Ukrainian Literary Dissent: Background, Expectations, Results

Abstract

The aim of the study was to discuss Ukrainian literary dissent as a component of the socio-cultural phenomenon of the Sixties – the national revival of the 1960s and 1970s in Ukraine and the Resistance Movement under the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union. The objective was to reflect on the phenomenon of Ukrainian literary dissent in the second half of the twentieth century in the light of the modus operandi/concept of Freedom. Historical and literary, comparative and historical, receptive and aesthetic, on top of typological methods are tools for understanding the Ukrainian literary dissent of the 1960s and 1970s in Ukraine in its morphological dimension. Personalities of the Ukrainian literary dissent included Ihor Kalynets, Hryhorii Kochur, Yurii Lytvyn, Valerii Marchenko, Taras Melnychuk, Mykhailo Osadchyi, Vasyl Ovsiienko, Mykola Rudenko, Yevhen Sverstiuk, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Vasyl Stus, Oleksa Tykhyi, Les Taniuk, Mykola Kholodnyi, and others.

The basis for the formation and existence of Ukrainian literary dissent (general historical, historical and cultural, mental, ontological) in the context of the Sixties as a “synergistic phenomenon” was discussed by Liudmyla Tarnashynska.
Worldview, philosophical, socio-cultural manifestations of Ukrainian literary dissent were literary aspects of the human rights movement (literary and artistic, rhetorical and journalistic, literary and critical).

The existence of Ukrainian self-publishing was a special form of the Resistance Movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, as well as an alternative component of the literary process of this period (Ivan Dziuba, Iryna Zhylenko, Sviatoslav Karavanskyi, Roman Korogodskyi, Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska, Leonid Pliushch, Mykola Rudenko, Yevhen Sverstiuk, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Vasyl Stus, and others). Contribution of literary dissidents included the activities of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (Oles Berdnyk, Yuuri Lytvyn, Valerii Marchenko, Mykola Rudenko, Vasyl Stus).

The activity of the Ukrainian literary dissent is projected into the plane of Freedom and Rebellion in the socio-historical, mental, genetic, and metaphysical planes were social freedom as a socio-political struggle; personal freedom as an existential confrontation; and creative freedom as a metaphysical rebellion. Presentation of the activities/works of Mykola Rudenko, Ivan Svitlychnyi, and Vasyl Stus as key figures of Ukrainian literary dissent follows.

**Keywords**

Ukrainian literary dissent, sixties, freedom, rebellion, historical and cultural context

From the karmic laws prescribed many thousands of years ago in the Vedas to the latest achievements of modern physics, the law of correspondence between action and counteraction remains unchanged. The angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection, a crime committed affects a future birth in a new capacity, a disturbed living system tends towards balance, heterostasis. A felled tree prefers to fall on the woodcutter. Droughts are followed by heavy rains, frosts and repressions by climatic and political thaws (Pokalchuk, 2011, p. 150).
The national revival of the 1960s and early 1970s in Ukraine is a regularity, one of the manifestations of permanent renaissances, logical from the point of view of the basic laws of world development. This socio-cultural phenomenon, a “synergistic phenomenon” (Liudmyla Tarnashynska), has been recorded in history as the Sixties (including the literary Sixties).

Like any extraordinary fact, it is impossible to explain the Sixties by external causes alone (economic, historical, socio-political, and sociocultural). It is worth looking at it from the perspective of ontological grounds. In this way, a set of motives will be activated in order to fully comprehend the Sixties in its heterogeneity.

The changes at different levels and in different forms that took place in Ukraine in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated the existence of intellectual and spiritual potential that had not been lost during the previous decades (30–50 stagnant years) of particularly brutal actions on the part of the Stalinist regime aimed at leveling the Ukrainian national identity.

The Sixties as a historical structure was a living dynamic reality with recognizable (albeit blurred) chronological boundaries and events recorded in time. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956 marked the beginning of the de-Stalinization process. It was the so-called Khrushchev Thaw. Stereotypes in domestic and foreign policy were being destroyed, in particular, in the cultural sphere as an important part of any state system.

The events and personalities united by the time factor were incorporated into the structure of existence, where the literary and artistic element began to manifest its formative and meaning-filling function. Obviously, this was due to the fact that it was the writers who operated with one of the most effective and powerful forces – the word, with an adequate awareness of its impact on a person. In the conditions of the 1960s and 1970s in Ukraine, the word was practically the only weapon in the struggle against the arbitrariness of the totalitarian regime, which, having liberalized somewhat, remained essentially repressive and inhumane, as it was in the times of Joseph Stalin. “Whatever is said well by anyone belongs to me.” This well-known statement by Seneca explains very
accurately the ability of words/language to form ideas and beliefs that will later form the basis of a worldview and become an internal need to follow a doctrine, to defend it, sometimes even at the cost of one’s own life.

Verbal combat has long been a way of fighting for the truth, of gaining an advantage (or even a complete victory) over an opponent. The agonistic factor of the ideological struggle (the battle of views and worldviews) that unfolded in the realm of words is very important, because the verbal formulation, a clearly, reasonably, convincingly formulated concept, provides the spontaneous, impulsive, naturally instinctive movement of existentialists towards freedom a complete, organized state.

The resistance of the Sixties began as a cultural movement. The arsenal of the resistance included celebrations of the anniversaries of famous figures of Ukrainian culture, or rallies near the monument to Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv. One form of dissent was letters of appeal. Their authors were mostly representatives of the writing community, including Yevhen Sverstiuk and Vasyl Stus. The letter entitled “A Site in Battle or Massacre” (1969), addressed to the Vitchyzna magazine and the editorial board of the Literaturna Ukraina (concerning the government’s attitude towards literary workers, written by V. Stus).

V. Stus sent another letter to the Presidium of the Writers’ Union of Ukraine, with copies to the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (ccpu) and the editorial board of the Vsesvit magazine in which he defended the convicted Sviatoslav Karavanskyi and others and denounced the Soviet government for depriving artists and scientists of their freedoms and for failing to observe the laws of democracy. The letter, along with others, formed the basis of Stus’s court case. In total, during 1965–1972, Stus wrote 10 documents, the content of which was defined at the time as anti-Soviet; the legal qualification was slander of the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (cpsu) and the Soviet government in the field of national politics, culture, and everyday life; actions aimed at undermining and weakening Soviet power.

He was sentenced on the basis of Article 62 p. 1 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (cc of the ussr) to
imprisonment in a strict regime labor colony for five years with three years’ deportation. Stus’s “last word”, dated September 2, 1972, is significant for at least two reasons: 1) as a document that testifies to Stus’s attempt to find an understanding with the authorities by appealing to justice and humanity; 2) as a confirmation that Stus’s main demand was freedom, including creative freedom.

The Resistance Movement was born and developed among intellectuals, largely among artistic youth, who preferred late modernism to the method of socialist realism. “Let me work for literature!” (Stus, 2019, p. 137). The need for freedom of creativity within the framework of the socialist system transformed into the need to dismantle it as a machine hostile to democratic principles, one of oppression and canceling of the individual.

Ihor Kalynets, Hryhorii Kochur, Yurii Lytvyn, Valerii Marchenko, Taras Melnychuk, Mykhailo Osadchyi, Mykola Rudenko, Yevhen Sverstiuk, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Vasyl Stus, Oleksa Tykhyi, Les Taniuk, and Mykcola Kholodnyi are dissident writers who, despite the circumstances of the socio-political plan, in the struggle against the criminal communist system, realized the right to freedom in all aspects – as a natural need of a free person, the need to be. Erich Fromm states that prerequisites of the principle of being are: independence, freedom and the presence of a critical mind. Its main characteristic feature is activity, but not external activity in the sense of employment, but internal activity, which means the productive use of one’s human potential. To be active means to let all the abilities, talents, and the wealth of human endowments manifest themselves. (Fromm, 2014, p. 100). The Soviet regime blocked activity, driving artists into the only acceptable channel of the artificial method of socialist realism, imposing ideological patterns on creative thought, turning a living aesthetic organism into dead flesh.

There is no human being outside of freedom, especially when it comes to an artist. Freedom is a necessity, a guarantee of talent development. There must be social freedom. If there is no such freedom, then a social struggle for freedom comes into play, which was demonstrated by a part of the creative intelligentsia of Ukraine in the late 1960s and 70s. This went down in history as Ukrainian literary dissent.
Historically and culturally, freedom is a variable category and is determined by

the type of civilization, local culture; subculture; culturally determined modes of discursive practices; worldview or the multiplicity of worldviews, etc. However, there is always at least a narrow strip of immanently personal determination (beyond the social; beyond the historically and culturally determined) (Kis, 2019, p. 3).

They usually focus on external cultural and historical factors as the root causes. “We often forget, unfortunately, that freedom as an ontic foundational structure; as a process; as the motivating forces of human nature; as a factor of creativity and active life; as a high Goal is one of the primary sources of the human in man (we are not talking about man as a species, but about each individual)” (Kis, 2019, p. 33).

Each of the representatives of the Ukrainian literary dissent fundamentally chose freedom as himself and himself as freedom in the field of infringement of rights and realized his situation, illuminated by specific goals. Two horizons coincided: the horizon of one’s own expectations and aspirations and the horizon of the national need to preserve national identity. The political Soviet system chose repression, destruction, demoralization—the whole set of dictatorial, inhumane means aimed at eliminating the human in man and turning him into an obedient, thoughtless, passive social unit. The dissident’s consciousness was based on the intentions to affirm his “doom to freedom” and to realize this givenness. “Freedom is the freedom to choose, not the freedom not to choose. Indeed, not to choose is to choose not to choose” (Sartre, 2001, p. 659). The quality of consciousness as “pure freedom” (Sartre) is determined by the presence of fear, devotion, and responsibility in their, so to speak, quantitative proportion and intensity of expression. “... I am absolutely free and absolutely responsible for my situation. But I am free only in a situation”, Jean-Paul Sartre states (Sartre, 2001, p. 695).

The spirit manifests itself only through the body. Freedom is manifested through the specific choice of a particular person in specific conditions. The individual coefficient of hostility/friendliness to a person becomes a trigger for the release of the energy of freedom.
If we move from the social to the personological level and look into the abyss of our souls, where true motivations are born, we will see the same pure energies of acceptance and reciprocity, flawless in their simplicity, which, rising to the light of consciousness, acquire personal meanings of defeat and retribution. Justice, which in the social sense has always been the highest dimension of ethics, is the same retribution, ennobled by the common consent of those who seek it (Pokalchuk, 2011, p. 152).

The author builds a conceptual framework that reveals the meaning of civic duty and the creative position of Ukrainian literary dissent. These are freedom, resistance/rebellion, choice, justice, and responsibility. In today’s information space, in the discourse of the consciousness of a modern person who is living in the world of digital technologies, in a society with an industrial dominance, social and political criteria for assessing freedom prevail. However, a person belongs to freedom even before he or she realizes it. The instinct of freedom is what we can call it. Thus, the intention to realize one’s potential for freedom has both ontological and phylogenetic roots; it is programmed into a person, an innate quality that awaits its time and place.

Market and consumer consciousness can block the way to freedom forever. A small part of humanity has managed to overcome the socio-political boundary of the phenomenon of freedom in practice. One of them is the dissident writer V. Stus. “Is Ukraine under occupation? – No, it is not! I am free – and therefore Ukraine is free, because it is in me…” (Stus, 1992, p. 3). Understanding and experiencing freedom (the energem of Selfhood and Self-reliance – according to R. Kis) “... is conditioned by the relation of the concept of freedom and its very axiological significance to the horizons of those ultimate meanings (horizons of hopes – goals – values) that are inherent in a particular interpreter; a connoisseur of freedom, or the so-called “freedom fighter” (Kis, 2019, p. 35).

The position of V. Stus, formulated even before his first arrest in a self-review – a response to Yevhen Adelheim (a reviewer of V. Stus’s “Winter Trees”). “… my appeals are global, not some kind of narrow time, regime, etc. (Stus, in: Stus, 2004, p. 224).
In unison with this statement is the poem “Tsia piesa pochalasia vzhe davno” [“This Play Has Been Running for a Long Time”] by V. Stus from his collection Veselyi tsventar [The Merry Cemetery]. The poem holds two worlds on the verge of collision: the historical and the metaphysical. It testifies to the time of social (Soviet) pathologies, marasmus, socialist idiocy, and at the same time appeals to the “original absurdity” (Søren Kierkegaard) and the original eternal freedom to choose a role in one’s own play, which began long ago and has not yet ended.

V. Stus is a unique figure in world literature and practice in the struggle for human rights. He is unique in his consistency, the strength of his convictions on a maximalist moral, ethical, and existential scale. Artists usually like masks in the sense that their lifestyle, their behavioral patterns of everyday life differ, often quite significantly, from what is meant by the concept of the hero in their work. V. Stus was one of those rare creative types: there was not the slightest distance between him as a person and his poetic stance. The “last word” of V. Stus (the situation of his first arrest), according to his own testimony, brought relief: he paid the last tribute to his socio-historical self, while still appealing to the justice of the Soviet government. “I expect justice from you, not mercy” (Stus, op. cit: Sprava Vasylia Stusa, 2019, p. 138).

The remnants of Stus’s faith dissipated during the trial. The journey beyond the line began, when Stus “... by word and deed became a hero” (Sverstiuk, 2009, p. 302). The formation of a myth in the sense of a clear vision of the great began. “Vasyl Stus – mystyk” [“Vasyl Stus – a mystic”] (Sverstiuk, 2009, p. 302). The mystical experience of “self-fulfillment” (Stus) of this ethical, aesthetic, civic maximalist impresses with the depth of immersion in the element of freedom, and surprises with spiritual stoicism.

Hoidaietsia vechora zlamana vit,
i synniu tiazhkoiu v osinnii pozhezhi
mii dukh basamanyt. Kinchylisia stezhi:
nam svit ne nalezhyt – bovvanom stoit.
Shalena vohnenna doroha kypyt
[A broken branch sways at night
and with the blue of the autumn fire
my spirit is stricken.
The paths are dead-ended:
The world does not belong to us – it stands like an idol.
The mad fiery road is boiling] (Stus, 1999, p. 27).

Stus’s experience of the movement towards freedom and the freedom he realized is recorded in his books *Chas tvorchosti* [*The Time of Creativity*] and *Palimpsesty* [*Palimpsests*] on top of his letters. This is the tragic luxury of *being yourself* in the tone of “hanging into death” (Stus), the limit of states and actions. When Stus was briefly released from prison after serving his first sentence, he completed the second version of *Palimpsesty*, a conceptual book that showed both his duty to Ukraine and his lofty approach to the Absolute.

The freedom of one’s own choice with the uniqueness of the experience of accompanying states, analogous to the poetry of V. Stus poetry is more fully presented in his lyrics than in his declarations, documents, and *Taborovy zoshchyt* [*Camp Notebook*]. Thus, it is confirmed that freedom, on the one hand, is an expression of will, conscious effort, moral and ethical asceticism (cutting off everything that can be called circumstances, that justify weakness, conformism, and apostasy). On the other hand, it is a generic, metaphysical basis, inherited patterns of honor, conscience, and dignity. It is not without reason that the psychiatric examination to which V. Stus was subjected, which showed his “pathological honesty”. The psychological constitution of V. Stus is unique, even taking into account that every person is unique. Semen Gluzman, a well-known Ukrainian dissident, professional psychiatrist, and cellmate of V. Stus, wrote in his book *Sketches from Memory, or Memoirs of a Prisoner* (in Russian), wrote about the mental health of V. Stus: “Even then, in the cell, I realized that fate and the KGB had connected me with a man of amazing sincerity and equally amazing vulnerability. He obviously did not know how to deceive, did not want to learn how. A tall and handsome young man, he managed to preserve in his soul the ability inherent in children: not to hide his feelings. For him, good and evil, beauty and ugliness were absolute categories” [italics mine – H. Ya.]
Observations by Gluzman as a psychiatrist, revealing Stus’s character and innate qualities, were as follows: “... he was always direct and sincere. He always called what was evil, evil. He was not manipulative, nor did he know how to be so ... He could not, and did not want to, adapt to ... dirt, primarily moral dirt, to drunkenness, fights, swearing ... a man without skin, who was acutely aware of falsity, lies, and other people’s pain. He tolerated his own pain more easily” [italics mine – H. Ya.]. (Gluzman, 2012, p. 163). Olha Punina wrote a study about Stus’s psychotype (Punina, 2022).

Freedom in the entire spectrum of meanings is the structuring enzyme of Stus’s personality. Knowing how the human world is organized, in particular, its totalitarian, autocratic models, which monopolized and “confiscated” the topic of freedom, replacing it with a factor of survival and degradation of the moral person, including an artist, one can only imagine what it cost Stus to keep standing tall. Freedom as justice. Those who take away freedom deserve retribution. If it is a political regime and not an individual, the confrontation takes on the scale of civil resistance. This is a tragic scale under any circumstances, in which individual pain is sublimated into collective pain, or even the space of the “collective unconscious” (K. G. Jung – psychoanalyst, psychologist, philosopher of culture), which has a universal nature, is a manifestation of the suprapersonal, the sphere of archetypes (Jung, 2014).

The highest freedom cannot be realized in any other way than through rebellion. Absolute independence, which Stus presented to the world, is an act of rebellion. “And the Ukrainian Don Quixote cannot miss the question: ‘Independence of the artist...’” (Sverstiuk, 2009, p. 312), as well as with the existential need to punish the criminal (the political regime), to expose its crime. For this purpose, the most radical method is chosen – a riot, which in the conditions of the time was equivalent to death, if not physical, then spiritual. The rebel is always a tragic figure. The categories that connote the state of the rebel are limit, excess, victim, suffering, death, and freedom. V. Stus synthesized the metaphysical and historical manifestations of rebellion.

Viktor Frankl, professor of neurology and psychiatry, founder of the method of logotherapy, former prisoner of Auschwitz, Dachau
and other concentration camps, observes in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*:

The basis for any predictions would be represented by biological, psychological or sociological conditions. Yet one of the main features of human existence is the capacity to rise above such conditions, to grow beyond them. Man is capable of changing the world for the better if possible, and of changing himself for the better if necessary” [cursive mine – H. Ya.] (Frankl, 2019, p. 140).

Frankl believes that “freedom is only the reverse aspect of a whole phenomenon, the face of which is responsibility” (Frankl, 2019, p. 141). Ukrainian dissidents realized the basic human need to be free and responsible. V. Stus, due to the peculiarities of his psychotype, stood out even among like-minded people, comrades in the struggle, who had years of imprisonment and other experiences behind them: Yu. Lytvyn, O. Tykhyi, Levko Lukianenko, V. Ovsienko, Mykhailo Horyn, Mart Niklus, Balis Haiauskas, Semen Skalych, and Ashot Navasardian. Stus noted moderation in resisting the regime even in these “honored veterans” of the human rights movement. “High intransigence, that is what Stus is ... This is a rare type of person who is not from this world ... this is the loneliness of an outstanding person, who constantly defends his right to be himself” (Sverstiuk, 2009, p. 316–317). Writer and literary critic Volodymyr Bazylevskyi, in his reflections on the Sixties, noted that this phenomenon was:

... evolutionary and revolutionary with an increase in the latter. A generation’s rebellion? No, it was resistance. Including within the limits of what was permissible. A rebellion in this capacity is no longer a rebellion. The synonyms for this lexeme are uprising and rebellion. Although we can talk about the rebellion of loners ... or about outbreaks of rebellion ... The rebel is Stus. But he is a spiritual organism of almost monolithic alloy ... The figure is unique because it is not to be imitated ... The uniqueness of Stus is also his unique relationship with death (Bazylevskyi, 2014, p. 6).
... pomerty, aby zhyty
shchob isnuvannia vidslonyla smert.
... Storch holovoiu v smert, ne zhdavshy cherhy,
shchob i ne vidaty tebe, strapatyi
otruinyi svite ...

[... to die in order to live
so that existence may be eclipsed by death.
[...]
Stoop headlong into death without waiting in line,
so that I don’t betray you, the suffering
poisonous world ... ] (Stus, 2008, pp. 128–129).

Stus, following the “road of pain”, made “transcendence to the transcendent” (Kost Moskalets) the content of his existence, filled his “death-existence” and “life-death” with emotions of extreme states, which is reflected in the poet’s glossary. The scale of Stus’s personality encompasses all possible dimensions of the human self, synthesizes all experiences (the human palimpsest), and represents absolute freedom. This is reminiscent of Lesia Ukrainka.

It was this relationship with death that prompted the poet to commit the most radical acts in prison, showing persistent systemic disobedience to prison guards and opposition to the arbitrariness of the prison administration. In an address to the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Stus makes a statement: “... I no longer consider it possible to remain a citizen of the USSR” (Stus, op. cit: Sprava Vasylia Stusa, 2019, p. 158). On August 28, 1985 (his second prison term), Stus went on an indefinite dry hunger strike in protest. Earlier, after returning to Kyiv after 5 years of imprisonment and 3 years of deportation, Stus, despite the threat that such an act posed to him, became a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (UHG) (1979).

On November 9, 1976, Ukrainian dissident writer Mykola Rudenko held a press conference for foreign journalists at the apartment of Russian human rights activist Andrei Sakharov (nuclear physicist, 1975 Nobel Prize winner), where he announced the creation of the UHG. It was a non-government organization. “... The novelty of this
phenomenon was that for the first time Ukrainian patriotic intellectuals spoke out not in the underground, but openly, at the top of their voices, contrary to the official ideology, threats, without fear of imprisonment or reprisals. This was a manifestation of courage” (Dysydenty, 2021, p. 213). Ukrainian Helsinki activists, without differentiation into writers and non-writers included O. Tykhyy, L. Lukianenko, V. Stus, Vitaliy Kalynychenko, Ivan Kandyba, O. Berdnyk, M. Horyn, Yu. Lytvyn, V. Marchenko, Mykola Horbal, Petro Ruban... The УНН had 41 members throughout its existence. Four (O. Tykhyy, Yu. Lytvyn, V. Stus, V. Marchenko) died in prison.

Regarding such an outlier phenomenon as the УНН, given the cruelty and cynicism of the Soviet regime, which monitored and eliminated all manifestations that threatened it, it is worth recalling Nietzsche’s understanding of history as events that break in and manifest themselves in regimes or institutions, asserting the irrationality of the formation of a mental structure, that is, the presence of things that go beyond external influence. On the other hand, again according to Nietzsche’s concept, there is the fact of will as a conscious choice. One does not contradict the other. In this context, it is worth mentioning Dmytro Dontsov and his study Poetka ukrainskoho risordhimenta (Dontsov, 2010) about Lesia Ukrainka, who, incidentally, along with Shevchenko, became the object of attention of the Sixties in their desire to revive Ukrainian culture, the Ukrainian language and history, and the Ukrainian spirit. D. Dontsov operates with the categories of “active courage”, “civic duty”, “bravery”, “the morality of activism”, and “ascetic ecstasy” (this is especially true of Stus), along with “the pathos of struggle”. A highly developed sense of dignity and law (the idea of virtus), the ethics of activism, moral heroism, irrational, archetypal will are the parameters set by the УНН, which demonstrated a powerful surge of spirit and became, as L. Lukianenko states, “the conscience of the Ukrainian nation”. The Ukrainian national interest was integrated into the context of the confrontation between the totalitarian USSR and the democratic West, and placed on an international legal basis, as M. Rudenko put it. (Rudenko, in: Dysydenty, 2021, p. 222). The human rights movement in the form of the УНН has once again confirmed that it is organic to Ukraine and that it is not enough to
explain it by economic, socio-political, cultural and historical factors alone. Passionate energy was activated, personal responsibility for the state was unlocked, and the postulate of self-sufficiency of irrational will, which goes against the so-called common sense (practicality in terms of adaptation for biological survival), was realized. Against the background of the socio-political circumstances of the 20th century, the activities of the UHH can be defined as a moment of mental enlightenment; a moment when the historical fills the ancient channel of the archetype of freedom with new meanings.

Events of this magnitude are characterized by the content of the energies of liminality and renewal. We are talking about liminality in its broad ideological and cultural manifestation. “The concept of ‘liminality’ embodies the idea of transition as a psychological and social state of the individual and society” (Bortnik, 2023, p. 1). M. Rudenko “… experienced the effect of the hourglass turning over, after which the veil fell from his eyes” (Kovaliv, 2023). M. Rudenko (18.12. 1920 – 1.04.2004) – poet, writer, philosopher. He was a successful communist writer, secretary of the Party Committee of the Writers’ Union of Ukraine (SPU), and a leading dissident, the head of the UHH, who, under the total despotism of the Soviet government, was not afraid to define the treatment of Ukraine as genocide. It was heroism, an act of civilian courage. It is important to emphasize that M. Rudenko voluntarily abandoned his Soviet official comfort in his mature years. Rudenko was 55 years old when he was expelled from the Writers’ Union. At the time of his arrest, he was 56.

M. Rudenko had to demonstrate not only civilian courage. He was a political officer in the blockaded Leningrad and was seriously wounded. An explosive bullet tore out a piece of his body in the sacral region of his back. It was a lifelong wound. Even the camp medical commission determined Rudenko’s disability to be of the second group (7 years in a strict regime camp and 5 years in deportation).

After treatment, he returned to the front and fought until the end of the war. Demobilization and literary work. First collection of poems (1947) by Rudenko and Stus have something in common: at a certain stage of their work, the word became a factor in the formation of their personality. The intense work of the consciousness
caused by contact with the artistic word led to the creation of texts within which the author emerged, different from his previous self. It was already an author who had grown up to himself. In V. Stus’s case, such a text was “Chas tvorchosti”, in M. Rudenko’s – his popular science work Slidamy kosmichnoi katastrofy. Z bloknota peysmennickogo [Traces of a space disaster. From the writer’s notebook] and his sci-fi nove, Charivnyi bumeranh [The magic boomerang]. As the writer himself put it, “... I had to study a lot to write Slidamy katastrofy and Charivnyi bumeranh: read scientific literature, consult, take lessons from scientists in various fields, observe life and think, think. Gradually, I began to feel the infinity, to feel the whole visible world and myself as part of it” (Rudenko, 1978b, p. xi). The only difference is in the conditions, the length of consciousness changes, and the modes of perception of reality. In the case of V. Stus, breakthrough to the sources of archetypal knowledge, to the center of being, to the freedom of his “self” self, occurred during his preliminary investigation (in solitary confinement). Thanks to the intensity of the experience, “... one of the most formidable and beneficent archetypes, the archetype of the Savior, was awakened” (Moskalets, 2014, p. 152).

The nature of such knowledge is insight. For M. Rudenko, changes were more evolutionary in nature, since he was on the outside, in, so to speak, normal conditions. However, the result is the same: access to the transcendent. The density of thought, the degree of emotion and thought led to a different relationship not only with the world of things, but also with the word itself, shifting the word from a secondary position of describing the surrounding to the first place – to be a self-sufficient powerful force. In the word, through the word, thanks to the word, both Stus and Rudenko began to move toward “the freedom of free existence” (Kovaliv, 2023). Both dissident writers presented consciously implemented programs to overcome the Iron Curtain in both socio-political and literary terms, freeing their work from the pernicious ideological influence and the poverty of socialist realist standards in art.

V. Stus and M. Rudenko demonstrated ideological, political, and spiritual solidarity, which manifested itself in affirming the value of Ukrainian culture and in integrating Ukrainian artistic words into the world’s elite artistic space. The word “worshipper”, M. Rudenko,
by his intellectual and creative potential, belonged to the type of writer-scientist who based his texts on both emotion and thought based on scientific facts. “It is difficult to overestimate the greatness of Rudenko’s feat”, Petro Hryhorenko, a Ukrainian dissident, major general, and member of the UHH noted (Hryhorenko, in: Rudenko, 1978b, p. XXII). M. Rudenko and his associates preserved the dignity of their people and demonstrated their will to independence, creating the ground for the struggle of future generations to ensure that continuity was not broken.

According to the observation of Ihor Kachurovskyi (Ukrainian poet, prose writer, translator, literary critic), it is impossible “… not to notice the Sun worship, and this is an important part of Mykola Rudenko’s worldview” (Kachurovskyi, 1978b, p. 354). A man of a wide range of self, a thoughtful observer, a multi-thematic and multi-genre writer, Rudenko showed that he had matured into freedom and got rid of the restrictions not only of the political and regime plan, but also of the psychological and spiritual plan, which manifested itself in the meaningful identification of himself as a “space bird” that can fly around the universe, overcoming the force of earthly gravity. M. Rudenko, according to his own feelings, knew and realized the unique ability of a person (in particular, an artist) to simultaneously be in the physical and metaphysical dimensions and to cognize them. Again, there is a parallel with Stus, whose personality as a poet and the lyrical person of his poems are identical. In addition, Stus as a person for himself and a person for the world also merge (the pain of the other, the pain of Ukraine, the pain of the planet – his own pain).

Rudenko’s documented activities for the benefit of Ukraine and Humanity suggest that there are no differences between him as a poet and him as an individual. Rudenko’s scope is not only Ukrainian. The horizons of his thinking are cosmic. Rudenko envisions a conversation with the Sun:

Sontse!...
Ya mushu pohovoryty
z tobou vidverto,
Yak vchyla maty.
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Ukrainian Literary Dissent: Background, Expectations, Results

… Sontse-Brate,-
Vilni,
Rozkovani,
Nepokirni…
… pidem po svitu…
… Ye dosyt voli,
Ye dosyt neba,
Ye dosyt syly,
Shchob svit trymaty

[O, Sun! 
I need to talk 
with you frankly, 
as my mother taught me.

... 
Sun-Brother. 
Free, 
Unchained, 
Unfettered. 
Let us go forth into the world...

... 
There is enough freedom, 
There is enough sky, 
There is enough strength 
To hold the world together] (Rudenko, 1978b, p. 54–55).

The Metafizychna poema [Metaphysical Poem] by Rudenko in 5 parts is impressive. The titles speak for themselves: “Nirvana”, “Pythagoras”, “Monad”, “Exit from Nirvana”, “Fortress of Light”. “Ya zhyv na dvokh planakh – u nebi y na zemli. Zemne tilo moie skhylialosia za pysmovym stolom. Dukhovne ‘ya” bulo tak wysoko, shcho zemni vibratsii ne mohly na noho vplynuty” [“I lived on two planes – in heaven and on earth. My earthly body was bent over my desk. The spiritual self was so high that earthly vibrations could not affect it” (Rudenko, 1978a).

Rudenko conducted conversations with the Sun and the Universe not only in the artistic plane. He continued to develop the idea of
Serhii Podolynskyi (physician, sociologist, economist, physicist) about the conservation and transformation of solar energy. With his analytical mind, Rudenko predicted the collapse of socialism based on economic calculations, in his scientific and journalistic works *Ekonomichni monology (Narysy katastrofichnoi pomylky)* (1978); *Gnosys i suchasnist (Arkhitektura Vsesvitu)* (1999); *Energiia progresu (Narysy z fizychnoi ekonomii)* (2004). [Economic Monologues (Essays on Catastrophic Error) (1978); Gnosis and Modernity (Architecture of the Universe) (1999); The Energy of Progress (Essays on Physical Economy) (2004)].

In his Economic Monologues, Rudenko dared to challenge the authority of Karl Marx and his theory of surplus value; he proved that this theory is in absolute contradiction with the laws of nature. Rudenko warned against consumerism, the cult of technocracy, and condemned the idea of a world proletarian revolution, as it was a path to the abyss. If we consider the time when the work was written, it will become clear why it was self-published.

Self-publishing (samyzdav) was the main infrastructure of the Resistance Movement in the 1960s and 1970s in Ukraine. The participants included Ivan Dziuba, Iryna Zhylenko, Roman Korohodskyi, Mykhaylyna Kotsiubynska, Vasyl Ovsienko, Leonid Plyushch, M. Rudenko, Ye. Sverstiuk, Ivan Svitlychnyi, V. Stus and others. The activities of samyzdav were an important component of the literary process of the 1960s and early 1970s. In an atmosphere of absurdity, total censorship, opportunism, and ideological layers destructive to the word, samyzdav demonstrated a commitment to truth, which in the conditions of Soviet rule meant struggle. “In the non-alternative space of the System, a person felt the potential power of his personal decision, his individual voice ... In the Sixties movement (as well as in existentialism), the category of conscience is inextricably linked to the category of freedom” (Pakhlovska, 2000, p. 70).

Samyzdav became not only a political but also an existential imperative, a manifestation of dignity and the intention of freedom as an authentic human attribute in the depths of a totalitarian system. Samyzdav is both a reaction to the objective processes of social life and a manifestation of a deeper desire for freedom as a necessity of the spiritual constitution of a person. Samyzdav “... became the
only possible ‘tribune’ in Ukraine to defend one’s aesthetic, literary, and civic positions” (Obertas, 2010, p. 55).

I. Svitlychnyi was the central figure, the “architect of the Sixties movement”, the “soul of samyzdav.” Svitlychnyi was a poet, translator, literary critic, and linguist. The banned texts of the Sixties (the collections “Winter Trees” and “Merry Cemetery” by V. Stus; poetry by Vasyl Symonenko, I. Kalynets, M. Rudenko, I. Svitlychnyi, etc.); works of fiction by predecessor writers, which were tabooed; later – topical political texts ([On the Trial of Pohruzhal'skyi] by Ye. Sverstiuk, [The Right to Live] by Yurii Badzio, [Internationalism or Russification] by Ivan Dziuba, [Chronicle of Resistance] by Valentyn Moroz, etc.); tape recordings – all of which were taken care of by I. Svitlychnyi with fanatical devotion. An informal leader of the Club of Creative Youth (KTM) (the center of the Sixties movement in Kyiv), he somehow became one of the same leaders in Zone 35 (one of the concentration camps in the Perm region). The samyzdav, logically, moved there as well, to this house of complete isolation from the world. Svitlychnyi remained a key figure in the recording, production, and dissemination of information of all kinds, from certificates to journalistic and literary texts. “… sobriety of judgment, ability to analyze the situation, a high sense of responsibility (responsibility for others, for those who take your word for it)” (Gluzman, 2012, p. 239), moral maximalism; physical aversion to meanness and cowardice; professionalism, erudition; combination of theoretical thinking, literary and critical, and poetic talent; aesthetic insight; panoramic coverage of literary life in Ukraine and professional orientation in the European literary process; congeniality in translations; responsibility and integrity in relation to graffiti and demagoguery, under no other circumstances would this have occurred – these are the qualities that ensured Svitlychnyi’s unconditional authority.

Formulated by S. Gluzman in his memoirs about Svitlychnyi, the word was resistance – a fundamental thesis conceptualized for the Sixties in general and, in particular, for literary dissent. In those conditions, the word was practically the only weapon, a “terrible weapon” (Gluzman) against totalitarianism. The word (and in its
artistic hypostasis, etc.) is information. Information is one of the most effective weapons, despite its delayed effect. The word changes consciousness, penetrates into its depths and determines/shapes the directions and parameters of a person’s intellectual and spiritual productivity.

In the fight against the KGB and the entire Soviet system in its Kafkaesque sense (moral degeneration, the cult of survival at any cost), the word was a powerful means of attack and defense. Svitlychnyi lived in words, lived in poetry, and taught others to breathe it.

Poety striliaiut rymamy!
Chekisty – iz revolveriv!
U sertse striliaiut.
Sertse – mishen dlia kul i dlia rym”

[Poets shoot rhymes.
Chekists shoot with revolvers.
They shoot at the heart.
The heart is a target for bullets and for rhymes alike] (Svitlychnyi, 1990, p. 88).

Svitlychnyi opposed the dictatorship of fear, orgies of cruelty and cynicism with his own credo, which he confirmed with his image and thinking:

U milionnykh mytiakh zhyty, yak v odnii.
Pyty, yak balzam terpku, pervynnu prawdu ...
Vse zhyytiia – kantata, vse – orhannyi Bakh

[To live in millions of moments as if in one.
To drink primary truth like bitter salve...
Weekdays are leap days.
Every day is Easter.
All life is a cantata, all is organ Bach] (Svitlychnyi, 1990, p. 96).
I. Svitlychnyi was a knight of honor and dignity. He was respected and feared even by his KGB supervisors and Perm “educators” in uniform. Svitlychnyi was loved and those who professed the same rules of dignity and freedom as he did needed his love. I. Svitlychnyi is an indisputable central figure of the Sixties and literary dissent. As a rule, Ukrainian literary dissidents, because they understood the nature and possibilities of the word in its most diverse hypostases, found themselves in key positions in the Sixties renaissance in Ukraine, and later in its dissident manifestation. Literary dissidents developed the concept of freedom and, in particular, the freedom of the artist and art. Most importantly, they confirmed it personally with their lives and work; they showed that freedom is not an ephemeral substance, not a theoretical postulate, but a real possibility and duty for everyone. It is simple and clear: man’s destiny is freedom. The word, as the highest achievement and privilege of the human world, helps to liberate from the socio-political collapse. Awareness of freedom and its possibilities is an amazing quality of meaningful existence and, obviously, it is an existential feature of the human species; something that is the basis for improvement both in the process of forming an individual and states, cultures, and civilizations.

The dissident movement, in particular, the Ukrainian dissident movement, and the Ukrainian literary dissident movement, in the specific historical time allotted to them, did not overcome the system (a Sisyphean duel), but they undermined it from within, shook its foundations, and the vibrations of their freedom-loving energy penetrated all social and mental structures, opening up social horizons to ontological depths. “... every fifth of the common sense and freedom of expression that was then regained was not easy, putting a person at every step before the problem of existential choice. And most importantly, it was a spiritual springboard for future development, for new thinking, for the liberation of the spirit”, states M. Kotsiubynska (Kotsiubynska, 2004, p. 7). Ukrainian literary dissidents showed that a person involves a choice and an action. The project of freedom is, on the one hand, a basic human project, and on the other hand, it is a specific, individual psychic and existential event for everyone. Ukrainian literary dissidence is a special project of rebellion/confrontation (historical and metaphysical;
socio-political and mental-ontological); a confirmation that the quality of the elite component of society is very important in state and cultural progress and it manifests itself in times of the most difficult trials; that victory over authoritarian regimes is possible – first at the level of active realization of the freedom of the self, and later by achieving the goals sought by the fighters for the freedom of entire nations.

Ukrainian literary dissent, experiencing freedom as the energy of rebellion, largely due to the realized potential of the word, inspired people with a powerful belief in the victory of truth.

**Bibliography**


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