

The Communist Movements in Russia and Ukraine

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Executive Summary:

In sharp contrast to the Soviet era, the offices of the communist party fractions (caucuses) in the Russian State Duma and the Ukrainian Supreme Rada -- with their state-provided support staffs and modern communications equipment (long distance telephone lines, fax machines, computers) -- have taken over most of the logistical functions of their party leadership organs (central committees and presidiums). There is likewise a pronounced overlap between central committee membership and the position of parliamentary deputy. With regard to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), of the top leadership designated at its fourth congress in April 1997, fully one half of the full members of the Central Committee (71 of 146) and five candidate members held the position of Duma deputy. All but three of the thirty members of the CPRF's newly appointed Presidium and Secretariat were also Duma deputies. The same was true for the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU). Fifteen of the eighteen members of the CPU Presidium and Secretariat appointed at the party's October 1997 congress and eighteen of twenty-five CPU regional first secretaries were elected deputies in the March 1998 Ukrainian vote for the new Rada, with over one third of the 139 full members of the Central Committee also holding that position.

At the same time, in Russia the development of proto-factions within the CPRF made a clear definition of the party's position on key issues ever harder to ascertain. By the winter and spring of 1998 the militants within the CPRF's ranks and even in its Central Committee were beginning to express public opposition to the party's policies and to Gennadii A. Ziuganov in particular. The Duma's April 1998 confirmation proceedings over President Yeltsin's nomination of Sergei V. Kirienko as prime minister intensified these disagreements, while Kirienko's appointment of the prominent CPRF member, Yuri D. Masliukov, to his cabinet in late July exposed them to public view, as is documented in this report. The dye was thus cast for a decisive show-down in the party's central committee when the political-economic whirlwind that hit Russia in August 1998 pulled the CPRF's chestnuts out of the fire, at least for the time being.

As for the Communist Party of Ukraine, its position was notably strengthened in the new Rada elected in March 1998. With the CPU winning over 24 percent of the party-list vote (15 percent higher than its nearest competitors, the Rukh nationalists and the Socialist Party of Ukraine), the CPU parliamentary fraction numbered 120 deputies as of mid-July. The eight-week long battle for the speakership of the new Rada resulted in the election of a center-leftist speaker and the CPU's deputy chairman as first deputy speaker.

The acid test of the CPU's political acumen may be its ability (or lack thereof) to reach an agreement with the Socialist Party of Ukraine on a common opposition leftist candidate in the rapidly approaching October 1999 presidential elections. And the issue most likely to determine the prospects for CPU-SPU cooperation on this critical question has to do with the communists' position on Russian-

Ukrainian relations, and specifically the question of the reconstitution of an eastern Slavic union. As discussed in this report, there is mounting evidence that the CPU favors a form of "sovereign communism" in which steps toward integration with Russia and (Belarus) would evolve on the pattern of the European Union rather than that of the old-style Soviet Union.

The Central Committees' Colonization of the Parliamentary Fractions:

As the electoral process and parliamentary institutions evolve in the post-Soviet Russian Federation and Ukraine, a symbiotic relationship has developed between the CPRF (Communist Party of the Russian Federation) and CPU (Communist Party of Ukraine), on the one hand, and their respective parliamentary fractions, or caucuses, on the other. In the Soviet era the CPSU Central Committee bureaucracy in Moscow, along with its offshoots in the republican capitals, were the focal points of party decision-making and intra-party communications as well as the sources of funding for local and regional cadres, while the parliaments were rubberstamp bodies that played primarily a propagandistic role. In contrast, the contemporary communist fraction offices in the Russian *Gosudarstvennaia Duma* and the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada* have taken over most of the logistical functions of the Soviet-era Central Committee headquarters.

The parliamentary offices of newly elected communist deputies, with their state-provided support staffs and modern communications equipment -- telephones, fax machines, computers -- were the engines behind the initial rebuilding of national party organizations after the autumn 1991 bans on CPSU activity were lifted. This quickly became evident following the December 1993 Duma elections in Russia and elections to the Ukrainian Rada during the second half of 1994. Grassroots party activists from the Soviet era often took the initiative in reconstructing local party committees.

But it was the interaction between these organizations and their respective parliamentary deputies that fostered the creation of new communist party networks.¹ If in this process the national Central Committees lost their former significance, that of the lower-level party units was considerably enhanced. For one thing, they were transformed into election campaign headquarters in which innovation, familiarity with problems in the localities, and the ability to reach out to uncommitted voters -- or the absence thereof -- could make or break the political careers of communist candidates.² This was especially the case in areas of genuine electoral competition, that is, beyond the left-wing rural enclaves of Russia's red belt or the predominantly industrial and ethnic Russian regions of eastern Ukraine. In short, the relationship between the local and regional communist organizations and the national-level party elite became one of

mutual interdependence, a far cry from the strictly top-down hierarchical structure of the old pre-Gorbachev CPSU.³

As material resources and political clout shifted from traditional communist party leadership organs (Central Committees and Presidiums/Politburos) to the parliamentary groups or fractions, the overlap between Central Committee membership and deputy status became pronounced. The CPRF, in selecting candidates for the 1995 Duma elections, took care to place prominent members of the party hierarchy high on its regional party lists, even if in some cases individuals widely known to the general public also ran in single-member districts.⁴ Given the 1993 electoral law stipulating the distribution of one half of the 450 Duma seats according to proportional representation, members of the party elite were more likely to win a place in the new legislature. And as a result of the enormous number of political organizations fielding candidates on the party-list ballot (43 in all), combined with the five percent threshold for a share of seats allotted by proportional representation, the CPRF's tactic paid off handsomely. If we take as an example the top party leadership designated at the Fourth CPRF Congress in April 1997, fully one half of the full members of the Central Committee (71 of 146), five candidate members, and five members of the party's less prestigious but still important Central Control and Auditing Commission held the position of Duma deputy. All but three of the thirty members of the CPRF's newly appointed Presidium and Secretariat were also Duma deputies.⁵ It may be surmised that a good number of the first secretaries of the CPRF's 89 regional and/or republican party organizations likewise belonged not only to the party's Central Committee but to its Duma fraction as well.⁶

With regard to the Communist Party of Ukraine, the same overall correlation between membership in the top party elite and status as a deputy in the Rada also held true. Thus, fifteen of the eighteen members of the CPU Presidium and Secretariat appointed at the party's October 1997 congress and eighteen of twenty-five CPU regional first secretaries were elected deputies in the March 1998 Ukrainian vote for the new Rada, with over one third of the 139 full members of the Central Committee also holding that position.⁷ In considering these numbers one should bear in mind that there are, relative to total population, more national-level deputies in Ukraine than in Russia (the parliaments of both number 450 seats while the population of Ukraine is only one third that of Russia) and fewer territorial units (27 Ukrainian regions compared to 89 in Russia).

Given the adverse relationship, in material terms, of the Russian and Ukrainian CP Central Committees compared to their parliamentary fractions, it is hardly surprising that the traditional Leninist principle of democratic centralism has, as it were, fallen through the cracks. While both the CPRF and the

CPU pay lip service in their party programs and congress documents to the overriding importance of party discipline, and particularly to the need for communist deputies to heed the decisions of their party leadership committees, violations of democratic centralism are routine and sanctions are rarely imposed. This situation will be discussed at some length in the separate accounts below of the activity of the communist fractions in the Duma and Rada.

First, however, mention should be made of a cardinal difference between the current parliamentary fractions of Russia and Ukraine. In the Rada as constituted after the spring 1998 elections, the various party groups may be compared to billiard balls: for the most part they are self-contained and mutually exclusive units. For example, while the Ukrainian communist and socialist fractions are potential allies on many legislative issues, they remain clearly differentiated from one another in terms of organizational loyalty. In the Duma, on the other hand, the various party fractions -- especially those on the left -- may be said to have a molecular structure, to be comprised of proto-fractions within fractions.

In the case of the Duma's Agrarian and People's Power groups, this circumstance is due, in large part, to the disproportionately large number of seats awarded to the CPRF as a result of the 1995 elections. Although the CPRF received only 22.3 percent of the party-list vote, it acquired twice that proportion of seats in the Duma since only four parties altogether (representing about 50 percent of the total popular vote) managed to pass the five percent threshold for a share of the proportional representation allotment. As a result, the communists, initially with 157 deputies out of 450, agreed to "subsidize" the creation of two additional left-wing fractions (35 were required to register a party group) by loaning some of its "surplus" deputies to the Agrarians and People's Power bloc. Thus, as of December 1997, almost one half of the latter group and two-fifths of the Agrarians were individuals originally elected on the CPRF ticket.⁸

This gave the CPRF, theoretically at least, considerable leverage over its Duma allies, provided the deputies "loaned" to them observed communist party discipline. To what extent they actually did so is not easy to ascertain with precision, particularly on secret ballots. But by 1998 this question had become moot since, as further detailed below, the cleavages within the CPRF itself had begun to spin out of control. The rule of democratic centralism thus collapsed, a subject to which we shall now turn.

The CPRF Fraction in the Russian State Duma:

The latent tension between a legislator's defense of the public welfare and defense of partisan interests, a perennial theme in democratic theory, is compounded in the CPRF's case by continued commitment in its party statutes to Leninist-style democratic centralism. At the same time, the emergence

of proto-factions within the CPRF, itself a reflection of the pull and tug of conflicting rank-and-file interests, had by 1998 made a clear definition of the party's position on key issues ever harder to ascertain. The overlap between the CPRF's top leadership organs and its Duma fraction further complicated the picture. In what may be termed a classic boomerang effect, the CPRF's "colonization"⁹ of the Duma -- initially intended to facilitate the recreation of a nationwide, cohesive, disciplined force -- is leading to the grudging transformation of this putative Leninist grouping into a European-style political party. This process was galvanized by President Yeltsin's late March 1998 dismissal of Prime Minister Viktor S. Chernomyrdin in favor of Sergei V. Kirienko and then, in reaction to the Russian Federation's deepening financial crisis, his late August 1998 dismissal of Kirienko in favor once again of Chernomyrdin.

From the January 1994 convening of the new State Duma (established by the 1993 "Yeltsin" Constitution) until the end of 1997, the CPRF fraction was unrelenting in its criticism of government policy but accommodating on those few issues that came within the constitutional purview of the Duma, such as approval of the annual state budget. During the tenure of the body elected in December 1993, this was partly due to the CPRF's relative weakness (its fraction numbered only 45 deputies, just ten percent of the total) and partly induced by memories of the violent October 1993 confrontation between the defenders of the Congress of People's Deputies dissolved by presidential decree and Yeltsin's armed forces. Even after the December 1995 parliamentary elections when, as explained above, the CPRF fraction's clout dramatically increased, the exigencies of the mid-1996 presidential contest led the communists to project a public image of compromise and moderation.

Yeltsin's decisive defeat of Gennadii A. Ziuganov, in an election that was free if hardly fair (given the Yeltsin campaign's enormous advantages in terms of finances and media access), resulted in continuing CPRF accommodation. Thus on August 10, 1996, Chernomyrdin was reconfirmed as prime minister by 314 to 85 with three abstentions, in a secret ballot, and the following December, in an open ballot, over half of the CPRF deputies supported the draft 1997 budget, while only 44 voted against it.¹⁰ In fact, the majority of the communists supported the successive draft budgets of 1997 and 1998 in votes that the party fraction left up to the discretion of the individual deputies.¹¹

Among the CPRF's ranks, however, the Duma fraction's persistent non-confrontation with the Yeltsin government was generating dissent, fueled by anger over the vast disparities in wealth, regional pockets of abysmal poverty, and persistent non-payment of wages to government employees as well as many workers in privatized but not restructured enterprises. Ziuganov's early October 1997 call for a vote of no confidence in the Chernomyrdin government was reflective of this malaise and elicited broad

support among the CPRF's allies in the Duma. On October 8 the parliament voted "380 to zero with five abstentions to declare the government's performance during the first nine months of 1997 'unsatisfactory'."¹² A week later, however, as parliament was poised to vote on the no-confidence motion, Yeltsin agreed to a number of procedural concessions by phone and, after the Duma took a recess, the CPRF fraction move to postpone the final vote until October 22.¹³ The upshot was a compromise whereby Yeltsin agreed, in exchange for withdrawal of the motion of no confidence, to consult regularly with the prime minister and speakers of the Duma and Federation Council as well as to conduct round-table talks with government and parliamentary representatives on a series of major policy issues.¹⁴ A semblance of harmony was restored, but within the CPRF pressures began to mount behind the scenes for a more confrontational policy. Significantly, during the brief Duma recess on October 15, communist deputies solicited the views of their local party leaders regarding the postponement of the no-confidence vote. There is some evidence that very mixed views were received.¹⁵

By the winter and spring of 1998, the militants within the CPRF's ranks and even Central Committee were beginning to express public opposition to the party's policies and to Ziuganov in particular. Yeltsin had not made good on his promises of consultation with the legislators, economic indicators were worsening, wage arrears continued. Against this backdrop and the abrupt March 23 dismissal of the Chernomyrdin government, the April 1998 drama over the confirmation of Kirienko as the new prime minister played itself out.

The first of the three confirmation votes constitutionally permissible (before the obligatory dissolution of the Duma and calling of new elections) was surprisingly indecisive. 226 votes were required for acceptance or rejection of Kirienko's candidacy, but on April 10 some 100 deputies opted not to take part in the secret ballot; there were only 143 votes for and 186 against Yeltsin's nominee, with five abstentions. Rumor had it that the CPRF Central Committee, in a closed meeting on April 2, was divided over what position to take.¹⁶ But prior to the second round of voting on April 17, Ziuganov announced that a decision by the leadership of the People's Patriotic Union of Russia (essentially a CPRF front organization) to vote against Kirienko was obligatory for all communist deputies.¹⁷ The battle-lines were clearly hardening, and in the second vote -- an open ballot -- an overwhelming 270 deputies voted against Kirienko, with only 115 in favor and 11 abstentions. Of the 133 deputies then comprising the CPRF fraction, 121 voted against the president's candidate, two for him and one abstained, while some 62 members of the Agrarians and People's Power group, that is, the overwhelming majority, also voted against Kirienko and only nine voted for him.¹⁸

The CPRF and its allies were now faced with the choice of whether to vote against Kirienko a third time, on April 24, and thereby invite dissolution of the Duma and new parliamentary elections. At this point, Ziuganov reiterated his opposition to Kirienko, baldly asserting the left opposition's readiness for new elections,¹⁹ while the Communist speaker of the Duma, Gennadii N. Seleznev took the opposite position. Seleznev argued on Russian Public Television that "Russia will not forgive us if we sacrifice the State Duma over a nomination for the prime minister," and he vowed to argue before an upcoming emergency session of the CPRF Central Committee that the party did "not have the right" to "leave Russia without a legislative assembly." He also cited the high cost of holding new parliamentary elections at that time.²⁰ Seleznev's stance notwithstanding, the Central Committee resolved on April 23 that all communists must vote against Kirienko and, in case of a decision to hold a secret ballot, should simply not participate.²¹

As it turned out, on April 24 some Communists did pick up ballots, and an as yet undetermined number of them voted in favor of Kirienko, thereby contributing to a decisive outcome of 251 to 25 in favor of his confirmation. Some observers have argued that the Ziuganov leadership circle engineered this result by secretly arranging that certain communist deputies would vote yes.²² The implication was that Ziuganov's public opposition to Kirienko's candidacy was simply a smokescreen to placate the party's increasingly vocal militants while he in fact hoped to avoid the incalculable consequences of the Duma's dissolution and new elections.

This interpretation is doubtful on several grounds. First, it assumes that the CPRF deputies *qua* Central Committee members still remained, in April 1998, a largely compliant group amenable to manipulation by the top leadership (or, alternatively, that they were prepared to go to any lengths to protect their perks of public office). More importantly, it fails to account either for the magnitude of the favorable communist vote for Kirienko²³ (which reportedly also came as a shock to Ziuganov) or for the anguish and soul-searching experienced by some of those CPRF deputies who consciously defied party discipline to vote for him.²⁴

The range and depth of the CPRF's cleavages over whether or not to reach a tactical accommodation with a Kirienko cabinet would become publicly apparent only in July 1998, as the result of the internal party crisis sparked by Yurii D. Masliukov's agreement to become minister of trade and industry in the government. Masliukov, the last head of the Soviet central planning agency (Gosplan) under Gorbachev, was a member of the CPRF Central Committee and chairman of the Duma's Economic Policy Committee until his appointment to the cabinet. Before agreeing to accept the new position he

stipulated certain conditions, to which Kirienko gave his oral consent, namely, that he be given oversight of arms trade and the defense industry, including nuclear weapons and the space industry, and that his ministry become the chief government organ for the coordination of state orders with regard to both federal and regional needs. His goal, as he put it in a letter to his party comrades, was to "protect industry and the defense complex from further destruction."²⁵

Masliukov joined the Kirienko government on July 23, one day after the CPRF Presidium voted unanimously against such a move.²⁶ He thus defied party discipline to serve the public interest as he understood it. Soon, however, it became clear that the CPRF as a whole was deeply divided over this issue. According to an official party announcement accompanying the publication of the above-mentioned letter, the discussion in the Presidium had been sharp indeed. Yuri P. Belov -- the Leningrad obkom secretary and a militant nationalist long associated with Ziuganov's views -- had gone so far as to threaten to call for a Central Committee vote of no confidence in the Presidium should it vote in favor of Masliukov taking the cabinet post.²⁷ Then, a few days later, the CPRF Central Committee's ideological department issued a statement on behalf of first deputy party chairman, Valentin A. Kuptsov. It bluntly stated that " 'Negative views were coming in' from many local party organizations, but at the same time representatives of the VPK [military-industrial complex] and a number of governors support Yu. Masliukov."²⁸ Meanwhile, Masliukov reportedly claimed that "half the members of the Communist fraction in the State Duma" supported his decision.²⁹

Kuptsov, in the statement cited above, had announced that a definitive decision regarding the "Masliukov affair" would be reached in the middle of August at a special session of the Central Committee. The die was thus cast for a decisive showdown regarding the conflicting requirements of communist party discipline and an individual legislator's own perception of his duty to constituents and country. In the end, of course, the political-economic whirlwind that struck Russia in mid-August 1998 pulled the CPRF's chestnuts out of the fire, enabling the party to defer resolution of this cardinal question.

Yeltsin's sudden dismissal of Kirienko and reappointment of Chernomyrdin as acting prime minister on August 23, a week after the devaluation of the ruble, led to a brief flurry of speculation regarding the possibility of a political truce between the executive and legislative branches of government. An agreement, which would have provided for the Duma's confirmation of Chernomyrdin in exchange for strengthened parliamentary powers including oversight over other cabinet appointments, was actually initialed by Chernomyrdin and the Duma and Federation Council leaders on August 30. However, Ziuganov quickly retracted the CPRF's initial approval of the arrangement.³⁰ The next day the first vote

on Chernomyrdin's confirmation went decisively against him, by 253 to 94,³¹ while a week later he was defeated by an even larger margin, 273 to 138 with one abstention.³² Ziuganov's early backing for some kind of deal was consistent with his October 1997 maneuvers in support of an executive-legislative compromise. Nevertheless, in view of the growing militancy throughout the CPRF so pointedly illustrated by the "Maliukov affair," there was plainly no way to buck the groundswell of opposition to the return of Chernomyrdin -- especially in the face of the now manifest failures of the government he had headed for five years.

It remained to be seen whether the premiership of Yevgeny M. Primakov, whom the Duma overwhelmingly endorsed for the position just days later, signaled the beginning of a new era in post-Soviet Russian politics or simply a transition to the parliamentary elections in December 1999 and presidential race scheduled for the year 2000. Whatever the case, with regard to the coming electoral season it was difficult to imagine a replay by the divided CPRF elite of its smooth coordination of the communists' 1995 Duma campaign, let alone united left-wing support for a second presidential bid by Ziuganov.

The CPU Fraction in the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada*:

In the March 1998 elections to the *Verkhovna Rada*, the communists won over 24 percent of the party-list vote, outpolling by some 15 percent their nearest competitors (the Rukh nationalists and the Socialist Party of Ukraine [SPU] garnered some 9.5 and 8.5 percent of the votes respectively, with all the others falling below 5.5 percent). However, although the elections were conducted according to procedures similar to those in effect in Russia since autumn 1993, a four percent rather than five percent threshold was required to qualify for a share of the 225 seats based on proportional representation (PR). This turned out to be an important distinction. Since in the 1998 Ukrainian contest eight parties, with some 66 percent of the total vote, reached the four percent threshold, the CPU with 24.5 percent of the party-list vote received only 84 seats on the basis of PR (in contrast to the CPRF's 99 seats, with 22.3 percent of the vote, in the analogous Russian PR distribution in 1995).

Nevertheless, when the new parliament convened, the CPU fraction numbered 119 as a result of communist seats won in single-member districts and the adhesion of several deputies elected as independents. As for the other Rada groups, the Socialist-Peasant Party bloc numbered 35, while the anti-Kuchma "Hromada" group led by former prime minister Pavlo I. Lazarenko had 39 members. The four center-right fractions counted altogether 185 deputies, including many who had run as independents in

single-member districts. And Sumy regional leader Natalia M. Vitrenko's maverick Marxist-Leninist formation, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, had 17 members. With 36 deputies still listing no affiliation, the Supreme Rada convened on May 14, 1998, with a total of 431 accredited lawmakers (that number increased to 441 by mid-July as various legal disputes over individual election district results were resolved).³³

The stage was thus set for the saga of the Rada speakership election. In a confrontation involving presidential ambitions and personal vindictiveness superimposed upon the left-center-right political cleavages, there were twenty separate sets of nominations and ballots over a period of eight weeks. Since an absolute majority of 226 votes (of the legally prescribed 450 parliamentary deputies) was required, the center-right deputies from Rukh, the Greens, former President Leonid Kravchuk's United Social Democrats, and President Leonid Kuchma's People's Democrats boycotted many of the successive ballots in an effort to bloc the election of a leftist speaker. Above all, they opposed the reelection of Aleksandr A. Moroz, the SPU leader and Rada speaker from 1994 until Spring 1998, who is poised to challenge Kuchma in the autumn 1999 presidential race.

Amid emotional polemics, belligerent outbursts, and accusations of vote-buying on all sides, one after another leading contender failed to achieve the necessary majority although CPU leader Petr N. Simonenko mustered a high of 221 votes (twice), former President Kravchuk 193, Lazarenko 177, Moroz 212, and two People's Democratic Party candidates, Ivan S. Pliushch and Oleksandr M. Bandurka 205 and 222 respectively.³⁴ In the end Aleksandr M. Tkachenko -- member of the Socialist-allied Peasant Party, former deputy speaker under Moroz, and Soviet Ukraine's last minister of agriculture, was elected with 232 votes on July 7. Although positioned on the left, he was reportedly a pragmatist rather than an ideologically committed leader in the manner of Moroz, not to mention Simonenko.³⁵ In a further jolt to the center-right, the post of first deputy speaker, by a vote of 270 to 23, went to Simonenko's deputy and CPU second secretary, Adam I. Martiniuk, while on the same ballot United Social Democratic leader Viktor V. Medvedchuk was chosen deputy speaker

The trauma of the battle for the speakership, despite the relatively successful outcome for the left, seems to have had a sobering effect on the CPU, judging from Simonenko's report to a Central Committee plenum on July 11, 1998. The first secretary reflected upon the party's need, among other tasks, to refine its coalition-building methods in the parliament.³⁶ While he cautioned against undue tactical compromises with the "bourgeois" parties, he also had some harsh words for the CPU's would-be Socialist allies. "In the documents of the last... congress, the SPU says nothing about the class contradictions in present-day

Ukraine and does not set forth the goal of a struggle against capitalism for socialism and Soviet power.” Rather, he continued derisively, the Socialists speak of a broad coalition of variously oriented forces “for the joint creation of a strong, economically developed society where each honest person will feel free and comfortable.” Not only that, but they look upon this goal as the “the Ukrainian national idea.”³⁷ All of this, he concluded, bespoke either “naivete or deception,” either of which bode ill for a serious working relationship with the Socialists in the Rada.

All the same, Simonenko seemed to have some understanding of the daunting tasks that lay ahead, particularly if the CPU was to take part in an effective multi-party coalition in the new Rada. The acid test of the communist party’s political acumen, however, would be its ability (or lack thereof) to reach an agreement with Moroz’s SPU on a common opposition candidate in the rapidly approaching October 1999 presidential elections. Two issues would condition the prospects for CPU-SPU cooperation both on a legislative agenda and on the more critical question of a joint presidential candidate. The first and most important had to do with the CPU’s position on Russian-Ukrainian relations and the second involved the extent to which the communist fraction in the Rada would vote along strict party lines, i.e., adhere to the rule of democratic centralism.

With regard to the latter, reference has already been made to the “billiard ball” structures of the left-wing fractions in the newly elected Rada. This had not always been the case during the previous parliamentary term, from 1994 until spring 1998. With all deputies elected in 1994 from single-member districts and the CPU only recently reconstituted, there was in that contest less central communist party control over individual candidacies and less cohesiveness in the subsequently formed CPU Rada fraction. This was illustrated by the divisions that developed among the communist deputies in the June 26-28, 1996, deliberations and voting on the new Constitution of Ukraine.

In the ballots not only on the final document but also on a series of amendments to the government’s original draft, a substantial minority of CPU deputies took a more moderate and flexible position than that of their party’s leadership (of which only five out of nineteen Presidium members were at that time Rada deputies).³⁸ One may well ask whether this same kind of pattern will eventually emerge in the present Rada or whether the cohesion garnered from the 1998 party-list system of electing deputies will remain in effect. If the latter is the case, the CPU leadership may be in a better position to stand firm in its bargaining with other opposition fractions for a common policy agenda.

As for the issue of Ukrainian-Russian relations, when the communist speaker of the Russian State Duma, Seleznev, addressed the Rada on September 29, 1998, he caused an uproar by calling for a “strong

union” of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus “without borders, without customs barriers, and with our citizens having the right to live, work and study in any of the three states without the feeling of being foreigners.”³⁹ Whereupon the nationalist Rukh deputies walked out, the communist legislators applauded, and the SPU explained in the next issue of its weekly newspaper that, in a meeting with the Rada Speaker, Seleznev had indicated that some 80 percent of Russians supported Ukraine’s joining the Union of Russia and Belarus.⁴⁰

Yet there are mounting indications that the CPU leadership circle, and Simonenko in particular, would prefer a quite different type of relationship between Ukraine and the Russian Federation than the one suggested by Seleznev. Simonenko’s report to the Third CPU Congress in October 1997 included repeated evocations of “proletarian internationalism” as well as praise for the Soviet custom of holding frequent “international meetings of communist and workers’ parties” on issues of common interest. He was presumably alluding to the type of international communist meetings that had taken place during the Brezhnev era. But at those meetings of ruling and non-ruling CPs the unanimity rule had prevailed.

Such de facto veto power, particularly as exercised during the prolonged negotiations leading to the pan-European communist summit conference in June 1976, had enabled the Eurocommunist-autonomist entente of the Italian, French, Romanian, and Yugoslav CPs to win the day vis-a-vis Moscow on a number of key issues. The 1976 pan-European CP conference had in fact signaled the triumph of “sovereign communism,” at least beyond Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe. It is thus likely that what the CPU leadership really had in mind was not the return to a single Soviet-style state but the establishment of a new kind of eastern Slavic union in which the parity and sovereignty of each member state would be guaranteed.

The mid-July 1998 issue of the CPRF’s *Pravda* published two articles dealing with Ukraine that lend credence to the above speculation. The first, which appeared on the front page, explicitly criticized the CPU fraction in the Rada for going along with the ratification of the spring 1997 Russian-Ukrainian Treaty signed by Yeltsin and Kuchma, (a step that the Duma had thus far declined to take). According to the *Pravda* commentator, the Ukrainian comrades’ support for ratification was a “tactical error” on the grounds (again spelled out) that the treaty delimited the Russian-Ukrainian border, thereby complicating the eventual reunification of the two states.⁴¹ These passages appeared, moreover, in a piece that not only hailed the union of Belarus and Russia but applauded the “direct and tightly knit ties of Belorussian and Russian enterprises and cities ‘of the red belt,’” and quoted Ziuganov as saying that Russia was the “chief integrating center” of the union. The other article, on an inside page but more cutting in its implications, contained a veiled admonition to the CPU to follow the path of their distant predecessors who had chosen,

in 1918, to become an autonomous formation within the Russian Communist Party (bolshevik) rather than a separate (*osobaia*) formation.⁴²

From the foregoing we may infer that for Simonenko, proletarian internationalism and international communist meetings were code words for "sovereign communism" rather than reintegration into a Moscow-dominated eastern Slavic state. The CPU's stance on the sensitive issue of Ukrainian language usage further corroborates this view. At the CPU congresses delegates spoke at their own discretion in either Ukrainian or Russian, while in the Rada the communist deputies alternately used both languages. For instance, Simonenko would deliver a speech one day in Russian, the next day in Ukrainian.⁴³ Should the CPU leadership in fact favor a sovereign albeit socialist Ukraine while also retaining authority over its Rada fraction (including its Russophile members), the prospects for a CPU-SPU agreement on a joint left-wing presidential candidate would substantially improve.

1. Joan Barth Urban and Valerii D. Solovei, *Russia's Communists at the Crossroads* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 50, 138-139, and 147. In the Russian Duma, the law allows a deputy to employ between one and five assistants. The CPRF determined that each communist deputy would have five assistants, one in Moscow and the other four in the regions, all of whom have the right to free public transport, rooms in the parliament or local administrative buildings, access to working documents, etc. The latter double in effect as full-time party officials, acting as raikom, gorkom, obkom, or reskom secretaries. With their salaries paid from the state budget (which in 1998 allotted some 3,000 new rubles per month for this purpose to each deputy, or the equivalent of about \$500 per month before the mid-August 1998 devaluation of the ruble), the 800-odd assistants to the communist deputies form a key component of the organizational core to the party. Since 1996, the CPRF has had a separate building in Moscow to house its Central Committee offices, fully equipped with modern communications facilities and even a small adjoining hotel. However, given the large number of Central Committee members who are also Duma deputies, top party leadership meetings continue to be held in the parliament building as a matter of convenience. This information is based on the author's conversations with ranking CPRF Duma deputies in Moscow on November 12-13, 1998.

By way of concrete illustration, according to discussions between Urban and Solovei at the CPRF's Ivanovo region offices in June 1996 and December 1997, the secretary directly in charge of the obkom office was also the assistant to her electoral district's Duma deputy (and obkom first secretary), Vladimir Ilich Tikhonov. As of December 1997, that secretary received a monthly state salary of 1,300,000 old rubles (about \$215 at the then current rate of exchange); she then turned over 200,000 rubles from her salary to the CPRF.

During Urban's informal conversations at the Ukrainian Rada in May 1998, deputies and their assistants described a roughly similar situation, although not in such detail. In contrast to the CPRF, the CPU headquarters in Kiev, located in a small, cramped, and sparsely furnished two-story building in the old city, appeared to be ill-equipped to serve as the nerve center of a mass nationwide political organization.

2. The Ivanovo obkom offices, four days before the first round of the 1996 presidential election, was a beehive of activity by volunteers who were distributing photocopies of campaign fliers published in the central pro-CPRF press (*Sovetskaia Rossiia* and *Pravda*) and posters hand made out of glossy, creatively doctored-up left-overs from the

pro-Yeltsin "Our Home Is Russia" 1995 Duma race.

3. Gennadii Ziuganov, at the April 1997 party congress, claimed 540,000 members for the CPRF (*IV Sezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Moscow, 1997], p. 33) although first deputy chairman, Valentin Kuptsov, reportedly mentioned the figure of only some 250 to 280 thousand members at a Central Committee meeting in March of that year (see O. Zhirnov, *Moskovskaia pravda*, March 5, 1997, as cited in *Raznogolositsa*, No. 10, March 3-9, 1997, p. 18). The CPRF had long since established party committees in all 89 territorial units of the Russian Federation, while Ziuganov reported that by 1997 there were 27,000 primary party organizations (*Pravda Rossii*, April 15, 1997, p. 1). As for Ukraine, at the Third CPU Congress in October 1997, Chairman Petr Simonenko put the party membership at 140,000 and the number of primary party organizations at 5,172, of which 1,375 were in workplaces (*Komunist* [Kiev], No. 42, October 1997, p. 7-8). The total population of Ukraine is about one third that of the Russian Federation (fifty million plus compared to some 150 million Russia).

4. Urban and Solovei, *Russia's Communists*, pp. 159-162.

5. For the composition of the CPRF's leadership organs, see *IV Sezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, pp. 108-117. The author compared this to the persons listed in a breakdown of the Duma fraction memberships made available to her by a CPRF deputy in December 1997.

6. Systematic information about the CPRF's regional organizations is as yet unavailable and constitutes an important topic for future research. The same may be said about the Communist governors elected since 1996 as well as their role in the restructured and increasingly influential Federation Council. For preliminary thoughts on this subject, see Sakwa, "Left or Right?", pp. 7-8; and Julia Wishnevsky, "The CPRF in the Regions," paper presented to the 30th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, September 24-27, 1998, Boca Raton, Florida.

7. The new CPU Presidium and Secretariat members are named in *Komunist* [Kiev], No. 42, October 1997, p. 1; the composition of the Rada elected in spring 1998 is listed, by fraction affiliation, in *Tovarishch* [Kiev], No. 22, May 1998, p. 2. For the election of CPU obkom secretaries as deputies, see *Komunist*, No. 32, August 1998, p. 3. The CPU fraction rose from 119 to 120 deputies by late July, as local electoral disputes were resolved.

8. At the Fourth CPRF Congress in April 1997, a total of 173 Duma deputies were identified as having been elected on the CPRF ticket (the increase since 1995 being due to victories in various by-elections); see the stenographic account of the Fourth Congress in *Komunist* (Moscow), No. 4, July-August 1997, pp. 102-105. Comparing that list to the breakdown of Duma fraction memberships as of December 1997 (see endnote 5), one can establish that the CPRF "loaned" 17 deputies to the People's Power group and 14 to the Agrarians.

9. The term was coined by Richard Sakwa; see his unpublished paper, "Left or Right? The CPRF and the Problem of Democratic Consolidation in Russia," 1997.

10. For these figures, see Sakwa, "Left or Right?", pp. 6 and 17.

11. This judgment is based on Joan Urban's conversations with ranking CPRF Duma deputies in Moscow, November 12-13, 1998. The Duma passed the 1998 budget in the final reading by 252 to 129 with two abstentions; *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 43, Part I, March 4, 1998.

12. *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 1, No. 135, Part I, October 9, 1997.

13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, No. 140, Part I, October 16, 1997.

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14. Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 144, Part I, October 22, 1997.
15. In Ivanovo, for example, the secretary in charge of the obkom office was able to reach fourteen raikom secretaries, out of a total of twenty-five, of whom eight opposed postponement of the no-confidence vote and six supported it.
16. See *Moskovskii komsomolets*, April 6, 1998, as cited in *Raznogolositsa*, No. 4, 1998 (April 6-12), p. 61.
17. Reported by S. Aksenov, *Kommersant daily*, April 16, 1998, as cited in *Raznogolositsa*, No. 4, 1998 (April 13-19), p. 101.
18. *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, April 21, 1998, as cited in *Raznogolositsa*, No. 4, 1998 (April 20-26), p. 127. CPRF Duma speaker, Gennadii Seleznev, did not take part in the vote, while Yurii D. Masliukov and Oleg A. Shenkarev (who was soon to leave the CPRF) voted in favor of Kirienko and Daria A. Mitina, the youngest member of the CPRF fraction, abstained, reportedly out of solidarity with Kirienko's youth; Joan Urban's conversations with ranking CPRF Duma deputies in Moscow, November 12-13, 1998.
19. *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 77, Part I, April 22, 1998.
20. Quoted in *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 2, No. 75, Part I, April 20, 1998.
21. For the text of the Central Committee resolution, see *Pravda rossii*, No. 18, April 29-May 5, 1998, p. 1. The motion to vote against Kirienko was supported by about sixty percent of the Central Committee members, while about forty percent opposed it, for reasons similar to those expressed publicly by Seleznev; information supplied to Joan Urban during conversations with ranking CPRF Duma deputies, November 12-13, 1998.
22. See, for example, G. Cherkasov, *Kommersant daili*, April 28, 1998, as reported in *Raznogolositsa*, No. 5, 1998 (April 27-May 10), p. 40.
23. The number of communists who broke ranks to vote for Kirienko ranged from Ziuganov's own figure of 12 (*Moskovskie novosti*, No. 16, 1998) to a figure of some 25 to 40 (*Argumenti i fakty*, No. 18, 1998); see *Raznogolositsa*, No. 5, 1998, p. 41. The differences in the figures may relate to the distinction between those deputies elected on the communist tickets but who are not "card-carrying" CPRF members and those who are both CPRF deputies and party members. The former are not obliged to observe party discipline although they normally choose to do so; information provided during Joan Urban's conversations with ranking CPRF Duma deputies, November 12-13, 1998. Prominent communist deputies who admitted to voting for Kirienko include Gennadii Seleznev, Yurii Masliukov, and Duma deputy speaker Svetlana P. Goriacheva. Ziuganov's longtime associate but non-communist member of the CPRF fraction, Aleksei I. Podberezkin, also voted in favor of Kirienko.
24. See, for example, Svetlana Goriachev's interview in *Pravda*, July 9, 1998, pp. 1-2, in which she recounted the physical and psychic stress to which she was subjected because of her breach of discipline. Her reasons for taking that step were similar to those cited above by Seleznev in his mid-April interview on Russian Public Television. The capstone of her interview, however, was her delineation of her public policy positions: preferential credit and tax subsidies favoring domestic Russian products over foreign imports; government regulation of energy prices; progressive taxation; free medical care, education, and so forth. These policies may be considered social democratic but certainly not communist in character.
25. For the text of Masliukov's letter and conditions, see *Pravda*, July 28-29, 1998, p. 1.
26. *Pravda*, July 24, 1998, p. 1.

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27. This disclosure appeared in *Pravda*, July 28-29, 1998, p. 1.
28. "Reshenie -- za plenumom TsK KPRF," *Pravda*, July 30, 1998, p. 1.
29. *RFE/RL Newslime*, Vol. 2, No. 141, Part I, July 24, 1998.
30. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, No. 167, Part I, August 31, 1998.
31. The breakdown by party fraction of the first vote was reported by *Reuters*, August 31, 1998, and reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List*, #2338, September 1, 1998.
32. For the breakdown by party fraction of the second vote, see *The New York Times*, September 8, 1998, p. A12.
33. See *Tovarishch*, No. 22, May 1998, p. 2.
34. J. B. Urban observed the speakership election process from the balcony of the parliament during the week of May 24; ongoing accounts of the prolonged crisis may be found in the widely respected Kiev daily, *Den*.
35. Olga Len and Vladimir Solotorev, "Rebenok parlamentskoi blokady," *Den*, July 11, 1998, p. 4.
36. Text in *Komunist*, No. 29, July 1998, pp. 3-4.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
38. The final vote, taken under the government's threat of a popular referendum that would have undermined the parliament's prerogatives and prestige, was 315 in favor, 36 against, 12 abstentions, and 30 nonvoters at a time when the communists numbered 87 out of a total of 415 deputies; a two-thirds majority of the 450 potential seats in the Supreme Rada, i.e., 301 votes, was required for ratification of the new Constitution. For details, see Kataryna Wolczuk, "The Politics of Constitution Making in Ukraine," in *Contemporary Ukraine: Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation*, ed. Taras Kuzio (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 118-138 at pp. 128 and 134; see also the official Rada record of the votes in Kiev.
39. Seleznev's speech was quoted in *The Washington Post*, October 17, 1998, p. A14.
40. "S tochki zreniia predsedatelia gosdumy...", *Tovarishch*, No. 40, October 1998, p. 1.
41. Vladimir Dekterev, "Porozn my obrecheny pogibat," *Pravda*, July 14-15, 1998, p. 1. CPRF deputies, including those among the top leadership, are divided on the issue of the recreation of a unitary eastern Slavic state, with some insisting on commitment to this goal and others conceding that any attempt to reunite Ukraine and Russia would lead to civil war in Ukraine. Here it should be emphasized that the appearance of an article in *Pravda*, even on such a highly sensitive subject, does not indicate prior approval by the CPRF in Presidium. This information was provided during Joan Urban's conversations with ranking CPRF Duma deputies, November 12-13, 1998.
42. Viktor Drozd, "Inogo net puti...", *ibid.*, p. 2.
43. This assessment is based on the author's reading of the unedited stenographic account of the Second CPU Congress and her observations of Rada sessions in late May and early June 1998.