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Shcherbitsky's Struggle To Dominate  
The Ukraine: Implications for  
Kremlin Politics

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## Shcherbitsky's Struggle To Dominate The Ukraine: Implications for Kremlin Politics

*Central Intelligence Agency  
Directorate of Intelligence*

*October 1977*

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### *Summary*

Since a number of prominent Soviet leaders—including President/General Secretary Brezhnev and Party Secretary Kirilenko—began their party careers in the Ukraine and have continued to meddle in Ukrainian politics since leaving the republic, political developments in the Ukraine have often provided clues about power politics in the Kremlin itself. Both the rivalry between former President Podgorny and Brezhnev in the mid-1960s and that between Brezhnev and Shelest, ousted as head of the Ukrainian party in 1972, were reflected in factional politics at the republic level.

Shelest's replacement in the Ukraine, Shcherbitsky, is a long-time protege of Brezhnev who has often been considered a potential successor to the top party job in Moscow when Brezhnev departs. Five years have now passed since Shcherbitsky replaced Shelest. While an examination of the balance of forces within the republic leadership at this time enables one to reassess Shcherbitsky's political prospects in the light of recent evidence, it at the same time is germane to a reading of Brezhnev's own standing in Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

Shcherbitsky's drive since 1972 to assert his predominance in the Ukraine has been impressive in many respects, but there have also been indications that he has continued to encounter resistance. Shcherbitsky has been more successful in removing old foes than in replacing them with clients of his own. The two most important republic positions below the first secretaryship are thus held today by men who have not been close associates of Shcherbitsky. In addition, Kharkov and Donetsk—two regional centers in the Ukraine whose cadres have rivalled those hailing from Dnepropetrovsk, Shcherbitsky's original base—continue to be strongly represented on the Ukrainian Politburo. Although the importance of regional groups in Ukrainian politics may have diminished somewhat in recent years, regional and career ties probably still

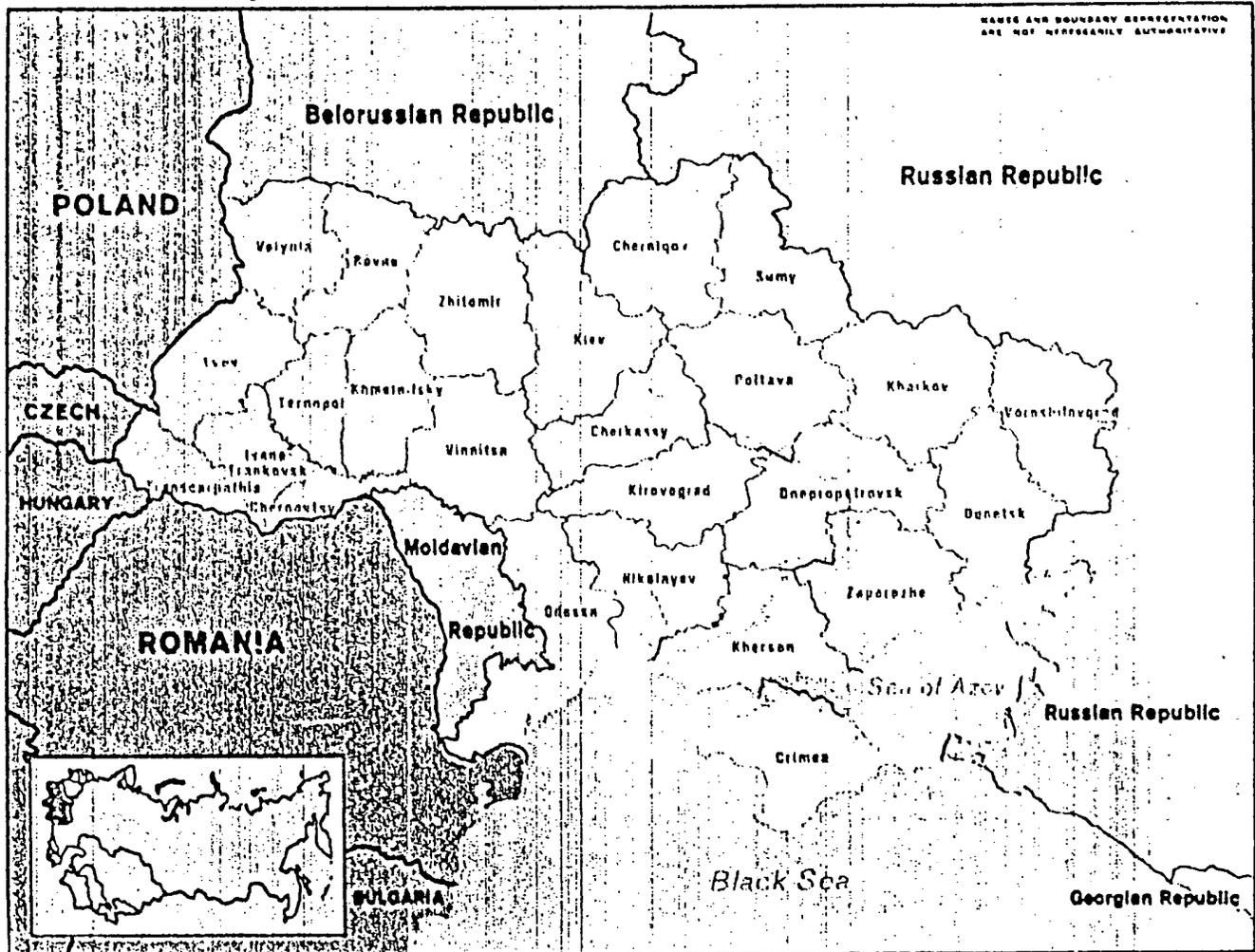
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constitute an important indicator of political loyalties. Thus, the continued strength of Donetsk and Kharkov leaders has suggested that Shcherbitsky has yet to consolidate his position completely.

Shcherbitsky's difficulties have probably also reflected tension within the CPSU Politburo itself—that is, constraints imposed by Brezhnev's colleagues upon his ability to exert patronage in the Ukraine to benefit Shcherbitsky. The elimination this year, however, of Podgorny—who built his early career in Kharkov—will probably give Brezhnev and Shcherbitsky a freer hand in the Ukraine. It is therefore possible that the factors constraining Shcherbitsky's career thus far have now been whittled down to the point where Brezhnev may be able to bring him to Moscow within the next year.

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# Ukrainian Republic



## Shcherbitsky's Struggle To Dominate The Ukraine: Implications for Kremlin Politics

### Counting Heads

#### The Ukrainian Politburo

Shcherbitsky's strength on the Ukrainian Politburo and Central Committee can be estimated by determining the size of the Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, and Kharkov groups in those institutions. In recent years officials from these three regional centers have competed—and probably continue to compete—for power, position, and patronage in the republic. Shcherbitsky, like Brezhnev and Kirilenko, is a member of the close-knit group of officials who began their party careers in Dnepropetrovsk. The promotion of officials from this regional group would sug-

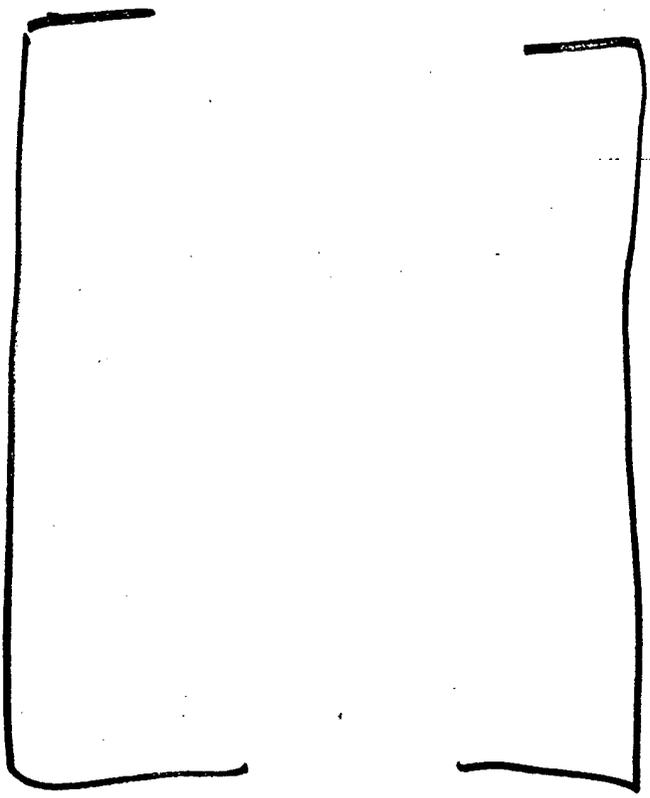
gest a rise in Shcherbitsky's stock. Conversely, the advancement of cohorts who built their careers in Donetsk or in Kharkov, where both Podgorny and Shelest earlier worked, could be read as a bad omen for Shcherbitsky.

A comparison of the present Ukrainian Politburo with Shelest's 1971 Politburo reveals a trend toward slightly increased representation of Dnepropetrovsk cadres, while Kharkov and Donetsk representation has remained stable. If non-Kharkov supporters of Shelest in 1971, and non-Dnepropetrovsk allies of Shcherbitsky today are added, the trend toward greater strength for Shcherbitsky is accentuated (figure 1).

Figure 1  
Representation of Regional Groups  
on Ukrainian Politburo

1977 Politburo		
Dnepropetrovsk (6)	Donetsk (5)	Kharkov (3)
Full members		
Shcherbitsky	Lyashko	Vashchenko
Vatchenko	Titarenko	Botvin
Petr Pogrebnyak	Sologub	Sokolov
Fedorchuk <sup>1</sup>		
Candidates		
Dobrik	Yakov Pogrebnyak	
Malanchuk <sup>1</sup>	Kachura	
1971 Politburo		
Dnepropetrovsk (3)	Donetsk (5)	Kharkov (5)
Full members		
Shcherbitsky	Lyashko	Shelest
Vatchenko	Titarenko	Sobol
	Degtyarev	Vashchenko
		Lutak <sup>1</sup>
Candidates		
Grushetsky	Yakov Pogrebnyak	Ovcharenko <sup>1</sup>
	Sologub	

<sup>1</sup> Non-Dnepropetrovsk supporters of Shcherbitsky.  
<sup>1</sup> Non-Kharkov supporters of Shelest.



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### The Dnepropetrovsk Group

Aleksey Vatchenko, Shcherbitsky's oldest and most prominent ally on the Politburo, spent most of his long party career in Dnepropetrovsk, where he worked under both Brezhnev and Shcherbitsky. Vatchenko's connection with Shcherbitsky was emphasized by the leading role he played in the ideological campaign directed against an ideologically suspect novel written by Shelest's Chairman of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, Oles Honchar. At the 24th Ukrainian Party Congress in 1971 he specifically criticized Shelest's ideological apparatus. Vatchenko was the only Ukrainian speaker at the May 1972 CPSU Central Committee plenum that ousted Shelest and endorsed the decision to go ahead with the Moscow summit after President Nixon's announcement of the mining of Halphong harbor. More recently, Vatchenko was listed in Soviet media as one of five members of the USSR Constitutional Commission who participated in

the review of the new draft constitution—a pet project of Brezhnev's—that took place the day before Podgorny's removal from the CPSU Politburo.

We have long thought that changes in Vatchenko's status would be an important indicator of Shcherbitsky's standing. In June 1976, something finally happened to Vatchenko: he was appointed Chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet. The circumstances of this move were ambiguous, however, and its significance therefore is not entirely clear. For one thing, Vatchenko replaced not a Shcherbitsky adversary in this job, but another official with Dnepropetrovsk credentials, Ivan Grushetsky. Grushetsky served briefly with Brezhnev in Dnepropetrovsk in 1938 and, like Vatchenko and Shcherbitsky, also served with him on the Ukrainian front during the war.<sup>4</sup> At age 72, Grushetsky probably departed for the officially stated reason of health.

More important, it is open to question whether Vatchenko's advancement from the first secretaryship in Dnepropetrovsk, the second largest regional party in the Ukraine, to the honorific post of Ukrainian "President" was in fact a promotion. More prestige than power attaches to Vatchenko's new post. [ ] rules out Vatchenko as a successor to Shcherbitsky. In his opinion, Vatchenko is a mediocrity "whose culture can never rise above the oblast level."

On balance, however, by broadening his experience and extending the range of his political contacts, the transfer probably enhances Vatchenko's chances of ultimately succeeding to the top job in the republic. Moreover, it is possible that the post of Ukrainian "President" will be upgraded in line with the upgrading of the analogous position in the central government. Thus, Vatchenko's transfer seems to represent some progress for Shcherbitsky.

<sup>4</sup> A telling passage in the memoirs of yet another Brezhnev associate and alumnus of the Dnepropetrovsk apparatus, Konstantin Grushevoy, clearly identifies Grushetsky as being one of "ours."

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The other Politburo full member with a Dnepropetrovsk background is *Petr Pogrebnyak*, an agriculture specialist who left the oblast in 1970. At the 25th Ukrainian Party Congress in February 1976, Pogrebnyak was promoted from minister of agriculture to first deputy premier for agriculture, and candidate member of the Politburo. Pogrebnyak's advancement seemed to indicate that Shcherbitsky and his close associates were not taking the rap for the harvest failure of 1975. Last October Pogrebnyak attained full Politburo membership, the rank which his predecessor in office had held.

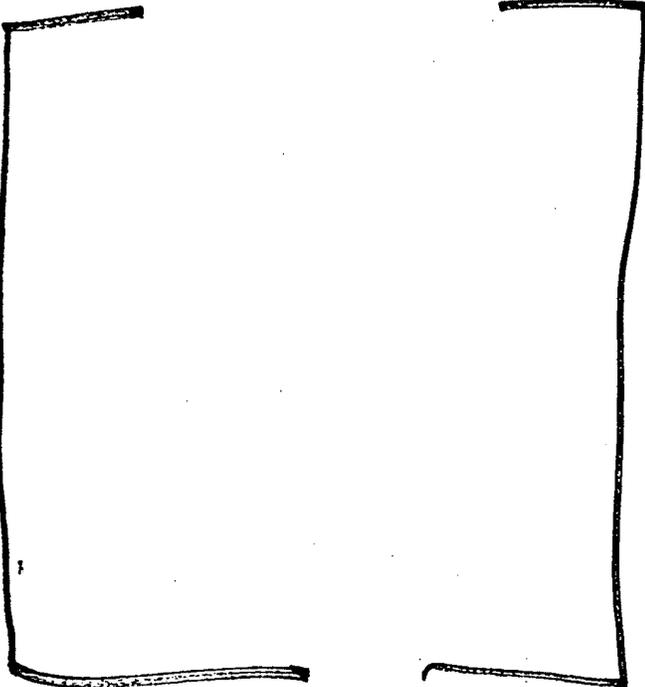
Also added to the Politburo at the party congress as a candidate member was *Viktor Dobrik*, concerning whose loyalties there can be little doubt. Although Dobrik in a recent interview with a Western correspondent was reticent about his connection with Brezhnev, denying any special relationship, his career tells another story. Over the years he has been singled out for a series of special honors not merited by the positions he

has held. In 1966, as head of the party in Dneprodzerzhinsk, Brezhnev's home town, he received the signal distinction of becoming the only gorkom (city party committee) first secretary in the Soviet Union except for the party chiefs of Moscow and Leningrad to be awarded a seat on the CPSU Central Committee. By the time the 24th CPSU Congress met in 1971, Dobrik had become first secretary of Ivano-Frankovsk obkom (regional party committee). In this capacity, as head of one of the least populous Ukrainian oblasts with one of the smallest party memberships, Dobrik was promoted from candidate to full Central Committee membership, the first head of the Ivano-Frankovsk party to be so honored. At the 25th Ukrainian Party Congress, Dobrik, who had since been transferred to Lvov obkom as first secretary, achieved another breakthrough by becoming the first official in that post to be elected to the Ukrainian Politburo.

Dobrik, who is said to have been openly hostile to Shelest during his time of troubles, is the prototype of the Russified and trustworthy East Ukrainian apparatchik tapped for duty in the restive Western regions. The removal of Vasily Kutsevol, who was demoted against Shelest's will from head of Lvov obkom, and the installation of Dobrik in his stead, were reportedly triggered by alleged errors in "internationalist and atheistic education of the masses."

The Lvov party's work under Dobrik has been extensively praised in the central press. In 1975 a CPSU resolution commended Lvov's initiative in developing a system for ensuring quality control of industrial output. Dobrik was further honored when Shcherbitsky chose the Lvov party conference in December 1975 as one of two pre-congress oblast conferences he attended.

Returning these compliments, Dobrik has continued to issue public praise for Brezhnev and Shcherbitsky on appropriate occasions. At the 25th Ukrainian Party Congress, he invoked Brezhnev's name more times than any party leader other than Shcherbitsky, and by thanking Brezhnev for the decision of May 1972 to purge



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Shelest, he made the first public reference to Brezhnev's role in the removal of Shelest. At the same time Dobrik expressed full support for Shcherbitsky "in all his good beginnings."

Rounding out the list of Ukrainian Politburo members in Shcherbitsky's camp are two men who had no earlier career association with Shcherbitsky or with Dnepropetrovsk: *Valentyn Malanchuk*, the republic ideology secretary, and *Vitaly Fedorchuk*, head of the Ukrainian KGB (Committee for State Security). The transfer of Fedorchuk from the central KGB in Moscow to the Ukraine in 1970 to replace longtime KGB chief Vitaly Nikitchenko provided an early sign that Shelest was in political trouble. Nikitchenko, who earlier served as a Kharkov secretary with both Podgorny and Shelest, had been on good terms with Shelest and reportedly shared his aversion to the use of "administrative methods" against dissidents. In September 1973 Fedorchuk's efforts to repress Ukrainian national dissent were rewarded with candidate membership on the Politburo, an honor never accorded his predecessor, who had headed the Ukrainian KGB for almost 20 years. At the 25th Ukrainian Party Congress, Fedorchuk was made a full member. His elevation, although part of a larger trend in the Soviet Union toward heavier KGB representation on republic Politburos, is at the same time a "plus" for Shcherbitsky.

No change in the composition of the Ukrainian Politburo so symbolized the change in orientation of the new regime in the Ukraine as the replacement in 1972 of Shelest's ideology secretary Fedor Ovcharenko by Valentyn Malanchuk. Ovcharenko's proclivities toward moderation in the ideological sphere were fairly well established. He may have been the ghost writer of a 1970 book on the Ukraine, published under Shelest's name, which was later attacked for betraying an unseemly national pride. Malanchuk owes his rapid rise in the hierarchy to quite different tendencies. He made his debut on the national scene in 1965 with a strong attack in *Pravda* on nationalist tendencies in Ukrainian literature. Since then a regular flow of tracts bearing his

name and extolling the "friendship of peoples" have simplified the task of categorizing him.

#### The Kharkov Group

The composition of the Kharkov group has changed since Shelest's day, and it is questionable whether the Kharkov cohorts on the current Ukrainian Politburo constitute a cohesive group. None of the three current members from Kharkov worked under Podgorny's direct supervision in Kharkov, and probably only one of them—*Aleksandr Botvin*—has substantial career ties to Shelest.

Botvin worked for Shelest, not in Kharkov, but briefly as second secretary of Kiev obkom in 1961-62 when Shelest was head of the party there, after which Botvin was put in charge of Kiev gorkom, where he has remained. This career link, plus the fact that Botvin's city organization has been criticized by Shcherbitsky and hit hard by the post-Shelest purge, provides evidence that Botvin is a Shcherbitsky opponent.

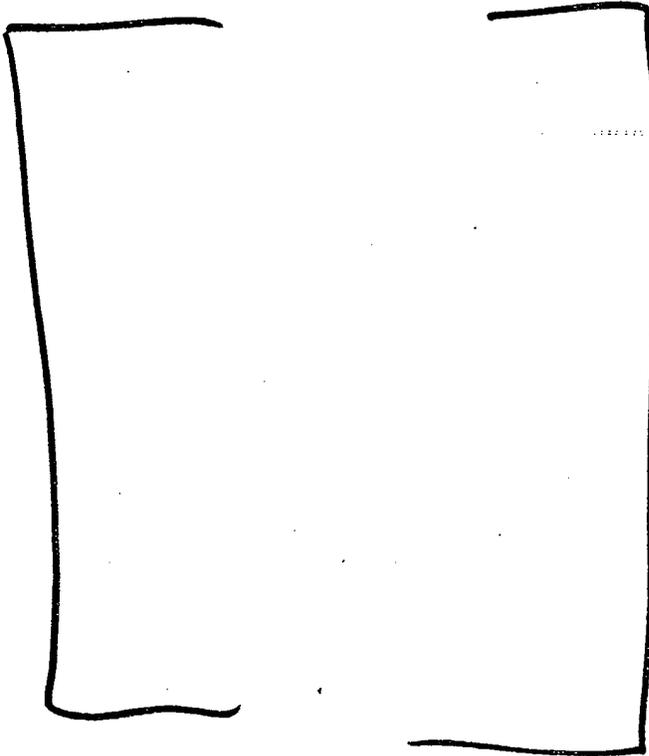
But there is countervailing evidence. As far back as 1968 Botvin, an ethnic Russian who may have been offended by Shelest's toleration of the expression of Ukrainian national feeling in literature, wrote an article for *Pravda* which criticized Oles Honchar. Botvin thus seemed to associate himself with the Dnepropetrovsk cadre who had led the campaign against Honchar. At the 24th Ukrainian Party Congress, in a speech which mentioned Shcherbitsky twice and Shelest only once, Botvin was one of the few speakers who made a favorable reference to Brezhnev. More recently, Botvin seems to have been the beneficiary of Shcherbitsky's tampering with the organizational control of the party in Kiev.

In May 1975 Shcherbitsky took the drastic step of removing the Kiev gorkom from the jurisdiction of the Kiev obkom and placing it under the direct supervision of the Ukrainian Central Committee. By this action Shcherbitsky cut the ground from under Vladimir Tsybulko, first secretary of Kiev obkom, who is no doubt aware that until 1947 the republic first secretary simultaneously served as head of the Kiev obkom. Tsybulko was left in charge of a "rump" party which had dropped overnight from being the second largest in the republic to the humiliating rank of tenth largest. This move against Tsybulko was part of a larger initiative against party officials who, like Tsybulko, began their careers in Donetsk. Tsybulko's rise in the party hierarchy had closely paralleled that of *Aleksandr Lyashko*, Ukrainian Premier and the leading figure in the Donetsk coterie.

As for Botvin, while he may chafe at being so closely supervised by Shcherbitsky, his status has visibly improved. Kiev city accounted for the great bulk of the oblast's party membership. Cut loose from Tsybulko's jurisdiction, Botvin's city organization now ranks fourth in the republic. Botvin emerged from the 25th Ukrainian Party Congress a full Politburo member, replacing and surpassing Tsybulko, who had only been a candidate.

At the congress, Botvin was honored as the second regional leader to speak, preceded only by Vatcherko. One of the few speakers who criticized Shelest by name, Botvin saluted the decision to remove him and gave Shcherbitsky special credit for his "personal initiative" in solving the problems of the Ukrainian capital. The *Pravda Ukratny* version of Botvin's speech differed considerably from the version published in the stenographic report of the congress; the latter version contained stronger praise of Shcherbitsky. Either the newspaper *dropped* part of Botvin's speech or the stenographic report *added* remarks he had not made. If the latter was the case, the doctoring of his speech would indicate that he earlier had shown reluctance to render the requisite praise of Shcherbitsky's leadership. On balance, however, although Botvin is not a member of Shcherbitsky's entourage, it seems likely that he has made his peace with the powers that be.

Just as Tsybulko's loss was Botvin's gain, *Ivan Sokolov*, another Kharkov figure, owes his place



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on the Politburo to the demotion of another presumed Shcherbitsky antagonist, Ivan Lutak. Lutak and Shelest worked together in the Kiev party in the early 1950s. Until December 1975, Lutak, by then the only Politburo member with significant career ties to Shelest managed to hold on to the crucial post of republic second secretary. It was a measure of Shcherbitsky's weakness that he was unable to demote Lutak during the first three and a half years of his tenure, but Lutak's assignment to the minor post of Cherkassy obkom first secretary indicates that this problem has been overcome.

One might have expected that Lutak's demotion would break up the logjam in the upper reaches of the Ukrainian party, enabling Shcherbitsky to move Vatchenko or another close associate into the second secretaryship. Such an outcome would have provided grounds to believe that the Ukrainian house had been put in order and a successor to Shcherbitsky was being groomed, perhaps preparatory to the transfer of Shcherbitsky himself to a better job in Moscow. The selection of Sokolov to replace Lutak as republic second secretary, however, put both the second secretaryship and the premiership—the two most common stepping stones to the top republic post—in the hands of men without strong potential for filling Shcherbitsky's shoes if he departed. As the leader of the Donetsk alignment, premier Lyashko would seem an unlikely successor.

Ukrainian second secretary Sokolov has a dual liability: he has a Kharkov background, and he is an ethnic Russian whose nationality alone might well disqualify him as a successor. Not since 1953 has a Russian headed the Ukrainian party. Sokolov may, however, have been selected for the very reason that he is a Russian, in keeping with the all-union trend of once again installing Russians as republic second secretaries. With Sokolov's appointment, only one republic (Belorussia) has a second secretary of the titular nationality. If Soviet authorities decided to replace Lutak with a Russian, Sokolov was the logical choice. Ethnic Russians are scarce in the upper echelons of the

Ukrainian party and government. At the time of his appointment, Sokolov was the only Russian on the Politburo and the only Russian in charge of the party of a major Ukrainian oblast. In addition, Shcherbitsky may see some advantages to having a Russian in the second secretaryship, since his nationality may preclude his becoming a serious rival.

There are some indications that Sokolov is on reasonably good terms with Shcherbitsky, who presided over the Kharkov plenum that installed Sokolov as obkom first secretary in June 1972. His selection for this post was not a mark of special favor, but an advancement entirely in accordance with the pattern of stability and regularity so typical of the Brezhnev era in the Soviet Union. Sokolov had merely moved up from the Kharkov second secretaryship. In his speech at the 25th Ukrainian Congress, however, Sokolov was unusually laudatory of Brezhnev, and he thanked Shcherbitsky "personally" for his contributions, while registering his support for the decision to remove Shelest. Perhaps Sokolov and Botvin alike were attempting to make up for past sins.

That Sokolov is in good political standing is suggested by the fact that he has, on at least one occasion, attended and addressed a meeting of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers. Since Kirilenko sometimes attends and speaks at Council of Ministers meetings in Moscow, Sokolov's participation in government deliberations in Kiev may indicate an extension to the republic level of an *institutional* change rather than any upgrading of Sokolov's personal authority. Whatever the reason for Sokolov's involvement in government affairs, however, the *fact* of his expanded role probably helps him politically.

At the same time, there is anecdotal evidence that Sokolov is not viewed as a power in his own right. According to [ ] during a recent Sokolov speech—delivered in accented Ukrainian—Shcherbitsky and Botvin openly chatted with each other in a way that seemed to slight the speaker, while other leading officials expressed their boredom by ostenta-

tiously glancing at watches, rolling eyes, and shaking heads.

The last Politburo member from Kharkov, *Gregory Vashchenko*, was moved in 1972 from the first secretaryship of Kharkov obkom to his present job as first deputy chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers. On the face of it, this transfer was a lateral move rather than a demotion, but in retrospect it appears that Vashchenko has been shunted aside. Although he has retained his Politburo standing, he has remained stationary, while Sokolov, his former subordinate in Kharkov, has moved up to the coveted job of republic second secretary.

Vashchenko began party work in Kharkov after Podgorny left the area, but he was in charge of the Kharkov party in 1965 when Brezhnev's victory over Podgorny was accompanied by an assault on his original power base. Although a CPSU resolution severely criticized the large intake of new members into the Kharkov party, Vashchenko himself weathered the storm. In the late 1960s, he emerged as a critic of ideological laxity and, by implication, of Shelest himself.

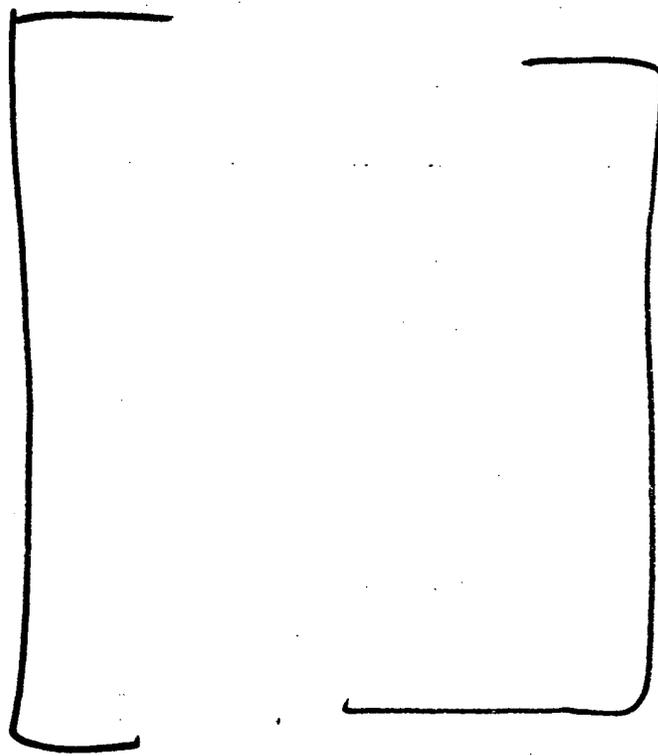
In sum, although the present Kharkov contingent on the Politburo does not include personal proteges of Shcherbitsky, they are probably more acceptable to him than were men like Shelest and Nikolay Sobol, Podgorny's closest associate in the Ukrainian apparat who was dropped from the Ukrainian Politburo in 1972. And at least two of the three current Kharkov members have long records as ideological hardliners, with views more harmonious with Shcherbitsky's cultural line than the one Shelest had fostered.

#### The Donetsk Group

By contrast with the Kharkov group, four of the Donetsk Politburo members of 1971 have retained their seats. All four earlier served together under Ivan Kazanets, who headed the party in Donetsk in the late 1950s. In 1965 Kazanets was transferred to the post of USSR Minister of Ferrous Metallurgy, perhaps in order

to create an opening in Kiev for Shcherbitsky, who succeeded him as Ukrainian premier. Perhaps it was because the Donetsk group existed as an identifiable group that it bore the brunt of Shcherbitsky's pre-congress drive to secure his position. In late December 1975, a terse, dramatic announcement appeared in Ukrainian newspapers: Vladimir Degtyarev, full Politburo member, prominent protege of Premier Lyashko, and head of the Donetsk party for a full 13 years, was appointed chairman of the State Committee for the Supervision of Labor Safety in Industry and Mining. This demotion was followed in January by the pre-congress Donetsk party conference at which it was revealed that Degtyarev's removal was the culmination of an extensive purge of the Donetsk party. Shcherbitsky, who attended the party conference, denounced Degtyarev in stronger terms than he had used against any Ukrainian official since Shelest's ouster.

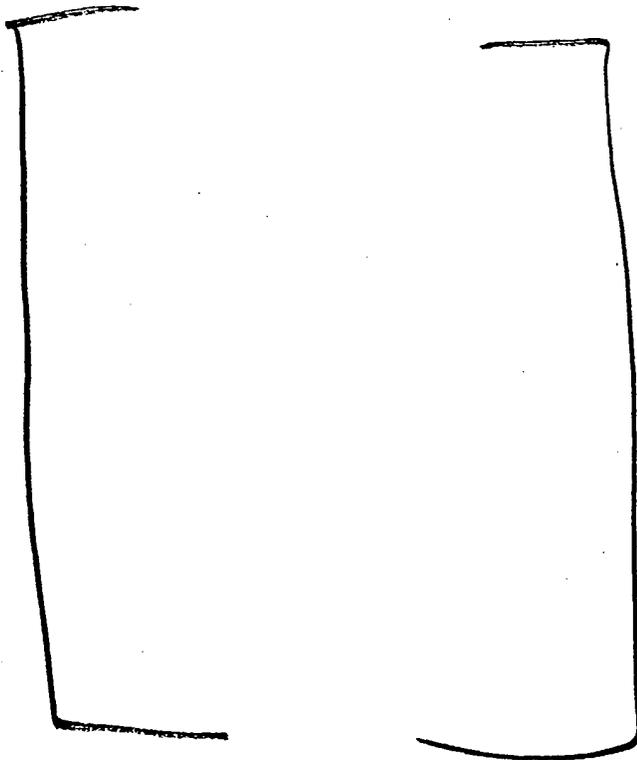
Replacing Degtyarev in Donetsk and on the Ukrainian Politburo was *Boris Kachura*, a new-



comer about whom little is known.<sup>3</sup> Kachura only became second secretary of Donetsk in 1974, having previously served as first secretary of the Zhdanov gorkom from 1971 to 1974. It is not likely that he served under Lyashko, who left Donetsk in 1963. Under Shcherbitsky, however, he has done well, and he has profited personally from Degtyarev's misfortune.

Kachura's speech at the last Ukrainian Party Congress was equivocal, however. He did not exude gratitude toward Shcherbitsky. On the contrary, he was one of only two obkom first secretaries who failed to mention Shcherbitsky's name, according to newspaper accounts. (One bland reference to Shcherbitsky later appeared in the stenographic report version of the speech.) But Kachura was somewhat more complimentary of Brezhnev than most speakers and seemed fully

<sup>3</sup> Kachura was only given a candidate Politburo membership. He may move up if he keeps his job, since the first secretary of Donetsk invariably is admitted to full membership.



supportive of the May 1972 decision regarding Shelest.

More recently, Kachura was listed by Soviet media as the first speaker at the May 1977 CPSU Central Committee plenum. He reportedly opened the discussion which led to Podgorny's removal from the Politburo by suggesting that Brezhnev should be made Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. While the fact that Kachura played this role at the plenum might seem to suggest that Kachura is a strong supporter of Brezhnev, it does not necessarily prove that this is so. It is likely that the leadership in any case preferred that the proposal to remove the last remaining ethnic Ukrainian (except for Shcherbitsky, who has an ex officio seat as head of the Ukrainian party) from the CPSU Politburo come from another Ukrainian to project the appearance of unanimity in the decision. Kachura may have been selected for this perhaps onerous task for the very reason that he was a leading member of a group not entirely sympathetic to the further consolidation of Brezhnev's power. Although Kachura's loyalties remain ambiguous, Shcherbitsky certainly prefers him to Degtyarev, a hostile figure whose long experience, contacts, and seniority must have given him considerable influence.

#### Other Party Institutions

Counting heads of regional groups on institutions below the Politburo level tends to reinforce the impression of a gradual, but not dramatic, rise in Shcherbitsky's political strength. A comparison of the size of regional delegations to the 24th and 25th Ukrainian Party Congresses shows a modest gain by Dnepropetrovsk, a slight gain by Kharkov, and no diminution in the size of the Donetsk delegation (figure 2). A similar pattern is evident in the changes in the republic Central Committee (figure 3).

The only surprising change in the composition of the republic Central Committee was the dropping of Aleksandr Ulanov, former first secretary of Dnepropetrovsk gorkom and a presumed pro-

Figure 2

Size of Regional Delegations to Ukrainian Party Congresses

	1976	1971
Donetsk .....	249	249
Dnepropetrovsk .....	189	185
Kharkov .....	171	168

tege of Shcherbitsky. Appointed in 1970 to the key post of head of the Ukrainian Department of Organizational Party Work, he was mysteriously transferred in 1973 to Voroshilovgrad as an obkom secretary. For a time it appeared conceivable that Ulanov had been sent there on an investigative mission to build an indictment against the obkom first secretary, who was in fact soon removed under a cloud. It is now clear, however, that Ulanov's demotion was more real than apparent.

Finally, representation of Kharkov and Donetsk on the CPSU Central Committee declined between 1971 and 1976, while the number of Dnepropetrovsk members grew (figure 4).

Representation of Ukrainian officials on the CPSU Central Committee, both in 1971 and in 1976, was based on position. Representation of obkom first secretaries, for example, appeared to be determined almost entirely by the size of the oblast party membership. Consequently, the in-

Figure 3

Regional Representation on Ukrainian Central Committees<sup>1</sup>

	1976	1971
Donetsk .....	13	11
Dnepropetrovsk .....	15	8
Kharkov .....	9	7

<sup>1</sup> This chart includes only full members. It is based on the current location of Central Committee members rather than on career association. Since the stenographic report of the 25th Ukrainian Party Congress did not identify members by region or position, the 1976 figures are less exact than those for 1971. Seven members from 1976 whose location is not known are excluded (191 members were elected in 1976).

Figure 4

Representation of Ukrainian Regional Groups on CPSU Central Committees<sup>1</sup>

	1976		
	Donetsk	Dnepropetrovsk	Kharkov
Full members .....	4	8	5
Candidates .....	3	1	1
Total	7	9	6
	1971		
Full members .....	5	5	4
Candidates .....	3	2	3
Total	8	7	7

<sup>1</sup> This chart includes only officials holding positions in the Ukraine at the time of the Central Committee elections, but it is based on career associations with the three oblasts, rather than on current locations within the Ukraine.

crease in Dnepropetrovsk representation was not due to a decision to elevate obscure officials who had career ties to that region, but merely reflected the success of the Dnepropetrovsk group in capturing important posts in the Ukraine. Only in the very special case of the Dneprodzerzhinsk gorkom was favoritism clearly shown. The last three first secretaries from that gorkom have been given membership either on the Central Committee or the Central Auditing Commission. It appears that Dneprodzerzhinsk has achieved an ex officio seat during Brezhnev's tenure.

The only surprising change in Ukrainian representation on the 1976 CPSU Central Committee was the election of controversial writer Oles Honchar as a candidate member. Honchar's rehabilitation came in spite of the fact that he has not appeared contrite about his past ideological "mistakes." He has continued to write eulogies to the Ukrainian language of a sort rarely seen since the demise of Shelest. In his speech at the 25th Ukrainian Congress, while praising Brezhnev, he conspicuously neglected to make a bow in the direction of the "wise" decision of May 1972. Honchar's election can hardly be seen as a bonus for Shcherbitsky.

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### Alternative Explanations for Shcherbitsky's Apparent Problems

The evidence suggests that Shcherbitsky has been more successful in removing old foes than in replacing them with clients of his own. Although the trend since 1972 in Ukrainian politics has been toward a gradual accumulation of power by Shcherbitsky, to date he has not completely consolidated his position in the central party institutions of the Ukraine. There are several possible explanations for his seeming failure to do so.

#### Is the Kharkov Evidence Illusory?

First of all, it may be contended that this conclusion is incorrect. It is conceivable that the evaluation offered here proceeds from a false premise—that is to say, that regional and career ties in the Ukraine have weakened to the extent that they are no longer reliable as indicators of political loyalties. It can be argued, in particular, that in recent years the Kharkov contingent on the Ukrainian Politburo has not always existed as a distinct group, and that consequently the Kharkov presence on the Politburo does not necessarily represent a stumbling block for Shcherbitsky.

The question of the solidarity of the Kharkov group and the relation of Shelest and Podgorny to Kharkovites in the Ukraine today is indeed a slippery one. That Kharkovites of an earlier day, under the leadership of Podgorny, Vitaly Titov, and Sobol—successive first secretaries of Kharkov obkom—formed a patronage network seems clear. Shelest's connection with this group was more tenuous. Although Shelest and Podgorny did not serve in Kharkov simultaneously, there is inferential evidence that Podgorny had a hand in Shelest's elevation to the first secretaryship, and that Shelest "inherited" some of Podgorny's patronage in the Ukraine. From the late 1960s, however, the evidence connecting Shelest with the Kharkov group is ambiguous. Shelest's support in the Ukraine during this period may have come largely from those who, regardless of territorial base, supported his policy positions, espe-

cially his toleration of some manifestations of Ukrainian national feeling. It is likely that on this issue the Kharkov group split. Certainly some Kharkovites, such as Botvin, Vashchenko, and Andrey Skaba—removed as ideology secretary in 1968—opposed Shelest on ideological matters and cooperated with the Dnepropetrovsk group. Others, like Nikitchenko, evidently did not.

This raises the question of Podgorny's position, which may also have shifted. Whatever Podgorny's personal sympathies—Podgorny has had the reputation of being the most "Ukrainian" of the central leaders—since the late 1960s, as he seemed to withdraw from active competition with Brezhnev, he also on occasion offered public support for Russifying and centralizing policies which Shelest clearly opposed.

In a July 1968 speech, for example, Podgorny offered a long panegyric to the Russian people, which concluded that "after all, it is not accidental that abroad all citizens of our multinational country are frequently described as Russians." And at the time of Shelest's demotion, Podgorny, in a May 1972 *Kommunist* article, registered his desire to see "rapprochement and even fusion" of nationalities (codewords for linguistic and cultural Russification) and expounded the view that the Soviet economy "constitutes an interlinked national economic complex developing in accordance with an integrated plan," in which investment decisions are made "from the viewpoint of the USSR central economy" (rather than in accordance with the desires of individual republics). Such statements suggested that Podgorny was putting distance between himself and Shelest's politically dangerous defense of Ukrainian national identity and republic economic interests. Thus, it would appear that, at least on this issue, many members of the Kharkov group abandoned Shelest. The fact that the Kharkov group as a whole was not associated with Shelest's line with regard to nationality policy indicated that regional and career ties in the Ukraine are not all-important, and that differences on important policy issues in some instances cut across group lines.

Nevertheless, the evidence with regard to the Kharkovites does not invalidate the overall conclusion that they have represented an element of potential weakness for Shcherbitsky in the Ukrainian leadership. Although the present Kharkov contingent on the Politburo is evidently more compatible with Shcherbitsky than was Shelest, it is unlikely that their Kharkov loyalties have disappeared altogether or that they "belong" to Shcherbitsky in the way that most Dnepropetrovsk officials presumably do. (Similarly, Podgorny acquiesced in Brezhnev's preeminence and supported some of his policies, but he did not thereby become a close personal ally in the way that Kirilenko and Shcherbitsky have been.)

#### How Strong Is the Dnepropetrovsk Tie Today?

An alternative explanation for the visible defects in Shcherbitsky's position—one which, if true, might radically change the complexion of Soviet politics—is that there has been a splitting of the Dnepropetrovsk group. Such a schism would doubtless take place if the presumed alliance among Shcherbitsky, Brezhnev, and Kirilenko broke up. While there is strong evidence that Shcherbitsky's fortunes have been tied to those of Brezhnev in the past, at some point the interests of patron and client may diverge. As the succession question looms ever larger in Moscow, Shcherbitsky could attempt to chart a more independent course for himself. Brezhnev, for his part, could conceivably come to view the younger man as a potential rival, and attempt to hold back Shcherbitsky's ascendancy.

Evidence suggesting that Shcherbitsky may be attempting to put some distance between himself and Brezhnev is found in certain of his recent speeches which have not been uniformly laudatory of Brezhnev. Shcherbitsky, for example, has used the formula "one of the most outstanding" international figures of our time to refer to Brezhnev, instead of the more complimentary "most outstanding" figure. Shcherbitsky has also stressed the virtues of collectivity in a way which could be construed as a criticism of Brezhnev's leading role. It is also interesting that speeches at

the 25th Ukrainian Congress revealed no clear correlation between praise of Brezhnev and praise of Shcherbitsky. In addition, in an article published on the eve of Podgorny's ouster, Shcherbitsky condemned "great power chauvinism." This term, a codeword for Russian nationalism, is rarely used by Soviet leaders. Shcherbitsky's use of it at this time could conceivably be interpreted as resistance to Brezhnev's removal of the last non-Russian holding a key central post. According to one report, finally, Shcherbitsky warned Brezhnev in 1975 against including in the new constitution any further formal restrictions on the rights of union republics, lest this lead to an unnecessary exacerbation of the situation in the non-Russian republics, particularly in the Ukraine. (In the event, the draft constitution formalized the movement toward further centralization.)

At the <sup>A</sup> same time, there is tentative evidence that Kirilenko has in recent months become more assertive and inclined to play up his personal importance in the Moscow leadership in a way that may not be altogether pleasing to Brezhnev. In a speech at his birthday celebration in October 1976, for example, Kirilenko—while complimenting Brezhnev by making an unusual reference to him as *vozhd* (leader), also made self-congratulatory remarks which called attention to his worthiness as a successor. If Kirilenko were to break away from Brezhnev, it is entirely possible that Shcherbitsky might follow his lead. Shcherbitsky's career ties to Kirilenko, under whom he earlier worked in Dnepropetrovsk, are even stronger than his ties to Brezhnev.

But despite these suggestions of a weakening of the bond between Shcherbitsky and Brezhnev, there is also significant countervailing textual evidence. Shcherbitsky, for example, gave a most laudatory tribute to Brezhnev on the occasion of the unveiling of a bust of Brezhnev in Dneprodzerzhinsk in 1976, and he is one of the few Soviet spokesmen who have publicly referred to Brezhnev's position as Chairman of the USSR Defense Council. Moreover, some of his references to collectivity can be read as compliments

to Brezhnev, whose alleged "modesty" and evident restraint in stepping on the toes of the "collective" have often been cited among his political assets. Thus, Shcherbitsky has stated that Brezhnev's speeches "greatly contributed to the creative development of Marxism-Leninism" and that they "embody, in a concentrated form, our party's collective thought."

**Conclusion**

The net weight of the evidence suggests that Shcherbitsky's difficulties in the Ukraine do not stem primarily from any problems between him and Brezhnev, but probably have reflected a continuing tension within the CPSU Politburo itself. That is, the constraints existing between Brezhnev and his colleagues have apparently also constrained Shcherbitsky. Presumably, the degree of collectivity which has existed in the CPSU Politburo and the character of all-union cadre policy since Khrushchev's day—with its emphasis on continuity and regularity—have combined to restrict Shcherbitsky's room to maneuver in the Ukraine. Vacancies of obkom first secretaries, for example, are invariably filled in the Ukraine, as elsewhere, from within the ranks of the local party, most often by promoting the obkom second secretary. In turn, there has been a trend for the heads of the largest oblast parties to have ex officio seats on the Ukrainian Politburo. In this way, limitations of an almost structural character in the application of power in Moscow have prevented Shcherbitsky from running roughshod over his opposition in the Ukraine. The ouster of Podgorny this year, however, may have considerably reduced the barriers to Brezhnev's exertion of patronage in the union republics and therefore may have removed a major obstacle to Shcherbitsky's ascendancy in Kiev.

Podgorny's demise may also mark a rise in Shcherbitsky's prospects as a succession contender. For Shcherbitsky to become a serious contender for Brezhnev's job, he needs experience in an important party or government post at the center. During the last two years, while Shcher-

bitsky has remained in place, several other junior leaders at the national level have advanced. In particular, Grigory Romanov, the Leningrad party leader, has in a sense caught up with Shcherbitsky by receiving promotion to full Politburo membership.

In addition, several other juniors who are believed to enjoy strong support from Brezhnev have advanced. For example, Nikolay Tikhonov has become a first deputy premier; Konstantin Chernenko and Konstantin Rusakov have been moved into the CPSU secretariat. Yakov Ryabov, who is probably a protege of Kirilenko, has also moved into the secretariat. Brezhnev during this period has continued to be either unable or unwilling to take steps to designate Shcherbitsky his heir apparent.



Nevertheless, because Podgorny's departure eliminated the last member of what was once a sizable Ukrainian contingent holding Politburo-level posts in Moscow, the central leadership may sense a need to placate a disgruntled Ukrainian apparat by appointing an ethnic Ukrainian to a leading post in Moscow.

the abrupt removal of Podgorny disquieted many Ukrainians,

has reported rumors circulating in Kiev to the effect that Shcherbitsky will soon be promoted.



In short, several shreds of evidence suggest an increase in Shcherbitsky's political standing since Podgorny's fall, and it is possible that the factors that have constrained Shcherbitsky's career since 1972 may now be overcome.

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*This paper draws on a recent unclassified study of  
Ukrainian politics by the same author, written for  
presentation at a conference of the American Association  
for the Advancement of Slavic Studies*

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