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Christopher Gilley

# **THE 'CHANGE OF SIGNPOSTS' IN THE UKRAINIAN EMIGRATION**

A Contribution to the History of Sovietophilism in the 1920s

With a foreword by Frank Golczewski

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*This book is dedicated to my parents, Sheridan and Margaret Gilley, who encouraged my love of the past through repeated day trips to Hadrian's Wall.*



# Contents

	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	11
	<i>Glossary</i>	13
	<i>Foreword by Frank Golczewski</i>	17
	Introduction	
	Ukrainian Sovietophilism and the Problem of <i>Smenovekhovstvo</i>	19
1	Russian <i>Smenovekhovstvo</i>	35
	Overview	35
	<i>Smenovekhovstvo</i> and the Bolsheviks	54
	Conclusion	57
2	The Ukrainian Emigration: Roots, Contexts and Developments	59
	The Ukrainian Populist Heritage	59
	The Ukrainian Revolution	64
	The Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s	68
	The Ukrainian Lands under Polish Rule	75
	The Ukrainian Emigration	80
	Conclusion	94

3	Volodymyr Vynnychenko and the Foreign Group of the Ukrainian Communist Party	97
	Introduction	97
	Vynnychenko's Reassessment of the Ukrainian Revolution	100
	The Foreign Group of the UKP and <i>Nova Doba</i>	108
	Vynnychenko's Mission to Moscow and Kharkiv	118
	<i>Nova Doba</i> and the Impact of Vynnychenko's Return to the Emigration	137
	Vynnychenko and the Soviet Ukraine after the Closure of <i>Nova Doba</i>	150
	Conclusion	158
4	Mykhailo Hrushevskyy and the Foreign Delegation of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries	163
	Hrushevskyy and the UPSR	163
	The Creation of the Foreign Delegation of the UPSR	167
	<i>Boritesia-Poborete!</i>	174
	The Attempt to Legalise the UPSR	182
	Hrushevskyy's Return to the Ukraine	200
	Conclusion	218
5	The Change of Signposts in the Ukrainian Emigration	221
	The Growth of <i>Smenovekhovstvo</i> in Berlin	221
	The Ukrainian National Committee	226
	The Amnesty for Interned Petliurists	231
	Ivan Kobza and the Ukrainian Agrarian Democratic Party	242
	The Hrekov Group and the Creation of a Ukrainian <i>Nakanune</i>	246



	<i>Nova Hromada</i>	269
	Conclusion	287
6	West Ukrainian Sovietophilism	291
	Ievhen Petrushevych and the Government of the West Ukrainian People's Republic	292
	Émigré Military Organisations and Galician Internees	310
	Sovietophilism in the Western Ukraine	319
	The Union of Ukrainian Citizens in France	333
	Conclusion	348
7	The Immigration of East Galician Intellectuals to the Ukraine	351
	Mykhailo Lozynskyi	355
	Iuliiian Bachynskyi	370
	Antin Krushelnytskyi	379
	Conclusion	386
8	Ukrainian <i>Smenovekhovstvo</i> and the 'Turn to the Right'	389
	Conclusions	399
	The Development and Importance of Ukrainian Sovietophilism	399
	Russian and Ukrainian <i>Smenovekhovstvo</i>	413
	Appendix	421
	Biographical Details of Prominent Figures in the Ukrainian National Movement and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic	421
	Bibliography	439



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This book is dedicated to my parents, Sheridan and Margret Gilley, who encouraged my love of the past through repeated day trips to Hadrian's Wall.

## Glossary

- Borotbisty* – the left wing of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries.
- Central Rada – a body set up in 1917 which brought together different nationalist organisations in the Ukraine and developed into a form of revolutionary parliament.
- ChUHA – Red Ukrainian Galician Army: made up of members of the UHA who crossed over to the Bolsheviks during the civil war.
- GPU – State Political Directorate: the Soviet secret police; after the creation of the USSR, the GPUs in the republics were brought under the central control of the OGPU (Unified State Political Directorate).
- KP(b)U – Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine.
- KPSH – Communist Party of Eastern Galicia: precursor to the KPZU.
- KPZU – Communist Party of Western Ukraine.
- korenizatsiia* – policy of ‘indigenisation’, whereby the Bolsheviks sought to garner support among the non-Russian peoples by promoting non-Russian cultures and increasing the number of non-Russians in party and state structures.
- NEP – New Economic Policy: the economic policy which replaced ‘War Communism’ and aimed to improve the economic situation of the peasants.
- Nezalezhnyky* – Independentists: the left wing of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers’ Party, which later formed the UKP.
- OUN – Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists: right-wing nationalist organisation active in Poland and the emigration.
- POW – prisoner of war.
- RKP(b) – Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).

- RSFSR – Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic.
- RUP – Revolutionary Ukrainian Party: the first significant Ukrainian political party created in the Russian-ruled Ukraine.
- Selrob – Ukrainian Peasant-Worker Union: Communist front organisation in the Western Ukraine.
- Selsoiuz – Ukrainian Socialist Peasants' Union: West Ukrainian socialist party.
- Shevchenko Scientific Society (NTSh) – Ukrainian scholarly society founded in the nineteenth century in Galicia.
- smenovekhovstvo* – the movement in favour of supporting the Soviet regime among former opponents of the Bolsheviks; its adherents were known as *smenovekhovtsy* (the singular noun being *smenovekhovets*), and the associated adjective was *smenovekhovskii*.
- Socialists-Federalist – members of the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Federalists, a liberal, democratic party which had no interest in socialism.
- Socialists-Independentists – members of the Ukrainian Party of Socialists-Independentists, a small, nationalist party set up during the revolution.
- Sovnarkom – Council of People's Commissars: the highest executive and administrative body in the Ukraine.
- Spilka* – the Ukrainian Social Democratic Union, which was formed by Marxists disenchanted with the nationalist line of the RUP.
- SUHUF – Union of Ukrainian Citizens in France.
- TsK – Central Committee.
- UHA – Ukrainian Galician Army: the armed forces of the ZUNR.
- Ukrainian Democratic Agrarian Party – a conservative, democratic and nationalist party founded in 1917 in the Eastern Ukraine.
- UKP – Ukrainian Communist Party: also known as the *Ukapisty*.

- UNDO – Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance: a conservative, democratic party founded in 1925, which became the main legal Ukrainian party in inter-war Galicia.
- UNDP – Ukrainian National Democratic Party: Ukrainian nationalist party formed in Galicia before the First World War.
- UNR – Ukrainian People’s Republic: the Ukrainian state created from the Ukrainian lands ruled by the Romanovs.
- UNTP – Ukrainian National Labour Party: the successor to the UNDP formed in 1919.
- UPP – Ukrainian Party of Work: breakaway group from the UNDO of supporters of Ievhen Petrushevych.
- UPSR – Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries: peasant populist party in the Eastern Ukraine.
- USDP – Ukrainian Social Democratic Party: the Social Democratic Party in Galicia.
- USDRP – Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers’ Party: the Social Democratic Party in the Eastern Ukraine.
- USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- UVO – Ukrainian Military Organisation: the Ukrainian terrorist organisation which fought against the Poles in the 1920s.
- VUAN – All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences: the highest academic institution in the Soviet Ukraine.
- Vukopspilka – All-Ukrainian Association of Consumer Cooperative Organisations: Soviet central association of Ukrainian cooperatives.
- ZUNR – West Ukrainian People’s Republic: the Ukrainian state created in Eastern Galicia following the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy.





## Foreword

Christopher Gilley's doctoral thesis – upon which this monograph is based – fills a gap in the existing research on the history of the Ukraine in the interwar period. Whereas *smenovekhovstvo* is a well-known and thoroughly researched topic in Russian history, the subject of the return (or immigration) of Ukrainians into the USSR has received barely any attention, despite the prominence of the individuals involved.

Dr. Gilley achieves this not only by looking at the groups of 'returners' but also the general history of Sovietophilism. The Ukrainian historiography has often brushed over this latter aspect. Following the Second World War, in response to the Russification in the Ukraine and the persecution of nationalists, the Ukrainian emigration refused even to consider the possibility of a pro-Soviet position; they declared that only those on the 'right' were 'genuine' Ukrainians. In doing so, they succumbed to the comprehensive 'turn to the right' (Alexander Motyl) of the 1930s and failed to see that, until its revision in 1929, the Soviet policy of *korenizatsiia* really was attractive for Ukrainian émigrés and inhabitants of Polish Eastern Galicia. After all, those who went back could not have foreseen that almost all the Ukrainian returnees to the USSR would be killed in the 1930s.

Dr. Gilley divides the thought of the pro-Soviet émigrés into two periods. During the first phase (from 1919 to 1923), he argues that those who supported the Soviet version of a Ukrainian republic justified their position with ideological arguments based on a socialist or socialist-revolutionary worldview. The early returnees did not believe that social and national demands conflicted with one another. During the second stage, which began with the Entente's recognition of Polish sovereignty over Eastern Galicia and the introduction of *korenizatsiia* (i.e. from 1923 to 1933, the year in which the last returnee considered here went back), Sovietophilism became more widespread among Galicians, who saw a Ukrainian national state being created under Soviet aegis. They returned to the Soviet Union not due to 'ideological' but rather 'national' reasons. Because the USSR did not understand itself as a federation

of nation states, this motivation diametrically opposed the political perspective of the Soviet Union itself. Through this interpretation, Dr. Gilley implies that the Soviet classification of the returnees as dangerous – a fact which led to their murder in the 1930s – was entirely ‘logical’.

Of equal importance to these chronological distinctions is the geographical differentiation. Through his research in the Kyivan archives and above all his sophisticated reading of the journals and internal arguments of the ‘left-wing’ émigrés, Dr. Gilley has made an important contribution to the historical literature of a subject that has until now received insufficient consideration. In addition, he corrects the view that Prague was the centre of Ukrainian *smenovek-hovstvo*, arguing instead that Vienna occupied this position.

Finally, Dr. Gilley successfully substantiates his initial thesis that the Ukrainian version of this movement differed from its Russian counterpart in that the Ukrainians found it easier to accommodate themselves to the Soviet form of statehood. The Ukrainians had no experience of an alternative that had survived in the past. He argues convincingly that the Ukrainian returnees deserve far more attention than the Russians, suggesting that the role of the former in the early Soviet Ukraine requires further investigation.

In doing so, Dr. Gilley’s doctoral dissertation – which at first glance only presents an additional aspect of Soviet history – in fact serves as a further indication of the differences between Russian and Ukrainian perspectives in the Soviet period.

*Frank Golczewski*  
University of Hamburg