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UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATIONS OF PATRIOTIC YOUTH AND THEIR LIQUIDATION BY THE STATE SECURITY AGENCIES OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR (the second half of the 1950s – first half of the 1970s)

Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to characterize the activities, exposure, and liquidation of underground patriotic youth associations by the Republic's state security agencies during the period under analysis. The methodological basis of the research is the principles of scientific objectivity,*

systematicity, verification, and historicism. Both general scientific (analysis, synthesis, generalization) and special historical (historical and comparative, historical and genetic, historical and systemic) methods have been used. **The scientific novelty** of the research results is determined by the fact that, based on the unpublished archival materials mostly, the activities and liquidation of opposition youth organizations and groups by the state security bodies of the Republic during the period under study have been analysed. **Conclusions.** The mid-1950s were marked by the emergence of a new stage in the national liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people – the transition to unarmed resistance to the Soviet regime. Having taken advantage of the political thaw, the opposition organizations of patriotic youth emerged: the United Party for the Liberation of Ukraine (1955); the Ukrainian National Front (1964); For Free Ukraine (1965); the Volia Committee (1969); the Organization of Ukrainian Youth of Galicia (1972); the Golden Four (1973), and other underground youth groups. Their participants spoke out against the administrative command pressure and arbitrariness of the communist regime, violations of the rule of law, the implementation of the policy of Russification in Ukraine, fought for civil liberties, the national rights of the Ukrainian people, conducted anti-Soviet agitation, discussed ways of fighting for independent Ukraine, etc. The Republic's state security organs, guided by the instructions of the party and Soviet bodies, made enormous efforts to expose and eliminate opposition youth organizations and groups, often using extremely harsh sanctions provided for by the Criminal Code.

Key words: underground youth organizations and groups, state security bodies of the Ukrainian SSR, Ukrainian nationalists, anti-Soviet activities, arrests.

ПІДПІЛЬНІ ОБ'ЄДНАННЯ ПАТРІОТИЧНОЇ МОЛОДІ ТА ЇХ ЛІКВІДАЦІЯ ОРГАНАМИ ДЕРЖАВНОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ РСР (друга половина 1950-х – перша половина 1970-х рр.)

Анотація. Мета статті – представити результати дослідження діяльності і ліквідації органами державної безпеки УРСР підпільних об'єднань патріотичної молоді у другій половині 1950-х – першій половині 1970-х рр. **Методологічною основою дослідження** стали принципи наукової об'єктивності, системності, верифікації та історизму. Використано і загальнонаукові (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення), і спеціально-історичні (історико-порівняльний, історико-генетичний, історико-системний) методи. **Наукова новизна** одержаних результатів визначається тим, що на основі переважно неопублікованих архівних матеріалів простежено діяльність і ліквідацію органами державної безпеки республіки опозиційних молодіжних організацій та груп зазначеного періоду. **Висновки.** Середина 50-х рр. ХХ ст. ознаменувалася новим етапом національно-визвольної боротьби українського народу – переходом до беззбройного опору радянському режимові. Скориставшись політичною відлигою, виникають опозиційні об'єднання патріотичної молоді: Об'єднана партія визволення України (1955); Український національний фронт (1964); За вільну Україну (1965); Комітет Воля (1969); Спілка української молоді Галичини (1972); Золота четвірка (1973), інші підпільні молодіжні групи. Їхні учасники виступали проти адміністративно-командного тиску та свавілля комуністичного режиму, порушення законності, здійснення політики русифікації в Україні, боролися за громадянські свободи, національні права українського народу, проводили антирадянську агітацію, обговорювали шляхи боротьби за самостійну Україну тощо. Органи державної безпеки республіки, керуючись вказівками партійних і радянських органів, докладали величезних зусиль для викриття та ліквідації опозиційних молодіжних організацій і груп, нерідко використовуючи при цьому передбачені Кримінальним кодексом надзвичайно жорсткої санкції.

Ключові слова: підпільні молодіжні організації та групи, органи державної безпеки УРСР, українські націоналісти, антирадянська діяльність, арешти.

Problem Statement. In the mid-1950s, a new stage of the Ukrainian national liberation struggle began. It became clear that the armed struggle against the Soviet regime had exhausted itself. Political changes in the Soviet Union, partial shaking of power structures, the brutal suppression of a public uprising in the Polish city of Poznan in 1956 and the anti-communist uprising in Hungary contributed to the opposition's transition to the implementation of the

national idea peacefully. Despite the understanding of the repression threat by the ruling regime, the underground organizations and groups emerged in the Ukrainian SSR. Among them, youth groups occupied a prominent place, and the repressive authorities focused their efforts on exposing and eliminating them.

Review of Recent Research and Publications. The activities of underground patriotic youth associations and their liquidation by the state security agencies of the Ukrainian SSR during the post-war period attracted the attention of domestic historians not as a direct subject of research, but as a component of broader scientific problems mainly. Oleh Bazhan (Bazhan, 1999), Yuriy Danyliuk (Bazhan, & Danyliuk, 2000), Yuriy Zaitsev (Zaitsev, 2007), Borys Zakharov (Zakharov, 2003), Hryhoriy Kasianov (Kasianov, 1995), Mykola Kostyrko (Kostyrko, 2024), Yuriy Kurnosov (Kurnosov, 1994), R. Kovaliuk (Kovaliuk, 2001), T. Marusyk (Marusyk, 1999), Radomyr Mokryk (Mokryk, 2023), A. Rusnachenko (Rusnachenko, 1998) and the others contributed to the coverage of a number of aspects of the specified issue during the period under analysis.

The purpose of the article is to characterize the activities, exposure, and liquidation of underground patriotic youth associations by the Republic's state security agencies during the period under analysis.

Research Results. The death of the Soviet dictator J. Stalin, the arrest and execution of the Minister of Internal Affairs L. Beriia, and the decisions of the 20th Congress of the CPSU accelerated the process of de-Stalinization, causing, in particular, certain positive changes in the activities of punitive and repressive bodies, the rehabilitation of victims of Bolshevik repressions, the return of participants in the underground insurgent movement from camps and special settlements, and some weakening of domestic political terror. However, its ambiguity, contradictions, a strict control, and restrictions on democratic changes in the Soviet Union, including the Ukrainian SSR, gave rise to a new stage of ruthless suppression of any instances of dissent (Bazhan, 1999, pp. 476–479; Trofymovych, 2021, pp. 25–26). This fact is confirmed, in particular, by the letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU “On Strengthening the Political Work of Party Organizations among the Masses and Suppressing the Raids of Anti-Soviet Hostile Elements” dated December 12, 1956, the discussion of which turned into a political campaign that overturned the positive results of the de-Stalinization policy (Bazhan, 1999, pp. 476–477). Evidence of the latter was, for example, that in 1954 – 1959 the Republic's state security organs discovered 183 “nationalist and other anti-Soviet organizations” and brought 1,789 people to criminal responsibility for belonging to them. In total, over 3,000 people were under their supervision at that time (Zaitsev, 2007, p. 323).

In 1955, the United Party for the Liberation of Ukraine was founded in Ivano-Frankivsk region, the first members of which were students and young workers. Although it was formed on the principles of the OUN and UPA, its direction of action was entirely propagandistic. This underground organization carried out agitation work among local residents, distributed printed leaflets. Vasyl Ploshchak, Ivan Strutynskyi, and Bohdan Tymkiv developed the charter. Its other members – the programme and the text of the oath. “We decided,” recalled Bohdan Hermaniuk, “to conduct agitation work and call on all of Ukraine, all of our Ukrainian people, to fight: religious people, intellectuals, and workers – we meant to involve everyone in this fight. In addition, we had intentions to contact other republics: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, because even then we understood that if we all fought together, the Soviet Union would not be able to resist, and that is why, we had the idea to unite all the republics and our entire Ukrainian people to fight for an independent Ukraine” (Zakharov, 2003, p. 65).

However, they were not destined to leave the Republic: on December 4, 1958, 28 people were arrested and interrogated, of whom 8 were convicted. In particular, Bohdan Hermaniuk, Ivan Strutynskyi, Yarema Tkachuk, Myroslav Ploshchak, and Bohdan Tymkiv were imprisoned for 10 years (Zakharov, 2003, p. 65).

In the spring of 1956, the KGB exposed the youth nationalist organization in the capital of the Republic, led by I. Dovhoruk, a first-year student at the Faculty of Philology of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University. It included a student of the Polytechnic Institute V. Naumenko and a student of the School of Applied Arts S. Usyk. During their arrest, calls to fight against the Soviet regime and three combat grenades with charges were found (SSA SSU), f. 16, c. 0911, pp. 110–111).

In February of 1958, the KGB exposed the Ukrainian nationalist group among the students of Kyiv Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages. A fifth-year student Sirenko, whose father had been arrested twice for nationalist activities, and a second-year students Hnatkevych, whose father died in the OUN underground, and the mother was convicted for participating in the latter, and Skurativsky were sentenced to various prison terms, the two others were expelled from the institute, and six were given “preventive conversations”. The investigation found out that the students had discussed the ways to fight for independent Ukraine. They also planned to recruit new people to their organization and organize the production and distribution of leaflets (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0917, pp. 302–304).

As of April 16, 1959, the state security agencies recorded “the activities of youth groups of Ukrainian nationalists” in Lviv, Stanislaviv, Rivne, and Kyiv (SSA SSU, f. 1, c. 0919, p. 89).

On January 6, 1961, the KGB Department of Lviv region exposed the youth nationalist organization in the village of Kupychvolia, Nesterivskyi district, founded in 1958 by Volodymyr Vyniarsky, a 20-year-old handyman at the inter-collective farm construction office. It consisted of 12 residents of this village aged 16 to 20. They held several meetings in the forest and in their homes, where they discussed ways to carry out the anti-Soviet propaganda, oppose youth joining the Komsomol, acquire weapons, and destroy collective farm property. While carrying out the organization’s tasks, in November of 1960, Adam Levytsky set fire to stacks of collective farm straw, and other participants produced and distributed anti-Soviet leaflets in their village twice. During the arrests, the KGB officers seized two firearms. V. Vyniarsky and A. Levytsky were brought to criminal responsibility, and the others were “prevented” (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0930, pp. 76–77).

At the beginning of the 1960s, such a form of national liberation struggle as dissent began to assert itself more clearly. The latter, according to the definition of Yu. Kurnosov, “is the struggle against the policy of the Soviet regime, which denied the identity of the Ukrainian people, the struggle for national liberation, a human dignity, respect for human rights regardless of race, nationality, religion, political beliefs, against any forms of dictatorship” (Kurnosov, 1994, p. 6).

It is also worth noting that at the beginning of the 1960s, special units of foreign centres of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, decided to abandon efforts to revive the Ukrainian liberation movement in the Republic finally, relying on former participants of the latter. This time they placed their main hope on a younger generation and creative intelligentsia, establishing contacts with them and supporting them (Antoniuk, & Trofymovych, 2021, p. 119).

In October of 1964, the first issue of the underground typewritten journal “Volia i Batkivshchyna” (Freedom and Homeland) was published. Its appearance marked the beginning of the activities of the Ukrainian National Front (UNF). The founder of the secret organization was Dmytro Kvetsko, a graduate of the History Department of Ivan Franko State University of Lviv (1963). The day before, he had developed drafts of its manifesto and charter, formulated the name, and prepared a number of articles for the planned magazine. At the same time, he was joined by a former illegal OUN member, a political prisoner Zinoviy Krasivsky, who graduated from the Philological Faculty of this University in 1962 and who took up editing and printing “Volia i Batkivshchyna”. Gradually, the organization was replenished with new members: in 1966, its membership included over 150 people. Among them there was a former UPA member and political prisoner, a participant in the Norilsk Uprising of 1953, a classmate of Zinoviy, Myroslav Melen, who soon became the organizer of one of the UNF groups operating outside Lviv. Another of its groups was headed by Ivan Hubka. Its members reprinted and distributed “Volia i Batkivshchyna”, the OUN and UPA publications, raised funds for editorial needs, and made contacts with representatives of the opposition movement in other cities and towns of the Republic (Zaitsev, 2007, p. 326).

Living in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Kirovohrad, and Donetsk regions, the UNF members managed to build a fairly effective underground network. They created their own programme, “Tactics of the UNF,” which resembled the goals of the OUN. According to it, a “cash fund” was established, underground members wrote their own oath, received pseudonyms, and there were appointed territories for their activity. In addition to the aforementioned magazine “Volia i Batkivshchyna”, the OUN brochures of the 1948 edition were distributed. In total, the KGB officers recorded 29 cases of anti-Soviet activity of the UNF. Thus, on April 19, 1966, underground members posted nationalist leaflets in Kyiv, and on October 30 of the same year, in the town of Bolekhiv, Ivano-Frankivsk region, they damaged the monument to Lenin and left the OUN publications near it. They considered “true patriots of Ukraine” – I. Dziuba, I. Svitlychnyi and V. Chornovil – to be their authorities (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0990, pp. 251–253; f. 16, c. 0957, pp. 354–362).

However, in March of 1967, the leaders of the UNF were arrested and convicted. Thus, D. Kvetsko was sentenced to 20 years (5 years in prison, 10 years in camps, 5 years in exile). At the beginning of the 1990s, all of them were rehabilitated, and in 1995, Lviv regional organization of the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists decided to revive the publication “Volia i Batkivshchyna” under the editorship of Ivan Hubko (Zaitsev, 2007, p. 326).

In the village of Koropets, Monastyrsky district, Ternopil region, the KGB officers discovered the youth nationalist organization “For Free Ukraine”. It consisted of 15 young men and women, members of the Komsomol, mostly the 10th-grade students of a local school. Its leaders were 18-year-old Volodymyr Rozhniv and 20-year-old Stepan Melnyk. They tried to develop the text of an anti-Soviet leaflet and reproduce it by printing using a self-made cliché. To this end, they intended to steal a font from the district publishing house and purchase firearms. They planned to spread this propaganda in Ternopil, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and other towns of Western Ukraine.

According to the investigation, they were prompted to take anti-Soviet actions by listening to the broadcasts of the radio station “Svoboda”. Therefore, in agreement with Ternopil regional committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the regional prosecutor’s office, it was decided to conduct “prevention” among the organization’s members at a public meeting

in the village of Koropets. The meeting took place on January 20, 1967, with the participation of about 900 people. After the speech of the head of the regional KGB, the suspects were heard. They all “admitted their guilt”, asked for forgiveness and promised “to justify the trust given to them with honest work and good behaviour”. Then, 12 representatives of the intelligentsia, collective farms, youth, as well as the secretary of the district party committee and the regional prosecutor spoke out in condemnation of their activities. At the end of the meeting, the decision was made not to bring the detainees to criminal responsibility, but to take them on bail by the public (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0981, pp. 24–27).

On February 19, 1969, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Petro Shelest, was informed of the distribution of leaflets in the premises of Lutsk Pedagogical Institute. The content of the leaflets was as follows: “Students! The time has come for us, as the youth of Czechoslovakia, to rise up to fight against the wrong policy of the Soviet government, against the yoke imposed on the Ukrainian people! The Soviet government must die a violent death, because it is leading our people to destruction! We must take to the streets, not attend History classes and some other subjects classes, at which demagogic ideas of fanatical communism are imposed on us and people are turned into puppets. Everyone on strike! Underground organization of the LPI” (Kucherepa & Sushchuk, 2012, p. 139).

On the same day, local KGB officers opened a criminal case against the student of this University, Volodymyr Topchiiy, for distributing the aforementioned leaflets. According to the investigation materials, while listening to banned Western radio stations about current domestic and international events, he decided to use his vision of the latter in the form of a leaflet. In addition, the content of the latter was announced at a meeting of student activists. V. Topchiiy was arrested and sentenced to four years in a labour camp (Kucherepa, & Sushchuk, 2012, p. 139).

On November 6, 1969, in the village of Bilyatychi, Sarny district, Rivne region, a Physical Education teacher at a local school, a part-time student at Ternopil Pedagogical College, Serhiy Veres, and a master of industrial training for civil defense courses at Sarny district executive committee, Hryhoriy Kaliush, founded the youth nationalist organization “The Volia Committee” (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0986, p. 310). It included local residents: an assistant projectionist of the village club Mykola Teremok, a student of Dubrovytsia Vocational School Mykola Stelmakh, a student of the 9th grade at Sarny secondary school Vasyl Mirko, a mechanizer of the collective farm in the village of Biliatychi Stepan Kravchuk. By order of S. Veres, all members of “The Volia Committee” took an oath of non-disclosure of organizational secrets, which was sealed with blood. They developed a method of behaviour in case of failure. During the period until April 14, 1970, they produced and distributed six anti-Soviet leaflets calling for the fight for Independent Ukraine (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0987, pp. 165–167).

On April 28, 1970, S. Veres was arrested by the KGB officers. During his interrogations, it turned out that the ideologist and founder of “The Volia Committee” was H. Kaliush. In view of this, on August 7 of the same year, the latter was also detained (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0983, p. 157).

During interrogations, H. Kaliush behaved strangely. He refused to testify. In connection with this, he was sent for a forensic psychiatric examination. According to the doctors’ conclusion, at the time of the creation of “The Volia Committee” he was sane. However, during the investigation he fell ill with a temporary mental disorder in the form of reactive

psychosis. By the decision of the Board of Rivne Regional Court of November 2, 1970, he was sent to a specialized hospital.

As for the fate of S. Veres, he was sentenced under Art. 62 Part 1 and Art. 64 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR to two years in prison. As for the other members of "The Volia Committee", "taking into account their youth and sincere repentance", only "preventive" measures were taken by the KGB (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0987, pp. 167–168).

In the winter of 1972, young workers and students in Ivano-Frankivsk region (mostly fellow villagers born in 1948 from the village of Pechenizhyn, Kolomyia district, who worked in Kolomyia or studied in other towns) founded an underground organization, "The Organization of Ukrainian Youth of Galicia". It included the founder of the latter, a locksmith, a secretary of the Komsomol organization of the mechanized column Dmytro Hrynkiv, as well as Dmytro Demydiv, Ivan Shovkovy, Mykola Mokriuk, Roman Chupriy and the others. There were 10 members. It is characteristic that in their minds nationalist ideas were combined with the communist ideology that was imposed on them at Soviet schools and universities. Therefore, although the "Organization" was founded on the principles of the OUN, its members dreamed of an independent Ukrainian socialist state modelled on the Polish People's Republic or the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Zakharov, 2003, p. 73; Rusnachenko, 1998, p. 206). The members of the Organization gathered information about the underground insurgent movement, searched for the OUN literature and weapons. Their plans included making contacts with similar organizations, including foreign ones, distributing samvydav, developing and approving the programme of the Organization. Everyone chose a pseudonym. For example, Roman Chupriy – "Khmel". They instructed the leader – D. Hrynkiv and his deputy – D. Demydiv to develop the organization's charter and programme. Each member of the "Organization" received an individual task. In particular, M. Motriuk had to collect evidence about the former UPA sotnyi "Orel" and the district leader of the OUN, as well as obtain several copies of the OUN literature, which described the facts of "national oppression," and record local rebel songs. I. Shovkovy prepared Vasyl Kuzenk for admission to the organization, and R. Chupriy – Ivan Chupriy. They completed the tasks set successfully.

In the summer of 1972, M. Motriuk and I. Shovkovy stole "Aida" tape recorder to record the speeches of the assembly participants. D. Hrynkiv found a cache of a German rifle and 40 live cartridges in a local resident's household. In addition, he kept a small-caliber rifle stolen in 1963 from Kolomyia school by M. Motriuk. In December, V. Kuzenko was appointed "a commandant of the fighting unit," responsible for conducting fire training among the organization's members in the forest outside the town. On March 14, 1973, all members of the "Union of Ukrainian Youth of Galicia" were arrested by the KGB officers (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 1021, pp. 30–33). Although the detainees admitted their guilt and repented, they were sentenced. After 5 months, four of them were tried. In particular, D. Hrynkiv was sentenced to 7 years in strict regime camps and 3 years of exile (Zakharov, 2003, p. 73; Rusnachenko, 1998, p. 208).

It should be noted that during the period under analysis, the Ukrainian youth were significantly influenced by the socio-political, journalistic, and human rights activities of prominent figures in the dissident movement, in particular Viacheslav Chornovil (Mankovska, 2018, p. 231).

As follows from B. Paska's publications, in the spring of 1972, the students of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University, Ivan Haiduk, Vasyl Ovsienko, and Raisa Sydorenko,

were involved in the preparation of Issue 6 of “Ukrainian Herald”. It was she who printed ten copies of it, as well as six copies of Valentin Moroz’s essay “Instead of the Last Word”, which V. Ovsienko gave to reliable people and informed the students he trusted of the content (Paska, 2024, p. 229). By the way, after graduating from the University, V. Ovsienko got a job as a teacher in the village of Teshan, Kyiv region. There he wrote a number of works in which he criticized the Soviet government and educated school students in the national spirit. On March 5, 1973, V. Ovsienko was detained and later arrested. During the investigation, threatening to send him to a psychiatric hospital, the punitive authorities got information about the preparation of the aforementioned “Ukrainian Herald”. Although at the trial (November 21 – December 6, 1973) he was forced to plead guilty, gave evidence about his opposition activity, and also “condemned his anti-Soviet nationalist activities, and expressed assurances that he would atone for his guilt before the Soviet people with his honest work”, V. Ovsienko was sentenced to four years in prison (Paska, 2024, p. 236).

At the beginning of the 1970s, several unannounced disparate groups emerged among the students at Ivan Franko State University of Lviv. For example, one of them included second-year History students who organized a group that was an alternative to the official group studying History of Ukraine. Its first participants were Stepan Sluka, Ihor Kozhan, Roman Kozovyk, Ivan Svarnyk. Soon they were joined by freshmen Ihor Khudiy, Leonid Filonov, and a fourth-year honors student, a member of the faculty bureau of the LKSMU, and a deputy of the regional council, Mariana Dolynska. Since the autumn of 1972, this circle began to evolve towards an illegal organization. The members of the group read and distributed the papers of Ivan Dziuba, Valentyn Moroz, Viacheslav Chornovil, other samvydav materials, and prepared a draft programme of their activities, “The Main Tasks of Modern Revolutionary Movement in Ukraine”. It followed that the members of the circle were an underground youth organization striving for the independence of the Ukrainian SSR. The programme was to be implemented through scientific and educational activities, the publication of its own printed organ, and subversive actions in the Soviet and party structures.

During the March Shevchenko celebrations of 1973, the historians’ circle of students of History, together with a group of Philology students led by Zorian Popadiuk, distributed 300 leaflets prepared by the latter in Lviv, protesting against the authorities’ curtailment of the celebrations. On the night of March 28, the participants of the action were arrested. Z. Popadiuk was sentenced to 7 years of strict regime and 5 years of exile, the others were expelled from the Komsomol, expelled from the university, and drafted into the army (Zaitsev, 2007, p. 340).

It is characteristic that Z. Popadiuk was not stopped being watched even in prison. For this purpose, a political prisoner named “Travnevy” was recruited, who quickly gained Zorian’s trust and provided the KGB with valuable information about the latter’s activities, and soon after his release by the state security agencies, he was immersed in the dissident community. According to B. Paska, “Travnevy” is Liubomyr Starosolsky, who was then serving his sentence in the Mordovian camp. (Paska, 2022, p. 231).

An important method of the state security agencies’ struggle with “Ukrainian nationalists” was the implementation of “preventive measures”. Their task was to “re-educate” a person who had not yet had time to commit “criminal” actions. Thus, in 1967 – 1969 they “prevented” 6,764 people. “They stopped the foundation of 332 anti-Soviet organizations, which included 1,360 people. Of these, 116 were youth groups with 537 participants” (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0981, pp. 17–18).

Thus, Volyn region KGB learned that the 26-year-old head of the village library, Oleksiy Pinchuk, tried to involve his former classmates – Yarmolchuk, Tomchuk and the others – in the creation of a youth nationalist group. His task was to renew the struggle for independent Ukraine. On May 13, 1967, the secretary of Lutsk district committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, representatives of the collective farm party organization and the village council held a “preventive conversation” with O. Pinchuk. Explaining the motives for his actions, the latter stated that he hated the Soviet government because of his difficult financial situation. He observed the unprofessionalism and abuses of the collective farm management. In addition, a teacher at Lutsk Pedagogical Institute, Ivashchenko, who was arrested in 1965 for anti-Soviet agitation, had a great influence on him. O. Pinchuk “fully admitted his guilt, asked for forgiveness and promised to change” (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 0981, p. 23).

In January of 1975, the state security agencies received information about the existence of the nationalist youth group “Golden Four” in the village of Surazh, Shumsky district, Ternopil region, which had firearms at its disposal. It was found out that in the summer of 1973 it was founded by an 18-year-old local resident, the Komsomol member Volodymyr Matsiuk. The group was joined by 15- and 16-year-old students of Surazh school – Vasyl Maniak, Mykhailo Yakymchuk, Mykhailo Diachykhyn, and Ihor Shvets. After V. Matsiuk moved to the town of Pershotravneve, Donetsk region, where he got a job as a senior economist at the district finance department, they were led by V. Maniak. They searched for abandoned OUN and UPA hideouts. They found a carbine, a rifle, a homemade pistol and cartridges with which they practiced shooting in the forest. The group did not plan to carry out any more active actions. Only once V. Maniak allegedly suggested the teenagers killing a local resident A. Yakymchuk, who participated in the liquidation of the OUN members, including his relatives. Given the minor nature of the guilt, the KGB decided not to prosecute the members of the youth group. On March 14, 1975, their weapons were confiscated and a “preventive conversation” was held. All the detainees assured that they would not do anything like that in the future. (SSA SSU, f. 16, c. 1043, pp. 29–30).

Conclusions. As we can see, the political thaw that began in the mid-1950s contributed to the emergence of a number of opposition youth organizations and groups in the Ukrainian SSR, among which the Ukrainian National Front, the Organization of Ukrainian Youth of Galicia, and underground student groups in universities in Kyiv, Lviv, and other cities of the Republic occupied a prominent place. Their protest activities focused on distributing leaflets with anti-Soviet content, underground publications of the OUN and UPA, *samvydav*, defending the national rights of the Ukrainian people, civil liberties, condemning the policy of the imperial centre aimed at the Russification of the Ukrainian people, denying its history, traditions, and culture, as well as considering ways to leave the USSR and gain Ukraine’s independence.

The reaction to their activities was political repression by the state security agencies, which took judicial and extrajudicial forms, and used the harsh sanctions provided for by the Criminal Code.

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