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# The Lives and Afterlives of a Soviet Misfit: Volodymyr Ivasiuk, the Emotional Crisis of Late Socialism and the Anti-Soviet Turn in Ukrainian Popular Culture

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This article examines how Soviet Ukrainian cultural artefacts acquired anti-Soviet meanings between the 1970s and the 1990s. It explores the life and posthumous commemoration of the pop composer Volodymyr Ivasiuk through the prism of the history of emotion. Although Ivasiuk promoted his Ukrainian-language music on Soviet radio and television in the 1970s, he turned into a symbol of Ukrainian resistance to Soviet rule after his premature death. The article frames this anti-Soviet turn in Ukrainian popular culture as a rebellion against state-sponsored emotional norms. In contrast to the more widely studied nonconformist circles, Ivasiuk's life and afterlives illuminate the experiences of misfits who tried but failed to find happiness and self-fulfilment within the boundaries of mainstream Soviet society. For a brief moment in the late 1980s, memories of Ivasiuk fuelled new visions of Ukrainian identity which underpinned attempts to push the limits of permissible emotional expression in the Soviet Union.

In May 1979, the body of the young composer Volodymyr Ivasiuk was discovered in a forest near the west Ukrainian town of Lviv. His death sent shockwaves through Soviet Ukrainian society, where Ivasiuk and his songs had acquired great popularity during the 1970s. While the local authorities declared the composer's death a suicide, stories about threatening phone calls and suspicious men following Ivasiuk around Lviv lent currency to the idea that he had in fact been murdered.<sup>1</sup> Although Ivasiuk promoted his Ukrainian-language pop on mainstream radio and television, he was later commemorated as a martyr for the Ukrainian cause who died at the hands of the Soviet regime. This article focuses on the history of emotions under late socialism to explain how Soviet Ukrainian cultural artefacts acquired anti-Soviet meanings between the 1970s and the 1990s.

Emotions were key to the legitimacy of the late Soviet regime. Whereas Stalinist literature had 'prescribed a narrow range of emotions' for the New Soviet Person,<sup>2</sup> Nikita Khrushchev presided over 'a fraught project to release anger, fear, guilt and shame connected to state terror in pursuit of catharsis and community integration'. In the 1950s and the 1960s, artists and writers effectively mobilised 'optimism, anxiety, gratitude and entitlement' to encourage citizens to engage with the socialist ideology.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Lepsha and Vasyly Semen, 'U moii smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu* 11 (1992); Ivan Lepsha, 'Sviato bez posviaty', *Kul'tura i Zhyttia*, 27 July 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Matt Lenoe, 'Emotions and Psychological Survival in the Red Army, 1941–42', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 22, 2 (2021), 323.

<sup>3</sup> Joy Neumeyer, 'Late Socialism as a Time of Weeping: The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Vladimir Vysotskii', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 22, 3 (2021), 515; Anatoly Pinsky, 'Soviet Modernity Post-Stalin: The State, Emotions, and Subjectivities', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, 2 (2015), 397–8; Nancy Condee, 'Cultural Codes of the Thaw', in William Taubman et al., eds., *Nikita Khrushchev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 166–70.

Although the most daring official literature explored painful emotions like anguish through the 1970s,<sup>4</sup> the Brezhnev era can be characterised as a time of renewed emotional repression. As Joy Neumeyer puts it, ‘Leonid Brezhnev’s apparatus encouraged a sentimental form of emotionality free of unsettling revelations’.<sup>5</sup> After the Prague Spring discredited party-led attempts to reform the system, Soviet and East European leaders no longer promised a bright communist future and instead built their legitimacy around the notion that life under socialism provided pathways to emotional ‘self-realisation’ (which they contrasted with the rat race of capitalist life and the ‘mass hysteria’ of dissent).<sup>6</sup> With the rise of television and international radio broadcasting, entertainment was a key means of promoting the idealised image of a happy and personally fulfilling life in the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Pop music shed its predominantly ‘civic’ character to explore more personal themes.<sup>7</sup>

Ivasiuk’s songs were part of the broader search for emotional self-realisation. They included jolly tunes about love and friendship. They also encompassed solemn ballads tackling grief and the broken heart which explored painful emotions within melodramatic conventions. As Susan Costanzo argues for the Soviet theatre in earlier decades, melodrama sat easily within Soviet public culture because it ‘resemble[d] Soviet socialist realism’. It offered clear models of what life should be, drawing stark boundaries between positive and negative protagonists and behaviours.<sup>8</sup> Like much of Soviet mainstream culture, Ivasiuk’s pop was melodramatic in the sense that it left little room for emotional complexity.

Unlike his music, Ivasiuk’s life and death were shrouded in ambiguity. The chasm between his art and image distinguished the composer from other famous outsiders in Soviet public culture. Vladimir Vysotskii, whose premature death inspired a mass outpouring of grief just over one year after Ivasiuk’s funeral, transcended Brezhnev-era emotional norms as he expressed ‘untameable despair’.<sup>9</sup> Like the poet Anna Akhmatova, whose carefully choreographed demeanour emphasised ‘an apartness from . . . those surrounding her’, Vysotskii ‘performed nonconformity’ and provided his devoted community of fans with ‘affirmation that their suffering and outsider stance were shared’.<sup>10</sup> Whereas Vysotskii and Akhmatova embraced their outsider personas, Ivasiuk was uncomfortable in his own skin. He made every effort to join the professional community of musicians but was never accepted into the Union of Composers, remaining an ‘amateur’ by Soviet standards. At the same time, in his ambition to conquer Soviet stages and mass media, Ivasiuk alienated members of subcultural groups who approached mainstream pop culture with indifference, irony or condescension.<sup>11</sup> Ivasiuk’s songs, as well as the narratives of his life crafted after his death, promoted values and behaviours to which the young composer never conformed. His music often celebrated young heterosexual love and his friends and relatives recalled him as a romantic equally in love with rural women and the natural

<sup>4</sup> Such emotions were often discussed in the context of past revolutionary struggles. Polly Jones, ‘The Fire Burns On? The Fiery Revolutionaries Biographical Series and the Rethinking of Propaganda in the Early Brezhnev Era’, *Slavic Review* 74, 1 (2015), 42.

<sup>5</sup> Neumeyer, ‘Late Socialism’, 515.

<sup>6</sup> Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010). The home-based medium of television helped define Soviet society with reference to the ‘emotional, interpersonal and ethical “atmospheres” that distinguished it from the capitalist West – the protagonists it celebrated were carefully selected to represent the ‘saintly’ qualities of love, compassion and harmony, with conflict and suffering clearly confined to the past. Christine Evans, ‘The “Soviet Way of Life” as a Way of Feeling: Emotion and Influence on Soviet Central Television in the Brezhnev Era’, *Cahiers du monde russe* 56, 2–3 (Apr.–Sept. 2015), 544, 558.

<sup>7</sup> David MacFadyen, *Red Stars: Personality and the Soviet Popular Song, 1955–1991* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 221, 243.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Costanzo, ‘Conventional Melodrama, Innovative Theater, and a Melodramatic Society: Pavel Kohout’s *Such a Love* at the Moscow University Student Theater’, in Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger, eds., *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 233–7.

<sup>9</sup> Neumeyer, ‘Late Socialism’, 516.

<sup>10</sup> Helena Goschillo, ‘Playing Dead: The Operatics of Celebrity Funerals or the Ultimate Silent Part’, in McReynolds and Neuberger, eds., *Imitations*, 294, 302; Neumeyer, ‘Late Socialism’, 514.

<sup>11</sup> On rock music fans’ perceptions of pop, see William Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 232.

beauty of the Carpathian Mountains. This image was undermined by Ivasiuk's erratic behaviour, the diagnosis of clinical depression and speculation as to why he never got engaged or married. In contrast to the more widely studied nonconformist circles, Ivasiuk's life and afterlives illuminate the experiences of misfits who tried and failed to belong in Soviet society.

Professional and personal struggles made Ivasiuk 'queer' – this is not to imply that he was homosexual, but rather more broadly to say that his desires, behaviours and identities were regularly obscured or rendered 'wrong' by Ivasiuk himself and those who surrounded him and cultivated his memory.<sup>12</sup> The presence of a queer hero in popular culture signalled an emotional crisis of late socialism: while the state peddled the notion that socialism provided pathways to self-realisation, citizens beyond self-fashioned nonconformist groups faced emotional turmoil when what they felt placed them outside the imagined 'happy' Soviet community. This was true of Ivasiuk himself, anxious about his professional and personal prospects. Likewise, the composer's parents were traumatised by the state's ruthless attempts to control how they expressed their grief. From the late 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev relaxed censorship, *glasnost* brought the emotional crisis of late socialism into the open. Journalists and memoir writers in Ukraine commemorated Ivasiuk as a composer whose search for original, authentic expression was crushed by the repressive Soviet state. Likewise, performers at the Chervona Ruta festival named in honour of the late composer spoke and sang about previously taboo political issues and personal emotions. Yet in the attempt to turn the composer into a larger-than-life hero, Ukrainian opinion makers still abided by some Brezhnev-era emotional norms as they muddled aspects of Ivasiuk's personal biography. Ivasiuk's life and the ways in which he was commemorated were underpinned by disaffection with the mainstream but also a desire to be 'normal'.

That Ivasiuk embodied both Soviet emotional repression and aspirations to belong to the mainstream made him an ambiguous figure. This ambiguity helps explain why he became a focal point for attempts to construct new forms of collective identity in Ukraine during the late 1980s and beyond. As with the young Lithuanian Romas Kalanta, whose self-immolation in 1972 sparked widespread discussion about what constituted personal and social freedom, the meanings assigned to Ivasiuk's death were 'unstable from the moment it occurred'. Ambiguity surrounding both men bred rumour, effectively undermining state control over national identity narratives in both Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> Artists, opinion makers and pop music fans in Ukraine recalled the professional and personal struggles of a distinctly Ukrainian composer who conquered mainstream media and stages of the Soviet Union. They thus juxtaposed the Ukrainian and the Soviet, but also capitalised on the fact that Soviet attempts to create cultures 'national in form, socialist in content' had turned Ukrainianness into a prevalent form of collective identity. For a brief moment in the late 1980s, Ivasiuk's name became a rallying call for those who sought to push the limits of Soviet emotional expression within mainstream Ukrainian popular culture.

### A Well-Connected Outsider

Ivasiuk hovered on the margins of Soviet culture during the 1970s. Hailing from the Soviet-Romanian borderlands, he did not fit the image of a reliable Soviet citizen. Never allowed to join the professional organisation of composers, he faced hostile cultural bureaucrats in the Communist Party of Ukraine. At the same time, he had powerful friends and patrons in official Soviet institutions like the television, philharmonics and the Union of Soviet Writers of Ukraine. Ivasiuk's precarious status in the world of Soviet music turned his career into an emotional rollercoaster: he oscillated between feelings of anxiety and relief, despair and joy, loneliness and camaraderie. The composer's emotional struggles took place in a distinctly Ukrainian context. Relying on informal personal contacts to sustain his career, he operated within a network of influential Ukrainian cultural figures who provided support and friendship to the anxious composer. Moreover, in his search for emotional self-expression, the composer drew on

<sup>12</sup> Katherine Watson, 'Queer Theory', *Group Analysis* 38, 1 (2005), 74.

<sup>13</sup> Amanda Swain, 'A Death Transformed: The Political and Social Consequences of Romas Kalanta's Self-Immolation, Lithuania, 1972', PhD Thesis, University of Washington, 2013, 73, 75, 31, 123.

Ukrainian folk music to develop a ‘casual, lyrical, individual, fragmented’ tone of voice that had been the main tool in the war against Stalinist totalitarian kitsch during the late 1950s and the 1960s, even as Brezhnev-era youth began to mock such earnest attempts to find new forms of cultural authenticity.<sup>14</sup>

Several factors explain Ivasiuk’s tense relationship with the political leadership of Soviet Ukraine. Albeit a member of the Soviet cultural establishment, his father had spent time in the Gulag after he migrated to the Soviet Union from Romania in the late 1930s.<sup>15</sup> This marked the Ivasiuks as a borderland family whose loyalty to the Soviet homeland remained uncertain. Volodymyr Ivasiuk himself was expelled from the Chernivtsi medical university in 1968, chastised publicly as a social parasite after allegedly vandalising a Chernivtsi bust to Lenin (local politics was fickle and he was re-admitted in the following academic year).<sup>16</sup> Murky, backstage decisions stood in the way of the composer’s career through the 1970s. Ivasiuk had friends among the local officials in Lviv who promised to nominate him for the Mykola Ostrovs’kyi Prize awarded by the Komsomol in Soviet Ukraine, but more senior apparatchiks were suspicious of young talent. Professional problems took an emotional toll. Ivasiuk was reportedly distraught upon learning that the local party secretary, D.A. Iaremchuk, did not forward his application to the higher authorities in Kyiv, effectively disqualifying the composer from the competition.<sup>17</sup>

Lacking post-secondary musical training, Ivasiuk enjoyed precious little prestige among professionals at the Union of Soviet Composers. He was visibly upset after one cultural bureaucrat reminded him that he was a mere amateur whose music could be taken off Soviet stages and airwaves at any moment; in personal conversations, he complained that official quotas specifying that performers include a certain percentage of songs by members of the composers’ union limited the spread of his music.<sup>18</sup> Far from resisting these practices, Ivasiuk tried to fit in and thus faced continued humiliation and frustration. In 1972, he enrolled at the Lviv conservatory to acquire formal musical training.<sup>19</sup> The composer’s letters to his family in Chernivtsi state that he was proud to study composition under Anatolii Kos-Anatols’kyi, ‘a great scholar of folklore and a wonderful musician’.<sup>20</sup> The letters may well have been an attempt at fashioning his emotions in line with what Ivasiuk wanted to feel,<sup>21</sup> given that memoirs compiled by Ivasiuk’s friends in the late 1980s suggest that Anatols’kyi resented his student’s success and regularly put him down (some of his friends added that they had believed Ivasiuk led a carefree life and only learnt about these problems after his death).<sup>22</sup> Despite repeated efforts, Ivasiuk never graduated from the conservatory.

Ivasiuk gained the reputation of an artist who worked outside, though not in defiance of, Soviet cultural institutions. His friends and colleagues remembered him as a lone wolf who insisted on personally controlling every step of the creative process.<sup>23</sup> He avoided large, official meetings and

<sup>14</sup> Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 115–18.

<sup>15</sup> Myroslav Lazaruk, ‘Volodymyr Ivasiuk. Zhyttia pislia smerti’, *Bukovynskyi zhurnal* 1–2 (2009), 81.

<sup>16</sup> Mykhailo Ivasiuk, *Monoloh pered oblychchiam syna* (Chernivtsi: Molody Bukovynets’, 2007), 82, 86.

<sup>17</sup> Ivasiuk, *Monoloh*, 207–9, 200, 221; ‘Sestra Vladimira Ivasiuka do sikh por ne verit v samoubiistvo brata’, *Segodnia*, 26 Oct. 2004; Halyna Tarasiuk, ‘Sviashchenni dlia mene’, in Praskoviia Nechaeva, ed., *Volodymyr Ivasiuk. Zhyttia iak pisnia* (Chernivtsi: Bukrek, 2003), 68–9.

<sup>18</sup> Ievhen Kovalenko, ‘Vin daruvav dukh zlahody’ in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 112–15; Ivan Lepsha, ‘Ioho pisnia pomizh nas’, *Kul’tura i Zhyttia*, 26 Mar. 1989.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Volodymyr Ivasiuk to Mykhailo Ivasiuk, 8 Aug. 1974, published in ‘Tvorets “Chervonoi Ruty” u lystakh’, *Bukovyns’kyi zhurnal* 1 (2010), 192.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Interview with Volodymyr Ivasiuk’, *Visty z Ukrainy*, 26 Apr. 1973.

<sup>21</sup> In his study of Soviet soldiers’ emotions in the Second World War, Matt Lenoe engages with the work of William Reddy, who has suggested that ‘individuals are not always sure *what* they are feeling. Consequently we cannot necessarily understand an assertion such as “I am cheerful” as a straightforward fact’. Emotions such as cheerfulness or courage could be deployed in a ‘self-altering’ or ‘self-exploring’ way, which sometimes made the absence of these very emotions conspicuous. Lenoe, ‘Emotions and Psychological Survival’, 325–7.

<sup>22</sup> Ivan Lepsha, ‘Ioho pisnia pomizh nas’, *Kul’tura i Zhyttia*, 26 Mar. 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Nazarii Iaremchuk, ‘Orfei synikh hir’ and Olha Rutkovs’ka, ‘Vysoke svitlo talantu’, in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 55–7, 123.

discussed professional matters in small groups of trusted friends.<sup>24</sup> He was anxious about his artistic prospects, convinced that performers would not play his songs unless he maintained a personal relationship with each of them.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Ivasiuk found solace among influential friends in Soviet cultural institutions who propelled his career. The son of a Soviet Ukrainian writer and university lecturer, he knew members of west Ukraine's creative intelligentsia.<sup>26</sup> Personal connections at the Chernivtsi television studio were crucial in making Ivasiuk a household name in Ukraine: the composer's friends Vasyl Selezinka and Vasyl Strikhowych recorded the hit songs *Chervona Ruta* and *Vodohrai* at the studio for broadcast on all-Ukrainian television in 1970.<sup>27</sup> Ivasiuk also relied on patronage from Kyiv and Moscow. After the first broadcast of his music on all-Ukrainian television, the Chernivtsi branch of the Amateur Composers' Association complained that 'unknown music' by 'unknown composers' should not be showcased to such a wide audience. At this point, republican-level institutions saved the skin of Ivasiuk and his friends from the Chernivtsi television studio: fully expecting an official reprimand, they instead received an award from Ukrainian television in Kyiv.<sup>28</sup> As his sister Halyna recalled, Ivasiuk rejoiced after the leading Russian composer Aleksandra Pakhmutova praised his work.<sup>29</sup>

There was a distinct Ukrainian dimension to Ivasiuk's status as a well-connected outsider. From 1972, he lived in Lviv and cooperated closely with prominent cultural figures in this largest centre of western Ukraine. He befriended the writer Rostyslav Bratun, head of the Lviv branch of the Soviet Writers' Union, who wrote the lyrics for several of Ivasiuk's songs.<sup>30</sup> It was through his west Ukrainian connections that Ivasiuk met prominent Ukrainian cultural figures from Kyiv. For example, Bratun introduced Ivasiuk to the famous actress Nataliya Uzhvii and the opera singer Dmytro Hnatiuk (who both originally hailed from the western borderlands).<sup>31</sup> In west Ukraine, Ivasiuk composed and promoted some of his most important works with little institutional or financial support from the Soviet state. At the request of the poet Bohdan Stelmakh, for example, he wrote the music for the play *Mezozoiska istoriia*, staged in the small Galician town of Drohobych. As a testament to the importance of informal connections, he refused to cash in on his royalties.<sup>32</sup>

Ukrainian folk culture helped Ivasiuk develop a unique style that further marked him as an autonomous artist.<sup>33</sup> After the death of Stalin, folk music provided a useful tool for bending Soviet cultural norms, with composers drawing on 'national' raw material to develop and legitimise increasingly diverse, personal styles. Whereas folk melodies had earlier been "homogenised" into an unambiguous tonal and melodic mold, the more daring composers of the post-Stalin era 'emphasised a flexible musical phrase'.<sup>34</sup> In the world of pop, the use of folk elements was likewise a legitimating strategy

<sup>24</sup> Ihor Kushpler, 'Nam spokii, druzhe tilky snytsia', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 79–80.

<sup>25</sup> Leszek Mazepa, 'Iavyshe u muzychnii kulturi', in *Ibid.*, 94–8.

<sup>26</sup> For example, he corresponded with his father's friend, the opera and popular music singer Dmytro Mikhaïlovych Hnatiuk. Letter from Volodymyr Ivasiuk to Dmytro Hnatiuk, 20 Mar. 1973, published in 'Tvorets "Chervonoii Ruty"', 187–8.

<sup>27</sup> Vasyl Selezinka, 'No Title', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 15 May 1988; Mykhailo Ivasiuk, 'Monoloh pered pamiattiu syna', *Visty z Ukrainy* 34 (Aug. 1987). Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Chernivets'koi Oblasti, Chernivtsi (hereafter, DACO), f.R2474 (Chernivtsi Oblast Philharmonic), op.1, s.285b, l.21; s.291, ll. 4–9.

<sup>28</sup> Vasyl Strikhowych, 'U kadri i za kadrom', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Halyna Ivasiuk, 'Mii brat Volodya', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 6 Sept. 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Praskoviia Nechaeva, 'Velychne', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 8–9.

<sup>31</sup> Anton Zhadan, 'Vozvrashcheniie Ivasiuka', *Komsomol'skoe znania*, 11 Nov. 1988.

<sup>32</sup> H. Domans'ka, 'Zvidky v nyoho ti chary', *Vil'na Ukraina*, 21 Mar. 1989.

<sup>33</sup> The amateur composer's search for a 'personal' style mirrored developments in the professional world of music. Like other composers, Ivasiuk found it relatively easy to escape the kind of control which the party exercised over film and literature. Even under Stalin, censorship in music was less intense than other forms of art because few people in the Soviet political leadership felt competent to categorise and judge musical pieces. Kirill Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 5; Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 279–80.

<sup>34</sup> Jelena Milojković-Djurić, *Aspects of Soviet Culture: Voices of Glasnost, 1960–1990* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991), 107–8. In cinema, folk themes also provided the background for the expression of 'spirit' and 'character'. Andrew

for the development of eclectic styles.<sup>35</sup> Influenced by the classical Ukrainian composer Myroslav Skoryk who used Hutsul folk melodies as the inspiration for his score to Sergei Paradzhanov's surrealist movie *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, as well as by Western rock, jazz and country music, Ivasiuk engaged in experiments that broke with the standardised forms of socialist realism.<sup>36</sup> He collected (and shared with performers) rare scores of Ukrainian folk songs that had not been published by the Soviet musical establishment.<sup>37</sup> As Soviet stages became spaces for artists to express personal emotions and not just civic loyalties, Ivasiuk's songs featured syncopation and non-harmonic tones which, distinct from the symmetrical mainstream of socialist realist music, have been described as the key to the 'touching lyricism' of his work.<sup>38</sup>

Although professional artists and composers shared Ivasiuk's search for the 'personal', his friends and patrons in Soviet cultural institutions interpreted his work as quite distinct from mainstream Soviet culture. They saw Ivasiuk's Ukrainian pop as emotionally authentic precisely because the artist hovered on the margins of officialdom. Leszek Mazepa, a faculty member at the Lviv conservatory who took over Ivasiuk's education after the composer's falling out with Kos-Anatols'kyi, claimed that Ivasiuk's lack of exposure to professional pressures made his early work truly original, adding that the composer gradually lost this unique style by trying to conform to his teachers' requirements.<sup>39</sup>

By the late 1970s, Ivasiuk's professional struggles went hand-in-hand with personal turmoil that became increasingly visible to those around him. The composer seemed to find personal life in Lviv difficult. Friends who later recounted how they had put pressure on Ivasiuk to get married added, almost in the same breath, that 'malicious rumours' about the composer spread shortly after his death, implying perhaps that his bachelor status raised suspicions about just how 'normal' he was. Ivasiuk only ever travelled abroad to socialist Poland, but gossip about the riches he had supposedly earned on a tour of Ukrainian diaspora communities in Canada was a source of much unpleasantness. Upon meeting an old Chernivtsi friend, Halyna Tarasiuk, Ivasiuk advised her that she should quickly get out of Chernivtsi in search of a better life, but also warned her not to move to Lviv: 'You will not survive there!'.<sup>40</sup> Ivasiuk was diagnosed with depression at a Lviv psychiatric hospital in 1978.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the first few months of 1979, he was active on the Soviet Ukrainian music scene, but some colleagues remembered that he avoided social interactions and had a mental breakdown during a concert.<sup>42</sup> The composer thus acquired the reputation of a misfit who tried but failed to belong.

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Horton and Michael Brashinsky, *The Zero Hour: Glasnost and Soviet Cinema in Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 225–6.

<sup>35</sup> In the Baltic states, where cultural controls were more lax than either in Russia or in Ukraine, professional composers like Raymond Pauls were particularly daring in 'embracing and highlighting stylistic, generic, linguistic and ethnic differences'. Alexandra Grabarchuk, 'The Soundtrack of Stagnation: Paradoxes of Soviet Rock and Pop of the 1970s', PhD Thesis, University of California Los Angeles, 2015, 53–5, 72. See also Swain, 'A Death Transformed', 47.

<sup>36</sup> Rostyslav Bratun, 'Ne zovsim lirychna elehiia', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 28–32; Riznyk, 'Pisnia', 532.

<sup>37</sup> Marichka Mykolaichuk, 'My z Ivanom duzhe liubyly Volodiu', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 127.

<sup>38</sup> Taisiia Kyrylovs'ka, 'Romansova osnova ioho pisen', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 172.

<sup>39</sup> Mazepa, 'Iavyshche', 94–8.

<sup>40</sup> M. Ivasiuk, 'Monoloh pered pamiattiu syna', *Visty z Ukrainy* 34 (Aug. 1987); Mykhailo Ivasiuk, *Monoloh*, 196, 200–1, 207–9, 221; Ivan Lepsha and Vasyl Semen, 'U moi smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu* 11 (1992); Anton Zhadan, 'Vozvrashcheniie Ivasiuka', *Komsomol'skoe znania*, 11 Nov. 1988; Liudmya Taran, 'Lehenda pro starshoho brata', *Vechirni Kyiv*, 15 Oct. 2003; Oksana Ivasiuk, 'Z nym bulo stilo i radisno', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 144; 'Sestra Vladimira Ivasiuka do sikh por ne verit v samoubiistvo brata', *Segodnia*, 26 Oct. 2004; Halyna Tarasiuk, 'Sviashchenni dlia mene', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 68–9.

<sup>41</sup> Ivan Lepsha and Vasyl Semen, 'U moi smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu* 11 (1992).

<sup>42</sup> Rutkov's'ka, 'Vysoke svitlo', 123.

### A Soviet Ukrainian Nation Builder

Yet Ivasiuk was an important part of Soviet public culture during the 1970s. As he sought to abide by mainstream cultural and emotional norms, his Ukrainian-language songs linked Soviet patriotism to deeply personal themes. Like much pop music, Ivasiuk's work made clear distinctions between positive and negative emotions: the message was that the Soviet system facilitated positive feelings like love and protected its citizens from negative emotions such as grief. The black-and-white emotional world of Ivasiuk's pop obscured the kinds of anxieties and uncertainties which characterised his professional and personal life.

Although the 1970s witnessed far-reaching Russification of public life in Ukraine and other non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union, state-sponsored Ukrainian-language culture provided an important source of legitimacy for Brezhnev's regime. Somewhat ironically, the movers and shakers of public culture promoted notions of unity through celebrating the cultures of select non-Russian ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, Soviet leaders sought to overshadow what they considered subversive memories of the Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, Jewish and German past in the western borderlands, creating instead a legible system of Ukrainian cultural references which more easily lent themselves to institutional control.<sup>43</sup> During the 1970s, Soviet propaganda still mobilised ethnically and geographically defined identities to disarm nationalist critiques of the Soviet Union, to excise dissent as foreign and unpatriotic and to rally citizens against real or imagined threats to the Soviet Union's territorial integrity.<sup>44</sup>

In line with these longer-term trends, Ivasiuk's music demarcated Ukraine as a coherent part of a broader Soviet community. Echoing state-sponsored narratives about the 1939 incorporation of the western borderlands into Soviet Ukraine,<sup>45</sup> Ivasiuk expressed the ambition to compose 'Ukrainian' music that would bridge east and west Ukrainian musical traditions.<sup>46</sup> In private correspondence, he proudly emphasised that his songs were performed in Lviv as well as in Donetsk.<sup>47</sup> Ivasiuk saw Ukrainian pop as part of the Soviet world of entertainment, aspiring to conquer audiences outside the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Working on a Ukrainian-language song that Nazarii Iaremchuk performed on all-Soviet television in 1979, he requested that Stepan Pushyk replace lyrics which were not immediately recognisable to Russian speakers with words common to both Ukrainian and Russian.<sup>48</sup> The people who promoted Ivasiuk's music were careful to frame it as an expression of the Communist Party's ideology, rather than as an articulation of local identities specific to regions annexed by the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Organising a large, multi-lingual pop festival featuring bands from different Soviet republics in 1972, staff at the Chernivtsi philharmonic emphasised that folk-inspired pop testified to the victory of 'Leninist nationalities policy'.<sup>49</sup>

The attempt to infuse Soviet patriotism with undertones of positive personal emotions was clear in the musical film *Chervona Ruta* which shot Ivasiuk to fame in 1971. The movie opens at Donetsk train station. About to set off on a trip across Ukraine, a local miner Borys promises a group of friends on the platform to pass east Ukraine's miners' greetings to west Ukraine's mountains. On the train, Borys meets a group of young women and soon breaks into a romantic, Ukrainian-language song about the

<sup>43</sup> Svetlana Frunchak, 'Commemorating the Future in Postwar Chernivtsi', *East European Politics and Societies* 24, 3 (2010), 435–63.

<sup>44</sup> Zbigniew Wojnowski, *The Near Abroad: Socialist Eastern Europe and Soviet Patriotism in Ukraine, 1956–1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 141–73. National themes had helped to define Soviet music under Stalin, as 'the core of musical Socialist Realism was largely formed by pieces realizing Stalin's slogan of "national in form, socialist in content"'. Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize*, 290, 293.

<sup>45</sup> Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 147–77.

<sup>46</sup> The Kyiv poet Vasyl Marsiuk, who authored the lyrics for 'Balada pro dvi skrypky', recalled that Ivasiuk saw the melody as 'east Ukrainian' and therefore insisted that it be accompanied with 'west Ukrainian' Hutsul cymbals. Z. Zaitseva, 'Ednae ukrainsiv u sviti', in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 185.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Volodymyr Ivasiuk to Volodymyr Oleksiiovych, 7 Dec. 1973, published in 'Tvorets "Chervonoii Ruty"', 190.

<sup>48</sup> Praskoviia Nechaeva, *Bezsmertna tin' velykykh dush* (Chernivtsi: Zelena Bukovyna, 2004), 24.

<sup>49</sup> DACO, f.R2474, op.1, s.291, ark. 4–9.

industrial landscapes of the Russian-speaking Donbas. Borys is keen to impress Oksana, a young woman played by the famous singer Sofia Rotaru. Sure enough, the couple fall in love as they hike in the Carpathians and sing folk-inspired songs. Produced in Soviet Ukraine, *Chervona Ruta* achieved great popularity in other Soviet republics, testifying to the rising influence of Ukrainian musicians from the western borderlands who wrote the lyrics and the music for most songs in the movie.<sup>50</sup> *Chervona Ruta* marked Ivasiuk as a Soviet Ukrainian composer. It framed his music as part of Soviet culture in the sense that the movie was released by state television and the dialogues were dubbed into Russian for audiences who did not speak Ukrainian. Songs from the film were promoted on the central television programme ‘Song of the Year’ (*Pesnia Goda*), with Ivasiuk himself performing on the show. Most song lyrics were Ukrainian, but the one Russian song performed at a campsite in the Carpathians made it clear that the ‘language of interethnic communication’ helped spread Soviet camaraderie to the western borderlands. *Chervona Ruta* helped Ivasiuk make a name for himself as a Ukrainian composer insofar as his music presented Ukraine as a homogenous space stretching from Donetsk to the Carpathians, united by a common language and folk traditions, as well as positive emotions facilitated by the Soviet system. This Soviet image of Ukraine was underpinned by clear hierarchies between the work-dominated, industrial, male east and the personal, pastoral, female west.

Although most of Ivasiuk’s work focused on love and other lyrical themes, songs on such sombre themes as Soviet soldiers’ suffering during the Second World War were part of a search ‘for a meaningful way to link deeply personal feelings and experiences with the Soviet system that ostensibly had made them possible.’<sup>51</sup> ‘A Song about Mallows’ (*Pesnia pro Malvy*), released for the thirtieth anniversary of the Soviet Union’s victory over Nazi Germany in 1975, was one of his proudest musical accomplishments. Experimenting with lyrics on different themes which he ultimately deemed inappropriate for this touching tune,<sup>52</sup> Ivasiuk finally decided to set the song to Bohdan Hura’s poem about a Soviet soldier’s death during the Second World War.<sup>53</sup> The song commemorated the war in Ukrainian and thus adapted Soviet narratives for the context of Ukrainian-speaking Ukraine. Such grounding of a war memory infused Soviet historical narratives with a personal meaning, shifting focus away from the celebration of the (Russian-speaking) state and its institutions. The intimate melody differed from march-like patriotic songs, the accompanying film featured shots of a small Ukrainian cottage and the lyrics focused on the relationship between a dead son and his grieving mother.<sup>54</sup>

Ivasiuk’s music carried special significance for Soviet youth politics.<sup>55</sup> Young people in Ukraine had a clear preference for foreign music over the Soviet *estrada* and looked to Moscow and the Russian-language mass media (and, in the western borderlands, to Polish mass media and Polish tourists) to learn about Western culture.<sup>56</sup> Still, Ukrainian pop held its own during the 1970s. The Chernivtsi philharmonic’s pop ensemble ‘Red Rue’ (*Chervona Ruta*), who performed Ivasiuk’s songs, brought in substantial profit. In contrast, the philharmonic’s large folk song and dance ensemble consumed more funds than it generated.<sup>57</sup> Ivasiuk was clearly aware that his music was supposed

<sup>50</sup> *Chervona ruta*, directed by Roman Oleksyv (1971, Kyiv, Soviet Union: Ukrtelefil’m). ‘Chervona Ruta’, Zoloty Fond Ukrain’skoi Estrady, <http://www.uaestrada.org/video/muzychni-filmy/chervona-ruta/> (last visited 10 Jan. 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Evans, ‘The “Soviet Way of Life” as a Way of Feeling’, 561.

<sup>52</sup> T. Severniuk, ‘Stryzhen dushi’, in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 83.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Volodymyr Ivasiuk to Bohdan Hura, 23 Apr. 1975, published in ‘Tvorets “Chervonoi Ruty”’, 198–9.

<sup>54</sup> Sofia Rotaru, ‘Balada pro malvy’, YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C90mWRI7bAY> (last visited 22 Sept. 2021); Volodymyr Ivasiuk, ‘Balada pro malvy’, YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYY6SaJkbFg> (last visited 14 Jan. 2021).

<sup>55</sup> Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 232. Pop music in general played an important role in winning the youth over to the Soviet project. One of the most famous *estrada* composers, Aleksandra Pakhmutova, devoted most of her work to the theme of youth. Grabarchuk, ‘The Soundtrack of Stagnation’, 48.

<sup>56</sup> Sergei Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity and Ideology in Soviet Dnipropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 12–13; Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 83–97.

<sup>57</sup> DACO, f.R2474, op.1, s.311, ark. 1–54.



to promote happiness and thus foster a sense of commitment to the Soviet project among the youth. He thus strived to avoid any lyrics that could have 'negative' connotations for his audience.<sup>58</sup> In a 1973 newspaper interview, he underlined that he wrote explicitly patriotic as well as more lyrical and folk songs to praise the virtues of 'our joyful, hard-working, life-affirming and proud Soviet youth'.<sup>59</sup>

### A Lviv Martyr

Despite the composer's contributions to Soviet public culture, it was the image of Ivasiuk as a Ukrainian outsider facing an overbearing bureaucracy that overshadowed memories of Ivasiuk as a Soviet Ukrainian composer. As state controls over cultural production tightened in the late 1970s and the early 1980s and pop music became increasingly Russophone, party authorities alienated many members of the Soviet Ukrainian intelligentsia. For Ivasiuk's relatives, friends and patrons, repressive cultural policies had a particularly immediate dimension following the composer's tragic death. In 1979, party leaders in Lviv launched a vile campaign to control public commemoration of the composer which became enmeshed in broader attempts to crack down on non-conformist cultural expression under Iurii Andropov.<sup>60</sup>

The local authorities in Lviv anticipated that Ivasiuk's premature death would provoke a mass outpouring of grief and raise troubling questions about his professional and personal struggles. They consequently made every effort to ensure that he not be celebrated as an outsider repressed by the Soviet state, subjecting the composer's parents to a brutal bureaucracy that displayed shocking insensitivity to familial love and grief. The post-mortem was conducted without the family's approval and Ivasiuk's mother was called in to identify the body after it had been cut open. Arriving from Chernivtsi, the composer's father demanded to view the body again only to face a barrage of insults from the Lviv public prosecutor: 'Take him to hell and look at him for the next one hundred years for all I care!'. When Ivasiuk's parents returned to the morgue one more time, they were forced at first to wait for two hours and were then subjected to long questioning about their son's disappearance right there by the body. The composer's father believed that this was a deliberate strategy aimed at gauging how they would commemorate their son when they were at their most vulnerable. In his account, a middle-aged man who introduced himself as a legal counsellor, but was likely a KGB officer, made it clear that the family were not to attract attention to Ivasiuk's tragic death: 'Now look at me . . . There won't be any talk about it, get it? Otherwise you'll have us to deal with'.<sup>61</sup> For the next eleven years, the Ivasiuks were not allowed to erect a monument at their son's grave.<sup>62</sup>

Despite these efforts, Ivasiuk became a focus for members of the local intelligentsia, university students and other residents of Lviv to celebrate Ukrainian culture outside party-approved channels. As William Risch describes in detail, the composer's funeral turned into a massive event, with some 50,000 people in attendance. Ivasiuk's friends, including Rostyslav Bratun and Roman Kudlyk, read poems that 'equated Ivasiuk's death with a great loss for Ukraine'. Reflecting Ivasiuk's popularity beyond the creative intelligentsia, taxi drivers offered to transport mourners to the Lychakiv cemetery free of charge.<sup>63</sup> Although Ivasiuk had never been explicitly anti-Soviet, at least not in any public

<sup>58</sup> Nechaeva, *Bezsmertna tin'*, 24.

<sup>59</sup> 'Interview with Volodymyr Ivasiuk', *Visty z Ukrainy*, 26 Apr. 1973.

<sup>60</sup> As the Communist Party leadership grew more concerned about the impact of cultural globalisation over Soviet youth, the Ministry of Culture cut the number of amateur bands allowed to perform in the early 1980s. The falling popularity of Ivasiuk's songs during the 1980s was at least partly due to changing fashions and rising popularity of predominantly Russian-language rock. But Ukrainian-language music was also subject to political repression. In particular, the authorities were alarmed by performances of songs written by émigré composers. Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromads'kykh Ob'ednan' Ukrainy, Kyiv (hereafter, TsDAHO), f.1, op.25, s.2223, ark. 63, 71; Valentyn Solodovnyk, 'Estrada', in Oleksander Hrytsenko, ed., *Narysy ukrains'koi populiarnoi kul'tury* (Kyiv: UTsKD, 1998), 144; Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 231; Milojković-Djurić, *Aspects of Soviet Culture*, 140.

<sup>61</sup> M. Ivasiuk, *Monoloh*, 210, 215–18.

<sup>62</sup> Iu. Kryl, 'Pamiatnik cherez 11 let', *Komsomol's'koe znamia*, 12 June 1990.

<sup>63</sup> Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 247–50; Mykhailo Ivasiuk, *Monoloh*, 218–20.

forums, proponents of Ukrainian nationalism defined in opposition to the Soviet state also sought to appropriate him for their purposes. On 12 June 1979, Petro and Vasyl Sichko, who had previously been convicted for ‘nationalist activities’, organised a meeting by Ivasiuk’s grave where they accused the Soviet regime of having killed Ivasiuk and raised slogans glorifying OUN-UPA far-right opposition to Soviet rule during and after the Second World War. This was the most radical way of framing Ivasiuk’s memory, and the Sichkos were both given prison sentences.<sup>64</sup>

The party did not so much try to suppress the memory of Ivasiuk but rather to control the narrative. Against the Ivasiuks’ wishes, the authorities sent the political agitator V. Antonenko to tour west Ukrainian universities and factories with party-approved lectures about the late composer.<sup>65</sup> Local apparatchiks in Lviv saw all spontaneous ways of commemorating Ivasiuk as a threat to their authority. They thus organised compulsory Communist Youth League meetings on the day of Ivasiuk’s funeral to prevent students from attending – those who disobeyed faced expulsion and had their stipends cut. Party bosses also confronted the creative intelligentsia who, in their assessment, had spoken out of turn: they thus removed Bratun from the leadership of the local writers’ union.<sup>66</sup> Ivasiuk’s grave became a symbolic site of confrontation between Lvivians keen to celebrate the life of a Ukrainian outsider and the local party authorities who did not want Ivasiuk to be remembered as anything other than a Soviet composer.<sup>67</sup>

### A Symbol of Perestroika

With the onset of Gorbachev’s glasnost policies in 1986, members of the Soviet Ukrainian intelligentsia who had helped sustain Ivasiuk’s career in the 1970s regained control over public portrayals of the composer. They capitalised on his reputation as an outsider to publicly distinguish themselves from the political leadership of Soviet Ukraine. By the late 1980s, the composer’s father, as well as his friends – including the writer Rostyslav Bratun and the journalist Ivan Lepsha – evoked memories of Ivasiuk-the-misfit to refashion themselves as champions of change. In collaboration with the Ukrainian Komsomol leadership and students from the Kyiv conservatory, they launched the Volodymyr Ivasiuk Chervona Ruta festival in 1989 (‘Chervona Ruta’ or ‘Red Rue’ was the title of Ivasiuk’s most popular song and the movie which made him famous in the early 1970s).<sup>68</sup> Naming the festival in honour of the composer, the organisers claimed that Ivasiuk could inspire new generations to create and consume Ukrainian-language music distinct from mainstream Soviet entertainment in the range of emotions that it expressed. The festival was conceived not only as a way to commemorate Ivasiuk’s despair but also as an opportunity for younger generations to express uncertainty, anger and irreverence.

The conflict between local party officials in western Ukraine and Ivasiuk’s friends and relatives exploded into the open in the second half of the 1980s. From 1986, Mykhailo Ivasiuk took a leading role in organising public events devoted to his son, with no support from (and perhaps despite obstacles created by) the political leadership of Soviet Ukraine. The Komsomol and other Soviet organisations engaged in public commemorations of Ivasiuk from 1988, while newly-established organisations that pushed the limits of acceptable cultural expression (the Lion Society and the Ukrainian Cultural Fund) promoted the image of the composer as a Ukrainian hero from 1989.<sup>69</sup> Mykhailo Ivasiuk propagated the notion that his son had been repressed by the Soviet state. In a 1989 newspaper interview, for example, he claimed that performances of his son’s music in Soviet mass media and concert halls

<sup>64</sup> Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 248–9.

<sup>65</sup> Mykhailo Ivasiuk, *Monoloh*, 220.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.; Oksana Ivasiuk, ‘Slavu Bratu ne prostili i posle smerti’, *Gazeta po kievski*, 3 Nov. 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 247–50.

<sup>68</sup> The idea to devote a major festival to Ivasiuk originated in 1987. ‘Pisnia bude pomizh nas: zhaduiuchi Volodymyra Ivasiuka’, *Literaturna Ukraina*, 11 Aug. 1988.

<sup>69</sup> Stefan Sokołowski, ‘The Myth of Volodymyr Ivasiuk during the Perestroika Era’ (MA dissertation, University of Alberta, 2008).

had been banned or at least severely curtailed in the first few years after his death.<sup>70</sup> These ideas found fertile ground among Ivasiuk's fans in Ukraine. The official press organ of the Soviet Ukrainian union of writers *Literaturna Ukraina* received letters from readers who, reflecting a new public interest in the history of terror, called for the 'rehabilitation' of the composer. As the editors explained, 'we were surprised [because Ivasiuk] did not experience repressions during his life . . . and his songs are still played on the radio'.<sup>71</sup> The magazine did not otherwise shy away from raising troubling questions about the Soviet past and present in the late 1980s and its scepticism regarding the repression narrative should not be seen as an attempt by the conservative establishment to preserve the status quo. Rather, it testified to how unclear the circumstances surrounding Ivasiuk's death remained. Arguably, it further signalled that Ivasiuk's fans conceived of repression in broader terms than those outlined by the perestroika-era political and cultural leaders: Ivasiuk had not experienced terror or imprisonment, but he was a misfit at odds with the late socialist emphasis on self-realisation and happiness.<sup>72</sup>

Ivasiuk turned into a powerful symbol of emotional rebellion. In 1989, the composer's sleepy hometown of Chernivtsi hosted a large popular music festival named in his honour. It was the culmination of numerous contests for pop, rock and guitar ballad performers from across Soviet Ukraine who sang in the Ukrainian language. Ivasiuk's friends and patrons saw the promotion of Ukrainian popular music as a search for originality and a means to escape excessive state controls over emotional expression. In Rostyslav Bratun's vision, Ivasiuk was a suitable patron of Chervona Ruta because he had been an 'original' composer whose artistic endeavours, fuelled by 'painful doubt', provided a source of inspiration for young people in the late 1980s. Bratun argued that composers and lyricists inspired by Ivasiuk were to replace 'pseudo-Ukrainian' sounds that only encouraged listeners to dance with new types of popular music reflecting the independent spirit of Ukraine (*samobutnist'*).<sup>73</sup> The notion of an 'authentically Ukrainian' culture was divisive and unclear, but Bratun's emphasis on innovation in music suggested that the festival would help discover unconventional, irreverential singers.

Organisers of the Chervona Ruta festival evoked Ivasiuk's name to launch an attack on Soviet Ukraine's cultural hierarchy and the emotional norms it promoted. Justifying the need to hold a festival for amateurs in November 1988, Anton Zhadan contrasted Ivasiuk's artistic spirit with the oppressive 'moral-psychological climate' of the 1970s created by an 'ill-meaning narrow group of culture officials' out of touch with Ukraine's multi-million audiences.<sup>74</sup> These views, though often expressed in mainstream media, had strong undertones of dissent. They were inspired in part by the famous dissident Ivan Dziuba's January 1988 essay 'Do We Comprehend National Culture as a Single Whole?', reflecting widespread disappointment with the slow progress of *glasnost* in Ukraine, where the Brezhnev-era leader Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi still called the shots in the late 1980s. As members of the Soviet Union of Composers bemoaned the fact that new types of entertainment furthered the 'social myth about the eternal animosity of generations',<sup>75</sup> the festival in Chernivtsi aimed to give voice to young performers who, like Ivasiuk in the 1970s, felt stifled by the musical establishment. While some organisers hoped that Chervona Ruta would simply popularise Ivasiuk's music from the 1970s, this approach was widely seen as anachronistic. The dominant view among supporters of the festival such as the rock musician and the namesake grandson of the early twentieth-century Ukrainian composer, Kyrylo Stetsenko, held that Chervona Ruta should encourage original, modern, 'surprising and even extravagant' artistic endeavours.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>70</sup> 'Interview with Mykhailo Ivasiuk', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 9 Apr. 1988; Ivan Lepsha, 'Ioho pisnia pomizh nas', *Kul'tura i Zhyttia*, 26 Mar. 1989.

<sup>71</sup> 'Pisnia bude pomizh nas: zhadiuichi Volodymyra Ivasiuka', *Literaturna Ukraina*, 11 Aug. 1988.

<sup>72</sup> Notably, Ivasiuk's friend the writer Rostyslav Bratun took a different line from *Literaturna Ukraina* and many prominent cultural figures, arguing publicly and in no uncertain terms that Ivasiuk had been repressed in the 1970s. Sokołowski, 'The Myth of Volodymyr Ivasiuk'.

<sup>73</sup> Anton Zhadan, 'Vozvrashcheniie Ivasiuka', *Komsomol'skoe znamia*, 11 Nov. 1988.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Milojković-Djurić, *Aspects of Soviet Culture*, 149.

<sup>76</sup> Kyrylo Stetsenko, 'Pershi uroky "Chervonoi Ruty"', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 4 June 1989.

While members of the intelligentsia and leaders of the Komsomol mobilised memories of Ivasiuk to portray themselves as champions of change, youth rebellion at Chervona Ruta went further than Ivasiuk's friends and patrons had anticipated. The widespread use of humour and pastiche meant that Ukrainian culture on the festival's stages resembled Dmitry Prigov's or Ilya Kabakov's postmodernist Russian poetry more than Ivasiuk's pop from the 1970s.<sup>77</sup> The band Snake Brothers (Braty Hadiukiny), looking distinctively more dishevelled than mainstream pop singers, performed a satirical song about the Sovietisation of western Ukraine in 1946, told through the prism of a hapless man called Mykola who lost his house after a bomb he had kept in the attic for forty years finally exploded. The band adopted an unconventional approach to a theme that carried enormous importance to both the Soviet state and Ukrainian nationalists who rejected Soviet power, to some extent distancing themselves from both political master narratives. Still, they ended their performance with a slogan associated with the anti-Soviet nationalist resistance: 'Glory to Ukraine' ('*Slava Ukraini*').<sup>78</sup> This music stood worlds apart from Ivasiuk's work which celebrated Soviet victories in the Second World War or else focused on non-political, lyrical themes. Whereas most Russian rockers of the perestroika era avoided political statements in favour of 'spiritual' lyrics,<sup>79</sup> innovative Ukrainian-language rock at Chervona Ruta helped to undermine the Soviet Union's claims to have protected and promoted Ukrainian culture.<sup>80</sup> The artist with the stage name Little Sis Vika (Sestrychka Vika) performed the song 'Shame' ('*Han'ba*') which featured distorted motives of a traditional folk song about the Cossack Morozenko's death at the hands of the Tatars, as well as lyrics juxtaposing official Soviet notions of Russo-Ukrainian friendship with citizens' indifference towards Ukrainian cultural rights. Vika's look broke with Soviet norms of femininity. Playing with the Cossack theme, she discredited a myth which Soviet leaders mobilised to suggest that the Soviet Union provided avenues for Ukrainian cultural self-realisation.<sup>81</sup> While artists like Sestrychka Vika and Braty Hadiukiny used abstract lyrics and non-harmonious melodies to question Soviet master narratives, other performers expressed more direct political criticism. The linguistic Russification of Ukraine and aggressive secularisation policies of the Soviet state were their favourite targets.<sup>82</sup> In the aftermath of Chernobyl, Ukraine was also portrayed as a victim of central Soviet environmental politics.<sup>83</sup> The Chervona Ruta festival transgressed late Soviet emotional norms, with artists expressing a sense of frustration, anger, cynicism and even amusement at the absurdities of Soviet life. At the same time, combining diverse musical genres, the festival reflected not only (or primarily) a set of subcultural identities but also aspirations to craft a new mainstream Ukrainian culture.

<sup>77</sup> M. Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995) 76–7, 92–3; Horton and Brashinsky, *Zero Hour*, 5, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Kyrylo Stetsenko, 'Film-Concert "Chervona Ruta-89"', Minute 67 to 73:30, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWV6bgH8F3E> (last visited 14 Jan. 2021). Braty Hadiukiny embodied characteristics which alienated many music professionals in the Soviet Union during perestroika: 'casual style of behaviour . . . that often crossed over to vulgarity', the 'discrediting of established values' and 'the throbbing effects of the amplifiers [which] drowned the melodic and intonational expressiveness of the songs'. Milojković-Djurić, *Aspects of Soviet Culture*, 152–3.

<sup>79</sup> Yngvar Steinholt, 'You Can't Rid a Song of Its Words: Notes on the Hegemony of Lyrics in Russian Rock Songs', *Popular Music* 22, 1 (2003), 98.

<sup>80</sup> Riznyk, 'Pisnia', 535–6.

<sup>81</sup> Kyrylo Stetsenko, 'Film-Concert "Chervona Ruta-89"', Minute 30:40 to 36:25, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWV6bgH8F3E> (last visited 14 Jan. 2021).

<sup>82</sup> The Kyiv group 'Komu Vnyz' equated Russian rule in Ukraine to Tatar and Polish oppression. The whole world 'laughed at Ukraine', they sang, but a return to religious values would mark the beginning of Ukrainian resurgence. Kyrylo Stetsenko, 'Film-Concert "Chervona Ruta-89"', Minute 36:25 to 41:30, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWV6bgH8F3E> (last visited 14 Jan. 2021).

<sup>83</sup> Kyrylo Stetsenko, 'Film-Concert "Chervona Ruta-89"', Minute 10:30 to 11:45, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWV6bgH8F3E> (last visited 14 Jan. 2021). Festival organisers also celebrated close links with ecological movements in Chernivtsi. V. Krasnodembskii, 'I vse-taky u Chernivtsach', *Radians'ka Ukraina*, 13 Aug. 1989.

### A National Hero for Independent Ukraine

During the early 1990s, prominent cultural activists continued to evoke memories of the composer to promote Ukrainian-language music after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the notion that Ukrainian-language entertainment could express emotions suppressed during the late Soviet period was less prominent in the 1990s than it had been in 1989. As the Volodymyr Ivasiuk Chernova Ruta festival moved eastwards to Zaporizhzhia in 1991, Donetsk in 1993 and Crimea in 1995, the organisers placed more emphasis on 'educating' east Ukrainian audiences than on questioning political and cultural authority. Ivasiuk lost currency as a symbol of rebellion against state-led attempts to limit the range of emotions that could be expressed in public.

For some members of the Ukrainian elites in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Ivasiuk's music helped frame Ukrainian identities in Soviet terms. To the frustration of Chervona Ruta festival organisers, political and commercial players who celebrated close Russo-Ukrainian ties appropriated Ivasiuk's image for their own purposes. Immediately after independence, members of the Volodymyr Ivasiuk Foundation, supported publicly by the Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk, spoke of 'friendship' between Eastern Slavs.<sup>84</sup> They enjoyed clear political and institutional advantages over the organisers of Chervona Ruta.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time, members of the Soviet cultural elite from the 1970s used memories of Ivasiuk to portray the composer (and themselves) as dissidents who had made an important contribution to independence. Ironically, as Ivasiuk's biography during the early 1990s was sanitised to fit the image of an anti-Soviet Ukrainian patriot, he increasingly resembled a typical socialist realist literary protagonist. Mykhailo Ivasiuk fondly remembered his son as an idealistic young man with bright blue eyes (a typical socialist realist device) who fought injustice in the small, closed off world of west Ukraine. Similarly, Ivan Lepsha relayed the views of Ivasiuk's friends and acquaintances who spoke about the composer as an uncompromising fighter for Ukrainian independence who struggled against malicious schoolteachers, local party apparatchiks and professional composers dead bent on suppressing the Ukrainian national movement. In his endeavour to become the 'Ukrainian Schubert', they suggested, Ivasiuk faced prosaic obstacles represented by complacent bureaucrats, as well as dramatic challenges posed by mysterious people seeking to murder him.<sup>86</sup> The imagined anti-Soviet Ivasiuk of the early 1990s learned from older mentor figures like his father, as well as Ukrainian cultural heroes from the pre-Soviet past such as the composers Sydir Vorobkevich and Mykola Lysenko.<sup>87</sup> These ways of commemorating Ivasiuk left little room for a rational debate about Ivasiuk's life or Ukrainian culture more broadly. They also effectively overshadowed memories of Ivasiuk's emotional turmoil which undermined the image of a courageous, determined and straightlaced Ukrainian national hero. In his father's memoirs, the idea was that Ivasiuk ultimately transcended his selfish desires and achieved 'enlightenment' which allowed him to manifest the 'genius of the nation' and to recognise Brezhnev and the Soviet state as 'enemies of Ukraine'.<sup>88</sup>

Post-Soviet narratives of Ivasiuk's life suggested that his world had been free from doubt and weakness. During the late 1980s and the 1990s, Ivan Lepsha was adamant that the composer had not in fact suffered from depression (and only checked himself into hospital to obtain a medical excuse for

<sup>84</sup> Volodymyr Pryimak, 'Pro slovians'ki koreni i pamiat' Volodymyra Ivasiuka', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 15 Apr. 1994.

<sup>85</sup> While central television in Kyiv reported on the fund's activities, the public broadcaster's relations with Chervona Ruta were strained. Festival organisers complained that television not only failed to pay for the right to show their concerts, but actually charged them for the broadcast in 1991. Oleksandr Evtushenko, 'Ruta v poloni pechali: kistka w horli', *Moloda Hvardiia*, 10 Sept. 1991.

<sup>86</sup> Ivan Lepsha, 'Sviato bez posviaty', *Kul'tura i Zhyttia*, 27 July 1991. These victimhood narratives of Ivasiuk's life were publicly contested. Sokolowski, 'The Myth of Volodymyr Ivasiuk'.

<sup>87</sup> Ivan Lepsha, 'U moi smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 1992.

<sup>88</sup> M. Ivasiuk, 'Monoloh pered pamiattiu syna', *Visty z Ukrainy* 34 (Aug. 1987); Mykhailo Ivasiuk, *Monoloh*, 196, 200–1; Ivan Lepsha and Vasyl Semen, 'U moi smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu* 11 (1992); Anton Zhadan, 'Vozvrashcheniie Ivasiuka', *Komsomol'skoe znania*, 11 Nov. 1988; Liudmya Taran, 'Lehenda pro starshoho brata', *Vechirni Kyiv*, 15 Oct. 2003; Oksana Ivasiuk, 'Z nym bulo stilo i radisno' in Nechaeva, *Volodymyr Ivasiuk*, 144.

missed classes at university). The suggestion was that the party authorities fabricated Ivasiuk's illness to fake his suicide. Lepsha even publicised the views of a fortune teller who 'confirmed' that Ivasiuk had been killed.<sup>89</sup> He also reported suggestions that the KGB planted transmitting devices in Ivasiuk's brain to make him hear voices and thus induce schizophrenia.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in an apparent attempt to make the bachelor Ivasiuk seem more 'normal', the composer's sister painted a desexualised image of a young romantic secretly in love with his 'pure and rustic' female friend, while Ivasiuk's friend and lyricist Stepan Pushyk stressed that Ivasiuk's blue eyes made him 'popular with women' and suggested that he would have got married had he lived longer.<sup>91</sup>

Those who cultivated the memory of Ivasiuk as an anti-Soviet hero also warmed up to the idea of state involvement in the sphere of popular culture and entertainment. During the early 1990s, the Volodymyr Ivasiuk Chervona Ruta festival failed to attract artists or large audiences in predominantly Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine.<sup>92</sup> In response, Ukrainian journalists supportive of the festival promoted the notion that popular culture was a political project which needed state support. This was a gradual process fuelled by growing disappointment with market reform. In the late 1980s, while the head of the Soviet composer's union Tikhon Khrennikov still condemned the 'bourgeois-commercial show-business machine',<sup>93</sup> the famous and controversial performer Taras Petrynenko looked at private investors and the newly formed cooperatives to free artistic production from excessive state controls.<sup>94</sup> As self-financing of state-owned enterprises became the catchword of Gorbachev's economic reforms in the late 1980s, Chervona Ruta would advertise Ukraine's large industrial enterprises and collective farms in return for financial support.<sup>95</sup> Were it not for Canadian Ukrainian private impresario agencies, *Molod' Ukrainy* emphasised, Ukraine's artists would be completely dependent on the Moscow-based record label Melodiia and the impresario agency Goskontsert which treated them as second-class artists.<sup>96</sup>

Although the early 1990s editions of Chervona Ruta were still sponsored by individuals from among the Ukrainian diaspora, as well as companies seeking to conquer new markets in Ukraine,<sup>97</sup>

<sup>89</sup> During the early 1990s, as the collapse of political, social and cultural structures caused much consternation, charismatic leaders of such movements as the Great White Brotherhood (which generated public attention far out of proportion to the number of members involved) offered supposedly divinely-inspired answers about the future and the meaning of life. References to the supernatural likewise underpinned grand narratives about what it meant to be Ukrainian, replacing the polyphonic and ironic search for new forms of cultural and political expression. Brian Bennett, *Religion and Language in Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge, 2011), 22–3.

<sup>90</sup> Ivan Lepsha and Vasyl Semen, 'U moi smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu* 11 (1992).

<sup>91</sup> Rutkovs'ka, 'Vysoke svitlo', 123; Zhadan, 'Vozvrashcheniie Ivasiuka', *Komsomol'skoe znamia*, 11 Nov. 1988.

<sup>92</sup> By 1991, groups which openly questioned Ukraine's place in the Soviet Union took over the Chervona Ruta festival named in honour of Volodymyr Ivasiuk. The opposition group Rukh and the Ukrainian cultural society Prosvita called the shots at the second edition of the festival in Zaporizhzhia, which was held on the eve of the failed coup attempt which fatally undermined Mikhail Gorbachev's authority and hastened the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1993, the initiative to hold the festival in the Donbas came from the local branch of Prosvita, an association opposing the Russification of Ukraine with roots in nineteenth-century Galicia. In Chervona Ruta organisers' own assessment, Ukrainian popular culture defined in opposition to Russia and the Soviet Union held limited popular appeal. After attending the festival in 1991, Catherine Wanner observed that attitudes ranged from a euphoric embrace of the musicians as 'children of the nation, proof of their collective talent', to discomfort and dismay caused by the explicit exclusion of Russians and Russian speakers from this imagined community. C. Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998), 128–33; Mykola Tsvirko, 'Druhyi start "Chervonoii Ruty"', *Vechirnyy Kyiv*, 5 Feb. 1991; Liudmyla Mykytiuk, 'Zakliuchnyi akord bez kil'kokh not', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 20 Aug. 1991; E. Denisova, 'Chervonyi Ruti – nashi vitannia', *Donbas*, 29 May 1993; Iryna Lukoms'ka, 'Skhidna Ukraina spryinala suchasnu Ukrain'sku muzyku', *Vechirnyy Kyiv*, 26 June 1993.

<sup>93</sup> Christopher Rice, 'Soviet Music in the Era of Perestroika', in Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A. Hosking, eds., *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 92–3; Milojković-Djurić, *Aspects of Soviet Culture*, 147–8.

<sup>94</sup> 'Hryhorii Halyts's interview with Taras Petrynenko', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 14 Sept. 1989.

<sup>95</sup> 'Hotuiemos' do finalu', *Molod' Ukrainy*, 9 July 1989; V. Krasnodembskii, 'I vse-taky u Chernivtsach', *Radians'ka Ukraina*, 13 Aug. 1989; *Chervona Ruta – Visnyk Festyvaliu*, 19 Sept. 1989.

<sup>96</sup> 'Ukrains'ke, otzhe – suchasne', *Vechirnyi Kyiv*, 19 Sept. 1989; *Chervona Ruta – Visnyk Festyvaliu*, 20 Sept. 1989.

<sup>97</sup> 'Pisennyi kvitnyk u shakhtarskomu kraii', *Kul'tura i Zhyttia*, 5 June 1993.

the festival reflected the first wave of frustration with economic reform. As in Poland, where ‘private presses [created] opportunities for bands that otherwise would not have had the opportunity to record’, but also ‘brought a new sort of restriction in the form of complicated contracts designed to extract profit from musicians’, Ukrainian performers during the early 1990s found that the capitalist music industry limited the ‘small spaces of freedom’ which the socialist system with its inefficient oversight had offered.<sup>98</sup> One of the winners of the first Chervona Ruta, Andriy Mykolaichuk, warned other performers against the pitfalls of singing for profit. He cancelled his tour of Canada, explaining that the organisers imposed a hectic schedule on its contracted artists.<sup>99</sup> Chervona Ruta’s reliance on foreign investors caused distinct unease by 1991.<sup>100</sup> Frustration with the outcomes of market reform went hand-in-hand with calls for affirmative action. Facing powerful competition and struggling to win over audiences, activists seeking to strengthen cultural boundaries between post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia saw an important role for the state in managing popular culture in the early 1990s. The journalist Iryna Lukoms’ka, who was invited to join the jury in 1993 after publicly criticising the 1991 edition of the festival for its failure to capture mass audiences, called for Kyiv to grant Chervona Ruta the status of a state festival, to introduce tax breaks for festival sponsors and to found music schools to train a new generation of Ukrainian artists. In the Ukrainian-language press, she also suggested that songs from Chervona Ruta be promoted at school discos and on the state railways, where music was played over loudspeakers.<sup>101</sup> This stood in contrast to the anti-statist sentiments of Chervona Ruta 1989 and rather reflected Soviet-era notions of pop as a state-sponsored identity building project.

Cultural activists keen to promote Ivasiuk’s music and to cultivate his memory in the late 1980s and the early 1990s viewed popular culture through the same prism as the political and cultural elites of the 1970s. In his reincarnation as an anti-Soviet national hero, Ivasiuk resembled one-dimensional socialist realist literary protagonists committed to grand ideological projects and deferential of older generations. Placing Ivasiuk among other Ukrainian national heroes, organisers of Chervona Ruta reduced Ukrainian-language music to resistance to the Soviet state and Russification and overshadowed the image of the insecure, probing and irreverent artist which fuelled a search for ‘original’ music in 1989. In this sense, Ukrainian culture framed in anti-Soviet and anti-Russian terms left little room for the articulation of emotional ambiguity or difference during the early 1990s.

## Conclusion

In 2019, based on an experiment conducted at the site of his death and evidence collected in 1979, the Institute of Forensic Research in Kyiv concluded that Ivasiuk could not have climbed the tree and hanged himself without third party involvement.<sup>102</sup> It repeated the claims which the journalist Ivan Lepsha had made since at least the early 1990s, when he accused the former prosecutor of the Lviv region, Borys Antonenko, of lying about the circumstances surrounding Ivasiuk’s death.<sup>103</sup> While it

<sup>98</sup> Raymond Patton, ‘The Communist Culture Industry: The Music Business in 1980s Poland’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, 2 (2012), 448.

<sup>99</sup> Mykhailo Kuchar’s interview with Andriy Mykolaichuk, ‘Koly e shcho skazaty – skazhy’, *Molod’ Ukrainy*, 25 Apr. 1991.

<sup>100</sup> As Bohdan Bileichuk stressed in *Molod’ Ukrainy*, local journalists and film crews found it difficult to report on the 1991 Chervona Ruta festival as the organisers gave foreign investors preferential access to the best filming spots in the auditorium, a risky move given that the latter might quickly lose interest in Ukrainian culture. Bohdan Bileichuk, ‘Festyval... problem i rozcharuvan’, *Molod’ Ukrainy*, 20 Aug. 1991.

<sup>101</sup> V. Radchenko, ‘Lakshcho zirky ne zahorajut’sia, to, mozhe, tse nikomu ne potribno’, *Ukraina Moloda*, 9 (1991); Iryna Lukoms’ka, ‘Skhidna Ukraina spryiniiala suchasnu Ukrain’sku muzyku’, *Vechirniy Kyiv*, 26 June 1993; ‘3 Vseukrains’kyi festyval’ pop muzyky Chervona Ruta taky vidkryvsia s’ohodni u Donets’ku’, *Kul’tura i Zhyttia*, 29 May 1993.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Sudova ekspertyzna vstanovyla, shcho kompozytor Ivasiuk ne mih povisytysia samotuzhky’, Ukrainian National News Information Agency (Ukrains’ki National’ni Novyny – Informatsiine Ahenstvo), 13 June 2019, <https://www.unn.com.ua/uk/exclusive/1806841-sudova-ekspertiza-vstanovila-scho-kompozitor-ivasiuk-ne-mig-povisytysia-samotuzhki> (last visited 14 Jan. 2021).

<sup>103</sup> Lepsha’s publications provided a forum where other members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia spoke about Soviet state-sponsored violence. Aurelian Tushyn’s’kyi, a former lecturer at the Rivne cultural institute during the late 1970s, recalled

is possible that Ivasiuk was murdered, it is not clear who killed him. Moreover, this article suggests that while it is important to question the Soviet authorities' claims that Ivasiuk had committed suicide, this should not obscure the alienation which the composer experienced during his short life and which found broader expression among amateur artists in Ukraine in the late 1980s.

Volodymyr Ivasiuk helped define the parameters of modern pop culture in Ukraine during the Brezhnev era.<sup>104</sup> His work was modern in that it differed from other Soviet cultural artefacts which equated Ukrainianness with peasant traditions of the past.<sup>105</sup> Although inspired by folk, Ivasiuk created Ukrainian music that reflected contemporary trends in global entertainment. More importantly, his professional struggles, personal problems and tragic death turned Ivasiuk into a queer symbol that proved remarkably attractive to many Soviet citizens. Historians of socialist Eastern Europe mostly focus on state-sponsored cultural norms rather than popular responses to them,<sup>106</sup> or else explore self-assured expression of anger and disgust within nonconformist cultural spheres, particularly in the more liberal context of the Soviet Union's satellite states.<sup>107</sup> The story of Ivasiuk's life and his afterlives exposes a different side to the emotional crisis of late socialism. His simultaneous desire to be part of mainstream culture and a sense of alienation from society exposed the notion of a 'happy life under socialism' as an unachievable and yet clearly desirable dream. The lives and afterlives of Volodymyr Ivasiuk suggest that *glasnost*' or openness of the late 1980s, although launched by the top Communist Party echelons, can be seen as a rebellion against state-sponsored attempts to systematise citizens' emotions driven not only by anger and disgust characteristic of nonconformist youth subcultures, but also deep emotional ambiguity underpinned by an unfulfilled desire to belong which permeated the mainstream.

By 1989, Ivasiuk had turned into a widely recognisable symbol that helped infuse frustrations with the late socialist emotional order with anti-Soviet, nationalist meanings. As Mikhail Gorbachev relaxed cultural controls throughout the Soviet Union, the Volodymyr Ivasiuk Chervona Ruta festival provided a forum where a new generation of artists broke with Soviet popular music tradition. They shocked audiences with irreverential lyrics, distorted harmonies and unconventional dress which reflected emotions that had been absent from Soviet public culture. At the same time, participants in the Chervona Ruta festival evoked the notion of Ukraine as an alternative space to the oppressive Soviet Union where their 'authentic' feelings were rendered wrong. Organisers of the festival saw Ivasiuk as a powerful patron for such a rebellious event largely because he had been a Ukrainian 'amateur' inspired by regional folk music from the borderlands.<sup>108</sup> To be sure, amateur artists played a key role in attempts to breathe a new life into Soviet socialism after the mid-1950s, helping citizens engage

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seeing Volodymyr Ivasiuk on 4 May 1979. He thus contradicted the official Soviet version that Ivasiuk died soon after he went missing at the end of April. In the same article, Tushyns'kyi recounted the story of his own arrest and torture in 1984, when he was accused of betraying the ideals of socialist realism in his work and of staging a play which highlighted Russo-Ukrainian conflicts. Ivan Lepsha and Vasyl Semen, 'U moi smerti proshu vynyty', *Za vil'nu Ukrainu*, 1992.

<sup>104</sup> While Ukrainian pop was grounded in operatic and folkloric traditions in the 1960s, it acquired a more contemporary sound in the 1970s. Solodovnyk, 'Estrada'.

<sup>105</sup> On the caricatured image of Ukrainian culture as 'folklore' of the days of yore, see Oleksandr Riznyk, 'Muzyka', in Hrytsenko, *Narysy*, 446; Riznyk, 'Pisnya', in Hrytsenko, *Narysy*, 533–4; Wanner, *Burden of Dreams*, 128.

<sup>106</sup> Popular responses to state-sponsored attempts to regulate citizens' emotions have been studied more thoroughly in relation to the post-Stalinist Thaw, as opposed to the long 1970s and beyond. Pinsky, 'Soviet Modernity Post-Stalin', 395–411.

<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 128. Raymond Patton shows that financial incentives encouraged the authorities in socialist Poland to promote 'provocative' forms of music such as rock and even punk through official channels. Patton, 'The Communist Culture Industry', 429.

<sup>108</sup> Elsewhere in the socialist camp, the cultivation of regional identities provided an escape from state-controlled, standardised national identity narratives. For example, Jan Palmowski argues that popular music helped sustain Thuringian identities which provided an alternative to the 'East German' identity and hastened the collapse of East Germany. Jan Palmowski, 'Regional Identities and the Limits of Democratic Centralism in the GDR', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, 3 (2006), 505–6.



in meaningful dialogue about the Stalinist past and the post-Stalinist future.<sup>109</sup> Yet Ivasiuk's apparent failure to survive in the world of Soviet Ukrainian entertainment helped juxtapose the 'amateur' and the 'Soviet'. Tightening institutional controls was relatively easy in a system where the state owned the culture industry.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, the early 1980s campaigns against non-conformist culture turned popular frustration with the emotional norms of late socialism into a national rebellion against the Soviet state and its institutions.

Yet especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ivasiuk's image was deployed to once again overshadow complex, ambiguous emotions in Ukraine. Because the identities which the movers and shakers of Ukraine's pop culture mobilised to criticise Soviet policies were grounded not only in what Catherine Wanner describes as 'alternative' visions of the Ukrainian community cultivated in defiance of the Soviet state,<sup>111</sup> but also in mainstream Soviet Ukrainian popular culture, Ukrainian identities framed in anti-Soviet terms 'often [copied] the traditional Soviet narrative and [borrowed] from its stylistic repertoire'.<sup>112</sup> Ultimately, Ivasiuk the anti-Soviet national hero of independent Ukraine was remarkably similar to Ivasiuk the Soviet Ukrainian nation builder: a straight-laced, deferential national hero who held little appeal among frustrated young people. By the 1990s, faced with the better funded and organised Russian-language pop industry, organisers and supporters of the Chervona Ruta festival abandoned the anti-statist rhetoric of the late 1980s. Seeking to extend state controls over entertainment, they turned into 'national-patriots' who competed against both irreverent artists and large capitalist enterprises.<sup>113</sup> Humour, pastiche and irreverence did not completely disappear from the world of Ukrainian-language music, particularly as the internet provided a way to escape top-down controls over artistic production.<sup>114</sup> But reframing history 'in a way to make nationalists and separatists out of nearly all prominent Ukrainians',<sup>115</sup> the guardians of Ivasiuk's memory resembled many other opinion leaders in post-Soviet Ukraine who failed to capitalise on popular frustration with late Soviet cultural norms that briefly informed and strengthened the Ukrainian nation building project in the late 1980s.

<sup>109</sup> They worked closely with Soviet institutions such as houses of culture and sometimes crossed over into the professional milieu by gaining membership in creative unions, acquiring a regular income and other perks granted to the Soviet creative intelligentsia, as well as obtaining an official 'rank' or 'category' from the Ministry of Culture. Costanzo, 'Conventional Melodrama, Innovative Theater, and a Melodramatic Society'. On the professionalisation of amateur rock music, see Polly McMichael, "'After All, You're a Rock and Roll Star (at Least, That's What They Say)": Roksi and the Creation of the Soviet Rock Musician', *Slavonic and East European Review* 83, 4 (2005), 664–84.

<sup>110</sup> In contrast, although US political and cultural elites were uneasy about the growth of rock music which expressed youth rebellion and undermined CIA-led attempts to counteract the image of the United States as a country devoid of high culture, English-language entertainment conquered the hearts and minds of audiences on both sides of the Iron Curtain and ironically, by channelling rebellious ideas into an American and British dominated idiom of popular music, ensured that the spread of anti-American sentiment effectively strengthened American cultural hegemony. Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Culture and the Cold War in Europe', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume One* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 398–419.

<sup>111</sup> Wanner, *Burden of Dreams*, xxi–xxii.

<sup>112</sup> This observation has been made with reference to contemporary memory wars focused on the Second World War. Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis and Tatiana Zhurzhenko, 'Introduction', *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 12.

<sup>113</sup> Bohdan Shumylovych, 'Vidmovliaiuchys' vid sotsializmu: Al'ternatyvni prostory L'vova 1970–2000x roki', *Ukraina: Kul'turna spadshchyna, national'na svidomist', derzhavnist'* 23 (2013), 602–14.

<sup>114</sup> One of the most interesting performers of the late 1990s and the 2000s sang not in Ukrainian or Russian but in a mixture of both known as surzhyk. Verka Serduchka thus presented audiences with a 'carnavalesque, liberating take on the very real cultural and political tensions' that rocked Ukraine after independence. S. Yekelchuk, 'What is Ukrainian about Ukraine's Pop Culture? The Strange Case of Verka Serduchka', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 44, 1–2 (2010), 217–32.

<sup>115</sup> On similar attempts, see Olena Palko, 'Between two powers: The Soviet Ukrainian writer Mykola Khvyli'ovyi', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 64, 4 (2016), 575–98.

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