, tightly knit issues – namely, the 'intelligentsia,' 'culture,' and 'nation'."[28] The magazine led the constant polemic against the adherents of Marxism and the apologists of "social art".[29] Thus, from the beginning of the 20th century, national culture and art became a landmark, an ideological space accumulator for the process of national integration.

The modernist attempts to create a national "high culture" set the direction for the further self-identification of the Ukrainian people as a political nation with its own traditions, language, and history of struggle for liberation. The national cultural revival of the 19th century and later the modernists' attempts to create a national literary canon ended with the idea of creating an independent state after the Revolution of 1917. In that year the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) was proclaimed. In 1918, the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR), located on the territory of the recently collapsed Austro-Hungarian Empire, declared its independence and then united with the Ukrainian People's Republic on 22 January 1919. Finally, on 10 March, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic was proclaimed on the territory controlled by the Bolsheviks. The 1917 Revolution and subsequent Civil War on the territory of the former Russian Empire led to the establishment of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.[30]

The complex intersection of national and European history, the fact that after 1922 most of today's Ukrainian territory became part of the USSR – these factors were preconditions for the development of several types of discourses in Ukrainian culture: the national oriented, the European, the imperial Russian, and the new proletarian Soviet. All this led to polarized views on the content and ideological landmarks of national culture, which was considered the main instrument in the struggle for national consolidation.

The debates of the 1920s over Ukrainian proletarian culture took place against the backdrop of the New Economic Policy (NEP), adopted by the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1921. The NEP represented a return to the very limited but more market-oriented economic policies aimed at reviving the Soviet economy, which had nearly collapsed during the years of "military communism" and the Civil War. The NEP caused much disappointment among the left-wing of the Bolsheviks. The initiator of the NEP, Lenin, and his supporters in the Party claimed that the new economic course was only a temporary, limited measure and not

the "come back of capitalism". The split directly affected the ideological climate of literary life. Some of the literary groups tried to maintain the "leftist" approach to literature and show their "usefulness," while others adopted an increasingly loyal attitude to the general line of the Party.[31]

In April 1923, at the 12th Congress of the Communist Party, the policy of Ukrainization was adopted, which in turn was part of the *Korenizatsiia* policy. Its aim was to strengthen the Soviet regime in the national republics by increasing the participation of the indigenous peoples in the governmental system and institutionalizing their languages.[32] However, the active institutionalization of the Ukrainian language in government, education, and publishing began only in 1925, when Lazar Kaganovich, the new First Secretary of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, was sent to Ukraine to speed up the process.

The policy of Ukrainization strengthened the national movement. The 1920s saw the emergence of a large number of Ukrainian literary movements and groups, each trying to offer its own vision of the future of national culture. An increasingly fierce debate ensued among these groups, much of it focused on the national content of literature, and from the mid-1920s it took on an increasingly politicized tone. All of this historical and political context contributed to the atmosphere in which the search for a sense of Ukrainian national identity took place in the 1920s.

3. The *Literary Discussion* of 1925–1928

One of the most important – even decisive – polemics was initiated by the writer and leader of the literary group *VAPLITE*,[33] Mykola Khvylovyi. In the course of the *Literary Discussion*, the question of the content of Ukrainian literature, its aesthetics and ideological landmarks, as well as the question of national consolidation and statehood became the focus. The fact that more than a hundred writers and critics participated in the polemic is an indication of its relevance and importance. Moreover, the discussion itself was, in a sense, the culmination of all the intellectual reflections on Soviet Ukrainian culture in the 1920s: its high point (1928) marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of the Soviet state: the first Five-Year Plan and, later, the Stalinist version of the Cultural Revolution (which finally placed the ideological function of art and literature in the forefront) and the onset of sweeping political repressions.

The discussion was about some of Khvylovyi's statements made in a series of his pamphlets in 1925–1926. He called for a cultural revolution that would free the Ukrainian people from Russian cultural hegemony. Khvylovyi also proclaimed that Soviet Ukraine should play a messianic role in building socialism and showing the enslaved Asian peoples the way from national renaissance to the new, bright future of communism.

One of the main participants in the discussion was the literary "peasant" group *Pluh*, represented by its leader, the writer Serhii Pylypenko. *Pluh* stood for the position of massism *(massovizm)* and populism in literature: their idea was that almost every Soviet worker and peasant could create literature.[34] On the contrary, Khvylovyi's criticism was directed against "prosvita"[35] and "massism[36] in literature: "The new art is being created by workers and peasants. On condition, however, that they be intellectually developed, talented, people of genius."[37]

Pluh's ideological position could be compared to that of the *napostovtsy* (from the title of their main publication, "Na postu") in Soviet Russia. They rejected the very possibility of politically neutral literature, insisting on unconditional support for the Communist Party (including the NEP); they also rejected the role of "fellow travelers" *(poputchiki*[38]) in socialist construction.

In the first series of pamphlets, "*Quo Vadis*," published in 1925, Khvylovyi formulated his main concepts, such as "Europe," "proletarian art," "vital romanticism," and "Asian Renaissance." He provides the reader with several definitions of each term, adding new metaphors that form the common vision of the future of socialist Ukraine.

Khvylovyi examines "Europe" not as a geographical or political category, but as a historically "psychological" phenomenon, in which the figure of Goethe's Dr. Faust (one of Oswald Spengler's main characters) symbolizes the spirit of adventure, the thirst – even the passion – for knowledge, and the precise cultural tradition: "Europe is the experience of many ages. This is not the Europe that Spengler announced was 'in decline,' not the one that is rotting and which we despise. It is the Europe of a grandiose civilization, the Europe of Goethe, Darwin, Byron, Newton, Marx and so on and so forth."[39]

It should also be emphasized that the author makes the following claim: the personification of this "Faustian type" were not only Voltaire and Marx, Luther and Isaak Babel, but also Saint Augustine, Lenin and Peter I. Thus, "Europe" is seen as a cultural totality, a very special and powerful intellectual tradition – not just a geographical term. At the same

time, Khvylovyi's turn to "Europe" is not naive. He predicted the possible reaction that his concept of "Europe" might provoke among Marxists, which is why he defined the terminology from the very beginning: "However, we never confused Europe with 'Europe'. And we now sense that we are strong enough to mock all discussions about the influence of alien ideologies."[40] Thus, "Europe" should be considered as a double construct. On the one hand, it is seen as a symbol of the highest development of humanity; on the other hand, it is shown as an exploitative force.

To some extent, these ideas correlate with the communist idea of appropriating the best achievements of "bourgeois culture and civilization" – in science, technology, art, etc. – which was very common at the time. As Vladimir Lenin put it in his speech at the 8th Party Congress in 1919: "Without the heritage of capitalist culture we would not build socialism. There is nothing from what we could build communism, but from what is left from capitalism."[41] Khvylovyi also appeals to Lenin in his 1926 pamphlet series "Ukraine or Little Russia": "Lenin carried the light from Asia, but he always advised of the need to learn from Europe. He evidently thought that the psychological Europe could be fused with the East."[42]

It is also important to note that the call to focus on European culture in Khvylovyi's concept is even more ambitious: first, European heritage is needed for the construction of proletarian culture using the best European examples; second, European experience is needed for the upcoming "Asian Renaissance". The author defines the latter as follows:

> Speaking of the Asiatic Renaissance, we mean the future of unheard-of flowering of art among such nations as China, India, and so forth. We see it like as a great spiritual reawakening of the backward Asian countries. It has to appear, this Asiatic Renaissance, because the idea of Communism stalks like a spectre not so much over Europe as over Asia; because Asia, realising that only Communism only will liberate it from economic slavery, will utilize art as a factor in the battle.[43]

The first period of this great renaissance is described by Khvylovyi as "Romantic Vitaism" (or "Active Romanticism") – the art of the transitional period.

And now for the most interesting implication. Ukraine, located on the border between "East" and "West," was supposed to play a messianic role

in this process. According to Khvylovyi, the "Asian Renaissance" would begin in Ukraine and then spread to all Asian countries:

> The powerful Asiatic Renaissance in art is approaching, and its forerunners are we, the 'Olympians.' Just as Petrarch, Michaelangelo, Raphael etc., in their time from a corner of Italy set fire to Europe with the flame of the Renaissance, thus the new artists of the once oppressed Asian countries, the new artists-communards who are following us, will climb Mount Helicon, and will place the lantern of Renaissance there, and, accompanied be the distant roar of barricade battles, the purple-azure five-cornered star will flare over the dark European night.[44]

Thus, "the dark European night" appeals to both Spengler's idea of European decline and the Marxist concept of class struggle. In this sense, the coming "Asian Renaissance" should have been the new stage of human development.

4. The roots of the idea

Several possible roots of Khvylovyi's idea of the "Asian Renaissance" can be traced. As usual, researchers speak of a fusion of Spengler's idea of the "decline of the West"[45] with the Marxist idea of the exploitative nature of Europe (mainly colonial exploitation), class struggle and the future triumph of the proletariat.[46] But here I would like to emphasize the importance of the work "Russia and Europe: A Look at the Cultural and Political Relations of the Slavic World to the Romano-Germanic World" (1869), written by Nikolai Danilevsky, a Russian sociologist, culturologist, one of the founders of the civilizational approach to history, the ideologist of pan-Slavism.

Comparing cultures and nations to biological species, Danilevsky argued that each "cultural-historical type" (of which he distinguished ten) is united by its unique language and culture.[47] He criticized the reforms of Peter I in the Russian Empire as an attempt to impose foreign values on the Slavic world. Danilevsky applied his theory of evolution by stating that each type passes through various predetermined stages of youth, adulthood, and old age, the latter being the end of that type. He characterized the Slavic type as being in the youth stage, and he developed a socio-political plan for its development, which included the unification of the Slavic world, with its future capital at Constantinople. While other

cultures would degenerate in their blind struggle for existence, the Slavic world, with Russia first and foremost, should be regarded as a Messiah among them.[48]

Mykola Khvylovyi in his series of pamphlets "Ukraine or Little Russia" mentions Danilevsky's work only once:

> We have already said that for us the theory of cycles is not an empty sound, but at a time when N. Danilevsky and O. Spengler (the first in "Europe and Russia" and the second in "The Decline of Europe") are proceeding in their argumentation through the philosophy of idealistic intuitionism, we think of it in terms of materialist causality. Every nation experience childhood, cultural stage and civilization. We do not argue it. The stage of civilization in our opinion also is the last chord of any culture and the beginning of its end. But at a time when for idealistic intuitionism historical types of cultures are confined to arbitrary frameworks, such as 'Faustian' […] we lock them in patriarchal, feudal, bourgeois and proletarian types, basing on the principle of causality and dividing historical types of cultures. Each of these types is not similar to the other, but it is not absolute, because the moment of natural inheritance is everywhere.[49]

Thus, Khvylovyi develops the concept of the "Asian Renaissance" as a response to both Danilevsky's and Spengler's vision of Europe within the civilization approach, but unlike both of them, he proceeds from causality and historical materialism. Danilevsky's work had a great influence on the further development of Russian culture in general, as well as on further philosophical, ideological, and political reflection on Russia's messianic role. Beginning with Russian Symbolism, a so-called Russian religious philosophy, and continuing with the emigre Eurasianism movement of the interwar period. In his appeal to the messianic role of Soviet Ukraine in the coming "Asian Renaissance," Khvylovyi, like Danilevsky, and later – as one of the founders of Eurasianism – Petr Savitsky, appeals to the civilizational criterion of cultural development.[50] In Khvylovy's concept, Ukraine is located between two great continents, thus uniting them into Eurasia: "Moreover, inasmuch as Eurasia stands on the border of two great territories, of two energies, the avant-garde of the forth cultural-historical type is continued by us [Ukrainians. – G.B.]."[51]

The second root is a reference to the "Asianism" or "Scythianism", as understood by the circle of Russian "Symbolists".[52] In his pamphlet "Ukraine or Little Russia," Khvylovyi refers to the idea of the "yellow peril" or "Chinese danger: "The 'yellow peril' of which the bourgeoisie

was so afraid, in fact always symbolized the real force which will solve the problem of a Communist society by beginning actively to produce a new cultural-national type."[53]

The concept of the "yellow peril" emerged in Western Europe in the second half of the 19th century, reflecting European fears of an "Asian Other," an invasion of countless "Asian hordes," new Mongols who would flood the Western world. This idea was part of a broader colonialist Orientalist discourse of the time. In Russia, the concept of the "yellow peril" was transformed into the infamous construct of "Pan-Mongolism" by the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. In his poem "Pan-Mongolism" of 1894 and in his "Story of the Antichrist" of 1899, the phenomenon is described as "a threat to European civilization from the East."[54]

Solovyov's ideas greatly influenced Alexander Blok, Andrei Belyi, and later the group of writers and philosophers who were members of the association "Volfila".[55] The latter was initiated by Andrei Belyi and Razumnik Ivanov-Razumnik. Among its members were Russian writers, poets, publicists and academics who, being close to Russian symbolist and Russian populist socialist circles, supported the revolution in various ways. They saw Russia's messianic role in the struggle against the world bourgeoisie – and at the same time they believed in a utopian common, united future of Western and Eastern cultures. In 1917–1918 they published two almanacs *Scythians*. "Volfila also organized open lectures and discussions on various topics, including philosophy, anthropology, and cultural studies. The literary historian Maria Carlson notes that the topics of discussion included questions of proletarian culture, Oswald Spengler's theory of culture, the philosophy of symbolism, Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, neo-Platonism, Russian literature, and anthroposophy as an instrument of self-knowledge.[56]

At the same time, "Scythianism" became one of the central ideas of the Russian futurists – *budetlyane* (from the Russian word "budet" that means "will be", "should happen"), in particular Velimir Khlebnikov.[57] The poet Benedict Livshyts in his book *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, telling the story of Tommaso Marinetti's visit to Russia in 1914, speaks of the peculiarity of the national character of Russian Futurism, which, according to him, consists of "Asianism" and the coming "Scythianism":

> If not all of budetlyane, then most of them were confused in difficult accounts with the West, anticipating the forthcoming 'scythianism' with their 'orientalism.' But this 'orientalism' had a quite metaphysical nature.

> Like Khlebnikov, I operated with distorted concepts of the East and West, giving to conditional categories unconditional qualities, and saw the way out of that collision in the absorption of the West by East. These two poles of culture did not have any territorial features: in their mistiness there was no core of certain state formations, they were devoid of spatial boundaries and consisted of some cosmological elements.[58]

Thus, in the historiosophy of the futurists, the "West" and the "East" are not endowed with special characteristics, they are "ample convenient categories." What is important here, however, is the idea that the East should absorb the West.

It should also be mentioned that the very idea of "liberating" and "awakening" the enslaved peoples of Asia was one of the programmatic points of the Third International (Comintern): "The victories of the Soviet revolution in China, the partisan war in Manchuria, the growth of the revolutionary forces in Japan and of the liberation movement of the colonial peoples, create a new front in the rear of the imperialists. The Soviet revolution in China has become a big factor in the world revolution."[59]

As Khvylovyi put it: "Of course, the 'world proletariat' should become the leader of liberation movements among the nationalities of the East."[60]

From all this we can conclude that Khvylovyi's construct of the "Asian Renaissance" was part of the ideological and cultural mainstream of the early 20th century. Thus, it becomes clear that Khvylovyi's understanding of "Europe" (in the sense of its intellectual and cultural heritage, its "best" – in Lenin's terms) is not just a separate construct, but only one of the sets of categories crucial for his vision of the "Asian Renaissance" – which means the flowering, revival, awakening of the peoples of the East. In this case, the "East" is not a real space or region, but a phantom, rather a "conventional idea."

5. The political aspect of the "Asian Renaissance": the competition of two nations

Khvylovyi's ideas provoked a great discussion among Ukrainian critics and writers. In May 1925, the Cultural Committee of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences organized a large event entitled "The Ways of Development of Contemporary Literature", where Khvylovyi's main points were discussed. The event was attended by almost 800 people. The positions

of the participants could be divided into three camps: first, those who supported the appeal to "learn from Europe", second, those who doubted the correctness of such a choice, and third, those who accused Khvylovyi of "bourgeois nationalism" and accused him of being a "pseudo-Marxist."

As an example of how the idea of orientation to European culture was perceived differently, it is worth quoting a part of the speech of Ukrainian writer Borys Antonenko-Davydovych: "So, our motto is not 'Europe or Prosvita', but – the literature of the Ukrainian SSR, purged of hackwork, education and *"chachl'ats'kyi*" (insulting name of Ukrainians – *G.B.*) bumf! We want at least half of the opportunities opened for Soviet literature in Russia were introduced here."[61]

In response, Khvylovyi wrote another series of pamphlets. "Thoughts Against the Current", which appeared in 1925, and "Apologists of Scribbling" in 1926, in which he clarified his definition of "Europe": from the psychological, abstract category, it becomes a more materialized image. Khvylovyi concludes in his pamphlet "Moscow's Zadrypanky," published in March 1926:

> "Ukrainian realities are more complex than the Russian, because we are faced with different tasks, because we are the young class of a young nation, because we are a young literature, which still has not had its Lev Tolstoys and which must have them, which is not in 'decline', but in the ascendant."[62]

In this way it becomes clear why Soviet Ukraine is given a key role in the coming "Asian Renaissance": because Ukrainian culture, unlike Russian and European culture (both of which are in "decline"), has not yet passed the stage of its revival. Starting from this point, the next question could be: which of the world literatures should Ukrainian society set its course? The answer is unequivocal – "by no means the Russian":

> The point is that Russian literature has weighed down upon us for centuries as master of the situation, as one that has conditioned our psyche to play the slavish imitator. And so, to nourish our young art in it would be impede its development […]. Our orientation is to Western European art, its style, its techniques.[63]

Thus, Khvylovyi rejects Russian culture because of its "dominating status," which does not provide an opportunity to form a national, original,

non-imitating literature (to imitate a "big culture" would be a great threat to Ukrainian literature because of its former inferior, colonial status), and because of the "decline" of Russian culture, whose Tolstoys are in the past already.

Khvylovyi expands on these ideas in a new series of pamphlets in 1926, "Ukraine or Little Russia," in which he presents the idea of a "competition of two nations."[64] Khvylovyi stated the problem quite categorically: is Ukraine a "colony" or not? From his point of view, Ukrainian and Russian literature compete with each other, but in order to free Ukrainian literature from Russian hegemony, it is necessary to escape its influence:

> Why is the Ukrainian intelligentsia unwilling to orientate itself toward Russian art? Because it comes up against Russian wares on the book market. If it orientates itself toward Russian art it will be unable to defeat its competitor, because its own wares will always be seen as second, third or even fourth rate, even though they may be of the first quality.[65]

Moreover, according to Khvylovyi, the triumph of world proletarian culture (starting with the "Asian Renaissance") should begin in Soviet Ukraine and embrace Russian culture, which "has reached the limits and has stopped at the roadside": "Russian literature can only find the magical balm for its revival beneath the luxuriant, vital tree of the renaissance of young national republics, in the atmosphere of the springtime of once oppressed nations".[66] Then the author explains: "We conceive of the new slogan directed against Russian literature as a call for healthy rivalry ('competition') between two nations – not, however, as nations, but as revolutionary factors".[67]

Thus, Khvylovyi's position indicates a very complex relationship with "imperial" culture. One side of this relationship – the attempt to escape the patronizing influence of Russian culture – is expressed here.

Such openly expressed views attracted the attention of the party authorities. In April 1926, Iosif Stalin sent a special letter to Lazar Kaganovich, who was then the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR. In his letter, Stalin pointed out that "a wide movement for Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian public has begun and is growing in Ukraine" and "this movement, led by the non-communist intelligentsia, at the local level can manifest itself as the attempt to alienate Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian society from the all-Soviet culture, to reveal in

a manner of a struggle against Moscow as a whole, against the Russians, against Russian culture and its highest achievement – Leninism."[68]

Eventually, Khvylovyi was accused of Ukrainian nationalism, *VAPLITE* was dissolved in 1928, and the Pan-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers was founded. In 1932, this union became an umbrella organization for the unification of all writers' groups into the Soviet Writers' Union of Ukraine (part of the Soviet Writers' Union of the USSR), and "socialist realism" was proclaimed as the only official style and creative method.

6. Conclusions

The ideas and the tone of Khvylovyi's arguments and polemics cannot be understood outside the very precise historical, political, ideological and cultural context. The more we question Khvylovyi's inseparable relationship to his revolutionary period, the more we understand the internal logic of his views – which at first glance seem contradictory and even chaotic. Here, in my conclusion, I will try to outline some points of this historical and cultural logic hidden behind his cunning rhetoric.

First of all, I should say that the most interesting thing for anyone trying to analyze Khvylovyi's case is his deep dialectical dependence on Russian culture and literature. On the one hand, he calls for getting rid of any influence of Russian culture, Russian thought, and especially Russian literature. In Khvylovyi's opinion, its deadly sin is that it is weak, tired, mostly decadent, full of "Christian dualism" and – this is his strongest point – Russian culture (and especially literature) is outdated because of its feudal roots and nature.

If so, then the brave new socialist Ukrainian culture should be oriented in the Western, European direction, because European culture is not only older and richer, but this culture represents the ultimate development of bourgeois, capitalist, modern society. In other words, it is more modern than Russian culture, and therefore the young national Soviet Ukrainian republic must borrow the best European achievements. The Ukrainian socialist nation must be fertilized with the "crème de la crème" of all European cultures, but not Russian.

On the other hand, Khvylovyi borrows the main line of his argument from none other than the Russian cultural and historiosophic discussions that began in the last third of the 19th century. His own historiosophy owes much to the concept of Danilevsky, to the mystical vision of Vladimir

Solovyov, to the circle of ideas of the Russian Symbolists, especially to *Volfila*. Less obvious is his dependence on the courageous rhetoric of the Russian futurists, who used almost the same words as Khvylovyi to denounce the "tired," "feudal," "slave-owning" literature and culture.

Thus, Khvylovyi's call to "run away from Moscow!" is at the same time a call to "borrow from Moscow!" Of course, this is not a case of hypocrisy or some kind of trick. Khvylovyi is very sincere and honest. What he does is one of the curious cases of the strategy of cultural transfer (or, in situationist terminology, a case of radical "detouring"), when the borrowed cultural ideas and even techniques are profoundly transformed by a recipient who pursues his own goals. Very often, all these borrowed cultural things end up having absolutely the opposite meaning than they had in the beginning. This is precisely the fate of all "Russian cultural influences" in Khvylovyi's pamphlet war against Russian cultural influence.

Second, we should focus here on the ideological and political environment of the first decade of the USSR's existence, especially the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of industrialization, which marks the beginning of Stalin's Cultural Revolution. The heated discussion within the Communist Party that preceded the creation of the new state in 1922 revealed three main visions of future Bolshevik national policy. They were: confederalization, federalization and autonomization.[69] The difference between them lay in the approach to the rights and extend of independence of the nations that made up the USSR.

Khvylovyi initiated the Ukrainian cultural and literary discussion after the creation of the USSR and the adoption of the constitution of the new state. It seems that his main intention was to find the best way to build the new Ukrainian socialist culture and nation within the federalist state, to expand the borders of the Soviet federation. This is one of the reasons why he extensively quoted Lenin's works on "national determination". It is well known that it was Lenin himself who, in 1921–1922, finally put forward the "federal option" against the "autonomists" and "confederalists". From a historical perspective, this was Khvylovyi's main political mistake and even existential drama – he mistook the Soviet Union for the real federation and took Stalin's rhetorical praise of Lenin's ideas at face value.

The third and last point: we should question the problem of anti-colonial Orientalism in Khvylovyi's pamphlets. The "Asianism" he proclaimed cannot be interpreted in the context of the later "Orientalism" of Edward Said. As is well known, Said developed a Foucauldian approach to knowledge as a definite power. In his concept, European knowledge

about the "Orient" is a deliberately artificial construct aimed at colonizing the Middle East, India, etc. Khvylovyi argues that "European knowledge", which must be borrowed by a young socialist Ukrainian nation, is a mere tool to be used at the new stage of non-European world awakening and further revolution of oppressed nations – led, of course, by Soviet Ukraine. Knowledge is still power in this concept, but the nature of this power is different: it is no longer colonial, it is anti-colonial, anti-imperial and communist at the same time.

In a nutshell, Khvylovyi's pamphlets are a unique example of the very strange mixture of Marxism-Leninism, quasi-mystical Symbolism, and late romantic/early modernist nationalist rhetoric of the period between Franco-Prussian and World War II.

At the same time, however, Khvylovyi's ideas were crucial to the formation of Ukrainian cultural identity in the 20th century. In his pamphlets, he employed a tactic of anti-imperial writing, rejecting Russian colonial myths and proposing alternatives for the further development of Ukrainian culture. The very fact that his slogans are being referred to a century later serves as a marker of their relevance and value for contemporary Ukraine. Thus, if we look at Khvylovyi's slogans from a contemporary perspective (more precisely, from the perspective of the war in Ukraine and the prospects of European integration), the modern approach serves as an important tool in the process of nation-building, especially in the process of writing and rewriting national history.

Endnotes

1 This article was written during the *Pontica Magna Fellowship* at New Europe College (Bucharest, Romania), where I worked on the project "Politics of Cultural Transfer in Soviet Ukrainian Literature and Literary Theory in the 1920s – the Beginning of the 1930s: National Identity and Cultural Modernization." The author thanks Myroslav Shkandrij and Andrii Portnov for their valuable insights in the preparation of this paper.

2 Mykola Khvylovyi (Fitilev) (1893–1933) was born in 1893 in the village of Trostianets in the Kharkiv region of the Russian Empire (now the Sumy region of Ukraine) to a family of teachers. He completed only four grades of the Bogodukhiv Gymnasium due to his connection with "revolutionary circles". In 1915 (1916?) he volunteered for the army in Chuhuiv. In the autumn of 1917, he was demobilized. During the revolutionary years he joined the insurgent detachment led by the Ukrainian eser T. Pushkar. Later Khvylovyi organized his own detachment, the "Free Cossacks," which fought against the Hetmanate and German units. In April 1919, Khvylovyi joined the CP(B)U. In 1921 he settled in Kharkiv. In 1922 he initiated the All-Ukrainian Federation of Proletarian Writers and Artists, which was established with three centers in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Moscow. In 1923–1925 he was a member of the literary organization "Hart". In 1926 he founded the literary organization *VAPLITE* (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature). In January 1928, he published a letter of self-criticism in the *Communist* newspaper. In the late 1920s, he founded two journals, "Literaturnyi iarmarok" (1928–1930) and "Prolitfront" (1930–1931). After both journals were closed, he tried to write according to the "party line". On 13 May 1933, as a sign of protest against the beginning of mass repressions against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, he committed suicide. See more in Alexander Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi: Eine Studie zu Leben und Werk*, Verlag Otto Sagner, München, 1999, pp. 14–51.

3 Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, "V shukanniah novoi povistiarskoi formy," *Shliahy mystectva* 5 (1923): pp. 59–63.

4 Here is a list of the most relevant studies on the subject: Ivan Dziuba, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi: "Aziiats'kyi renesans" i "Psykholohichna Evropa"*, Kyievo-Mohylians'ka akademiia, Kyiv, 2005; Yurii Kochubei, "'Evraziistvo' i 'aziats'kyi renesans': evolutsiia i dolia dvoch koncepcij," *Slovo i Chas* 9 (2003): pp. 25–34; Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi* cit.; George S.N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC and London, 1990; James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation. National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918–1933*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1983; Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation*, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, Edmonton, 1992, pp. 51–125; Olena Palko, *Making Ukraine Soviet: Literature and Cultural Politics under Lenin and*

Stalin, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2020, pp. 115–185; Leonid Plushch, *Ioho tajemnyts'a abo "Prekrasna lozha" Khvylovoho*, Komora, Kyiv, 2018; Iaroslav Polishchuk, *Literatura iak heokulturnyi proekt*, Akademvydav, Kyiv, 2008, pp. 151–234; Iurii Shevel'ov, "Pro pamflety Mykoly Khvyl'ovoho," in Hryhorii Kost'uk (ed.), *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi. Vybrani tvory*, v. 5, t. 4, Smoloskyp, Toronto, 1982, pp. 7–67; M. Pavlyshyn, G. Brogi Bercoff, S. Plokhy, *Ukraine and Europe: Cultural Encounters and Negotiations*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2017.

5 The phrase most often attributed to Khvylovyi, "Away from Moscow!", was never used by him. It first appeared in Stalin's letter of 26 April 1926 and was the latter's brief paraphrase of the essence of Khvylovyi's views. See: Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine. Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 2001, p. 226.

6 "Away from Moscow! – Khvylovy about the orientation of the intelligentsia of the 1920s," *Radio Free Europe*¸ 27 July 2014, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25471835.html.

7 Timothy Snyder, "Edge of Europe, End of Europe," *The New York Review of Books*, 21 July 2015, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/07/21/ukraine-kharkiv-edge-of-europe/.

8 See Dziuba, *Mykola Khvyl'ovyi*.

9 Michel Espagne, *Istorija civilizacij kak kul'turnyj transfer*, per. s franc.; pod red. E. Dmitrievoj, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, Moskva, 2018.

10 Serhii Plokhii, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, Basic Books, New York, 2015. pp. 20–27.

11 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994, pp. 3–15.

12 The National Cultural Revival was a cultural movement of many peoples in Europe (Ukrainian, Belarusian, Czech, Irish, etc.) that began in the second half of the 18th century and continued throughout the entire 19th century. The "great aim" of this movement was to (re)build the national language, culture and identity. The Ukrainian National Revival took place on the territory of modern Ukraine which was divided between the Austrian (from 1867 Austro-Hungarian) and the Russian Empires. See Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Narysy istorii Ukrainy: formuvann'a modernoi ukrains'koi nacii XIX–XX st.*, Geneza, Kyiv, 1996.

13 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 13.

14 The Valuev Circular of 18 July 1863 was a secret decree (*ukaz*) that banned all the publications in the Ukrainian language (except the *belles lettres*). Further restrictions on the Ukrainian language were made by the Ems Ukaz in 1876, which completely prohibited the use of the language in print.

15 Alexander Dmitriev, "Ukrainskaia nauka i eë 'imperskie' konteksty (XIX – nachala XX veka)," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2007): p. 123.

16 Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, pp. 153–197.

17 See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1979, pp. 31–41.

18 *Istoriia Rusov* ("History of the Ruthenians" or "History of the Rus' People") is an important document of Ukrainian political thought from the late eighteenth or early 19th century, of unknown authorship. It describes the development of Ukraine from the distant past to 1769. The basic principle of *Istoriia Rusov* is that every nation has a natural, moral and historical right to independent political development. See: Oleksander Ohloblyn, "Istoriia Rusov," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*: http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CI%5CS%5CIstoriiaRusovIT.htm.

19 The *Kharkiv Romantic School* was a group of young poets who were professors or students at Kharkiv University in the 1830s and 1840s. The term "school" was proposed by Ahapii Shamrai, who was the first to collect and publish their poetry. The main representatives of the school were Izmail Sreznevs'kyi, Amvrosii Metlyns'kyi, Mykola Kostomarov, Mykhailo Petrenko, etc.

20 The *Ruthenian Triad* was a Galician literary group, named after the number of its predominant members – Markiian Shashkevych, Iakiv Holovats'kyi, and Ivan Vahylevych – that existed in the late 1830s. The group was interested in folklore, national history, and the quest for Pan-Slavic unity. Their third collection, *Rusalka Dnistrovaia* (The Dniester Nymph, 1836), initiated the use of vernacular Ukrainian for literature in the Ukrainian lands of the Habsburg Empire.

21 "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by an overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Renger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1–15.

22 See George G. Grabowicz, *Taras Shevchenko: A Portrait in Four Sittings*, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge MA, 2016.

23 The ideas of the *Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood* in Kyiv (1845–1846) played an important role in the Ukrainian cultural and political revival. Based on the ideas of Enlightenment, Slavophilism and Christianity, the Brotherhood proposed a series of reforms in political, educational and social life in the Russian Empire. The main emphasis was placed on equal opportunities for all Slavic nations to develop their national language and culture. The basic document in which the ideas and program of the Society were formulated was *Knyhy butt'a ukrains'koho narodu* ("Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People"), written by the historian Mykola

Kostomarov. Among its members were also Taras Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish, Iurii Andruz'kyi, Vasyl' Bilozers'kyi, etc.

24 Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p. 57.

25 Tamara Hundorova and Natalia Shumylo, "Tendencii rozvytku khudozhn'oho myslenn'a (pochatok XX st)," *Slovo i chas* 1 (1993): p. 50.

26 Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, p. 204.

27 Solomiia Pavlychko, *Teoriia literatury*, Osnovy, Kyiv, 2009, p. 136.

28 Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, „Ukrainska khata and the Paradoxes of Ukrainian Modernism," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 2 (1994): p. 10.

29 Its main opponents were the "Literary and Scientific Herald" (whose editor was I. Franko) and the newspaper "Rada" (1909–1914), presented by the critic and writer Serhii Efremov.

30 Stephen Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red: The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule in Ukraine 1918–1925*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2015, pp. 37–42.

31 As an example, let's look at the widening gap between the positions of the Pan-Futurist group and the organization of "peasant writers" Pluh. While "Pluh" expressed unconditional support for the Communist Party line, the Pan-Futurists, trying to maintain the leading positions in literary life, were critical of the NEP and proclaimed the bold goal of "introducing art to the masses." By 1924, the Pan-Futurists saw themselves as "a political body of the Third Front and a State Planning Committee (GOSPLAN) for cultural production": Mykhail' Semenko, "Centr, iacheiki komunkulta," *Gong komunkulta* 1 (1924): pp. 4–5. Read more in Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism 1914–1930*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1997, pp. 111–133.

32 Providing the politics of Ukrainization, Russian Bolsheviks believed "that the planned modernization of the Ukrainian republic, led by local 'national Bolsheviks' under Moscow's tutelage, would create a state socialist in spirit, one that was national only 'in form'". See Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, p. 204.

33 VAPLITE – an acronym of the Ukrainian "Вільна академія пролетарської літератури" (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature), which was a writers' organization that existed in Kharkiv from 1926 to 1928. While accepting the official requirements of the Communist Party, it took an independent position on questions of literary policy.

34 "Platforma ideolohichna i khudozhnia spilky selians'kych pys'mennykiv 'Pluh'," *Chervonyi shliach* 2 (1923): pp. 211–216.

35 "Prosvityanstvo" refers to the word "prosvita". Prosvita was a society that brought literacy and political education to the Ukrainian village in the pre-revolutionary years. It formed the specific paradigm of Ukrainian culture *(narodnytstvo)*. In other words, Khvylovyi spoke out against tendencies of national populism, which he saw as a threat to proletarian

culture. See Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernist, Marxists and the Nation. The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*, University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1992, p. 57.

36 By "massism" Khvylovyi means the writer's orientation toward the mass, "not very educated" reader, who prefers works written in simple language without formal experiments, etc. He also refers to a new type of literary organization – mass organizations (such as "Pluh" and "Hart"), which appeared in Ukrainian literature in the early 1920s. In the pamphlet "On 'Satan in a Barrel'", Khvylovyi criticized, first of all, the rules of admission to the all-Ukrainian peasant writers' union "Pluh": according to the organization's statute, anyone could become a writer, all he had to do was become a member of "Pluh".

37 Mykola Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine. Polemical Pamphlets 1925–1926*. Translated, edited and introduced by Myroslav Shkandrij, CIUS, University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1986, p. 54.

38 The term "fellow traveler" (also *poputchik* or "one who travels the same path") was invented by Lev Trotsky to identify the undecided intellectuals, who were sympathetic to the Communist regime, but were not the formal members of any organization.

39 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 75.

40 Ibid.

41 Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoie sobranie sochinenii*, t. 38, Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, Moskva, 1969, p. 142, https://leninism.su/works/77-tom-38/1305-viii-sezd-rkpb.html.

42 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 230.

43 Ibid., p. 67.

44 Ibid., pp. 65–66.

45 The first volume was published in 1918.

46 See, for example, Palko, *Making Ukraine Soviet*, pp. 115–147.

47 Danilevsky's work served as a pre-text for O. Spengler's later concept of the "Decline of Europe." Read more about their intersection in Kratochvil, *Mykola Chvyl'ovyi*. pp. 89–113.

48 Nikolai Danilevsky, *Russia and Europe: The Slavic World's Political and Cultural Relations with the Germanic-Roman West*, transl. by Stephen M. Woodburn, Slavica Publishers, Bloomington, 2013.

49 Mykola Kvylovyi, *Ukraiina chy Malorosiia. Pamflety*, Smoloskyp, Kyiv, 1993, p. 254. The translation is mine.

50 The intersections between Khvylovyi's ideas and the Eurasianism movement require a deeper study. For now, I will rely on Kochubei's conclusion that Khvylovyi's concept of "Asian Renaissance" refers to the anti-imperial discourse as opposed to the imperialist framework of interwar Eurasianism. See Yurii Kochubei, "'Evraziistvo' i 'aziats'kyi renesans': evolutsiia i dolia dvoch koncepcij," *Slovo i Chas* 9 (2003): p. 31.

51 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 232.

52 In 1918 Alexander Blok wrote his famous poem "Scythians". This poem is an essential poetic expression of the Scythian ideology, in which Russia is depicted as a symbol of the Eastern Slavic world, which, in Blok's opinion, served as a borderland and a shield between "enlightened cultural Europe" and "barbaric Asia": "Ages for you, for us the briefest space, / We raised the shield up as your humble lieges / To shelter you, the European race / From the Mongolians' savage raid and sieges." See Alexander Blok, "Scythians." Translated by Kurt Dowson, *International Socialism* 6 (1961): pp. 24–25.

53 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 231.

54 Read more about it in Susanna Lim Soojung, "Between Spiritual Self and Other: Vladimir Solov'ev and the Question of East Asia," *Slavic Review* 67.2 (2008): 321–341.

55 *Volfila* (an acronym of the Russian Вольная философская ассоциация, the Free Philosophical Association) was based in Petrograd in 1919–1924. *Volfila* had its counterpart in Moscow – the Free Academy of Spiritual Culture (1918–1922). Among its members were critics and philosophers such as Gustav Shpet, Mikhail Gershenzon, as well as the main figures of the Russian religious renaissance – Nikolai Berdiaev, Boris Viasheslavtsev and Fedor Stepun.

56 Maria Carlson, *No Religion Higher Than Truth. A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia in 1875–1922*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.

57 Khlebnikov's early work is characterized by an appeal to the "Asian" stratum of Russian culture and a rejection of Eurocentrism. At the same time, "Scythianism" became one of the central motifs of his work, for example, in such poems as "Skifskoie", "Skuf'ia Skifa."

58 Benedikt Livshyts, *Polutoraglazyi strelec*, Sovetskii pisatel, Moskva, 1989, pp. 480–481.

59 *The Communist International 1919–1943 Documents*, vol. 3, edited by Jane Degras, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, p. 300.

60 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 232.

61 *Sliachy rozvytku suchasnoi literatury. Dysput*, Knyhospilka, Kyiv, 1925, p. 69.

62 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 222.

63 Ibid.

64 All printed copies of this pamphlet were confiscated. Until 1990, the text existed only in fragments reconstructed from the text of the pamphlet "From the Slope to the Abyss" (1928) by the head of the press department of the CP(B) U Andrii Khvylia, which quotes this pamphlet. For the full version of this pamphlet, please refer to Kvylovyi, *Ukraiina chy Malorosiia*, pp. 219–267.

65 Khvylovyi, *The Cultural Renaissance in Ukraine*, p. 230.

66 Ibid., p. 229.

67 Ibid., p. 230.

68 Iosif Stalin, *Sochineniia*, t. 8, OGIZ, Moskva, 1948, p. 152. Biblioteka Mikhaila Gracheva: http://grachev62.narod.ru/stalin/t8/t8_11.htm.

69 Eric Blanc, *Revolutionary Social Democracy: Working-Class Politics Across the Russian Empire (1882–1917)*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2022; Stephen Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red: The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule in Ukraine 1918–1925*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2015.