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**PUBLIC POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF VASYL STUS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PROTECTION OF UKRAINIAN SELF-OPPORTUNITY****ГРОМАДСЬКА ПОЛІТИЧНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ ВАСИЛЯ СТУСА ТА ЇЇ ВПЛИВ НА ЗАХИСТ СВОЄЇ ВЛАСНОСТІ УКРАЇНИ****Lada O. V.,**

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*The figure of Vasyl Stus is considered as one of the representatives of the creative intelligentsia of Ukraine. Through a thorough analysis of scientific and journalistic literature about V. Stus I managed to explore the way of life of the poet. The struggle of the domestic intelligentsia against the Soviet hierarchy, a significant place among which belongs to V. Stus, is revealed. In the course of the study, it was found by the representatives of the authorities that the views of the poet concerning the state-building processes are still in power, even in the present. Significant contribution of the poet in protecting national interests is noted in the condition of non-statehood of Ukraine.*

**Keywords:** sixties, poetry, Russification, nation-building, totalitarian society, political prisoners.

*Фігура Василя Стуса вважається одним з представників творчої інтелігенції України. Завдяки ретельному аналізу наукової та публіцистичної літератури про В. Стуса вдалося вивчити спосіб життя поета. Розкрито боротьбу вітчизняної інтелігенції проти радянської ієрархії, значне місце якої належить В. Стусу. У ході дослідження представники влади встановили, що думки поета щодо державно-будівельних процесів залишаються у силі, навіть у сьогоденні. Значний внесок поету в захист національних інтересів відзначається в умовах недержавності України.*

**Ключові слова:** шістдесяті роки, поезія, русифікація, націоналізм, тоталітарне суспільство, політичні в'язні.

(стаття друкується мовою оригіналу)

**Relevance of research.** The end of 2013 in Ukraine marked the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity (November 2013 – February 2014). The revolutionary events revealed a deep socio-political crisis in Ukraine, which manifested not only in the weakness of state borders, but also in the absence of national consciousness of citizens in general. Despite the fact that the main requirements and slogans of the revolution related to the European integration processes, the ideological basis of these events

was the literary heritage of domestic dissidents and leading figures in Ukrainian literature and history. The literary work of Vasyl Stus, a dissident who fought for Ukraine's independence during the Soviet period, played a significant role during the revolutionary events of December, 2013 – February, 2014. Of particular interest in this context are the works of the poet, which, in our opinion, reflects the struggle of the Ukrainian people for their identity and independence in the conditions of the colonial policy of the Bolshevik totalitarian regime.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.**

Socio-political activity of V. Stus is represented in the works of domestic researchers: A. Bondarenko [2], Yu. Bondarenko [2], V. Tergi [10], N. Logvinenko [15], O. Solovey [17], N. Svyatokum [18].

The purpose of the article is to study the social and political activity of V. Stus and his contribution to the preservation of Ukrainian identity.

The extraordinary creative figure of Vasyl Stus is one of the central issues in the history of Ukrainian writing. This is a person who belonged to the oppositionally-minded, nationally conscious young intelligentsia, who frankly opposed himself to a totalitarian regime and actively protested against the restoration of the personality cult and impeding freedom of thought. The rank of V. Stus became part of the history of Ukraine as an important factor in national awakening and self-awareness, and became a symbol of spiritual invincibility and freedom.

Today, he is compared with another Ukrainian, whose greatness no one doubts, Taras Shevchenko. Both died as a foreigner at the same age, having not lived up to massive socio-political changes in their state and returned to their native land after their death [1].

V. Stus' worldview was influenced by his life path. The death of his brother and the enormous disadvantages caused by the war and the famine of 1947 were imprisoned in the memory of the poet. Severe conditions of existence shaped the boy's compassion, inner strength, the desire to help others. He began to study hard, trying to match adults. According to relatives, when he was 6 years old as a schoolboy, even among older children he was erudite [2].

High moral maximalism and the cult of personal freedom were transferred from the mother to the son, which became the basis of his civic position. Maternal songs made the soul of the boy sensitive to poetry. From the mother's songs the poetry of V. Stus appeared and the first patriotic experiences were formed. The fate of the native people of Ukraine began to emerge in the minds of the future poet in tragic perspectives [3].

Student's years of V. Stus in the life of the Soviet Union were not easy, because the poet already realized the repressive nature of the totalitarian state. Across the country there were meetings, which read the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party «On overcoming the cult of Stalin's face». There was such a meeting at the Stalin Pedagogical Institute. Against a background of capturing the breadth of ideas and wisdom of Stalin he could express rather critical judgments about the «scientific» works of the leader,

including his linguistic descriptions, despite the fact that there were people who collaborated with the punitive organs in each student group [2].

In the literary association «Horizon», which included young novice writers, V. Stus for the first time began to openly oppose national discrimination people. He is skeptical of the attitude of those who are trying to conceal the process of destroying Ukrainian culture, to create the appearance of its heyday. Even from the perspective of the ruling Communist doctrine he managed to show all false national policy in the USSR emphasizing the insidious nature of the systematic Russification of the Ukrainian people [4].

1963, according to E. Sverstiuk, was a turning point for V. Stus. Having entered postgraduate study at the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, he moved to Kyiv, where he took part in the public and literary life of the capital of Ukraine. The processes of democratization and spiritual revival, which took place in the then Soviet society and especially manifested in the political and cultural centers of the country, captured the poet. Optimism, the expectation of a better future for the people, the fullness of the creative plans of the Sixties, inspired V. Stus, and contributed to his natural application to a new environment. Poetry evenings, concerts, scientific conferences and disputes, meetings with prominent writers of the older generation and artists of the Ukrainian diaspora expanded his horizons, opening up new spaces for native culture [2].

The prominent leader of the Sixty Movement is I. Svitlychnyi, a literary critic and poet and translator, a wonderful organizer around whom a galaxy of bright personalities was grouped. Fate led him to V. Stus at the Department of Theory of Socialist Realism at the Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature. A magnificent example was an encyclopedic example for him, despite the enormous erudition in the spheres of world culture, science and politics still did not lose the «Ukrainian angle», looking at the world through the prism of Ukrainian interests [3].

The psychological proximity of the two poets led to similarities in fate: from activity in the 60's, through prisons and wandering in the 70's and 80's, and then – to martyrdom and eternity.

Since the mid-1960s, mass arrests of the sixties began again, and this did not hold back the resolve of the poet. When life seemed hopeless, the poet found the meaning of his existence in confronting the forces of totalitarianism. Although V. Stus prefers creative work in science, and he did not like politics, under hard conditions he did not lock himself up in his own artistic world, but proclaimed himself for the public ranks. The poet constantly expressed his solidarity with his inmate friends, opposing the arrests of intelligentsia that swept Ukraine [5].

In the beginning of September 1965, V. Shush supported Z. Paradzhanov's «Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors» at the Kiev Cinema «Ukraine» and supported the protest of I. Dzyuba and V. Chornovil against these arrests. And at the end of the month, V. Stus was expelled from postgraduate study, being formally accused of «systematic violations of the

standards of conduct of postgraduates and staff of a scientific institution», although the actual reason for the accusations was his statement–protest [6].

In the second half of the 60's – the early 70's, the poet wrote letters addressed to state institutions of Ukraine, where he exposed the antidemocratic and anti-national repressions sanctioned by the governing bodies, defending his comrades. In the years 1965 to 72, he wrote 10 documents of anti-Soviet content, including: two letters beginning with the words «Dear Petr Yefimovich», and the manuscripts «The Ghost wanders in Europe», «We live in a very interesting era», «We live in a time of paradoxes», etc. [7].

In 1970, Stus produced an improvised illegal collection entitled «Merry Cemetery», which included anti-Soviet poems written by him: «Here is the sun», «Wheels puffing», «There were two», «In the unfolding period», etc. In 1972; the writer was arrested and sentenced – 5 years in camps and 3 years in exile [8].

During the term of imprisonment, punitive bodies committed on Vasyl Stus physical and psychological pressure, the purpose of which was to break the internal forces of the poet, to make him repent, to confess guilt before society. The dissident constantly had to fight for the preservation of his dignity. During these years he was subjected to provocations, harassment, surveillance, cruel punishment, and hard work. He was repeatedly deprived of proper nutrition, visits to his relatives, correspondence rights, and thrown into prison isolation.

Due to illnesses acquired in the camps, he could not withstand physical activity, and resigned from work at the factory for the repair and manufacture of means of mechanization of construction. In May 1980, a search was again carried out on the apartment, Stus was arrested, and in the autumn, a court sentenced him to a more severe sentence: 10 years of special regime camps and 5 in exile [6].

During the Soviet era, most of the political prisoners, including Vasyl Stus, were identified into two «zones» – large and small. The entire state was called a big area, since its citizens lived in a violent spiritual, political, economic dictate. Those who did not agree to support the planned way of existence, were in a small area – in prisons, camps, exiles, and psychiatric hospitals.

V. Stus had an internal need to become a «throat of protest» against the destruction, he was aware of personal responsibility for the fate of the fatherland. Patriotism filled him with high dignity and courage. The camp records of the poet state: «I'm not going to bend my head, whatever it was. For me, Ukraine stood, my oppressed people, for whom I owe honor to death. «Defending the national human rights of his people was a vital credo and one of the prominent goals set by the poet [9].

Conflicts with power often grew out of attempts by prisoners to appeal to justice through open letters. His letters are full of remarkable facts that revealed the actions of the punitive machine against the people who managed to raise the voice of protest. The poet defending the rights of the repressive people and his culture, shows that the eradication of national values has led to great moral losses.

Vasyl Stus also used hunger as a means of counteracting the totalitarian regime. Almost all political prisoners resorted to this, but the poet especially often [2].

Explanations of V. Stus's «anti-Soviet» actions are in the letter to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of May 1, 1978: «I fought for democratization – and this was understood as an attempt to slander the Soviet system; my love for the native people, the concern of the crisis state of Ukrainian culture, was categorized as nationalism; my non-recognition of the practice, based on Stalinism, Beryivshchyna, and other similar phenomena grew, have been recognized as particularly malicious slander. My poems, literary and critical articles, and official appeals to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Union of Writers and other official bodies were accepted as evidence of propaganda and agitation...» [10].

Vasyl Stus is one of those who still managed to take a significant place in the nation-building of the country despite the diversity of views and perception of his figure in the minds of the population [11].

In the situation of deploying an offensive on any show of democracy, the poet irritates the passivity of people who want change and do nothing. The poetic word reveals the uncompromisingness and integrity of V. Stus. The thematic direction of V. Stus's poetry was very aptly defined by I. Dzyuba: «Speaking about some or other motives of Stusov's poetry, one should keep in mind the conditionality of their isolation. Actually, they all combine in it into a general picture. In general, this poetry is unprogrammed and non-mathematical, in other words, it is all in one «theme»: the poet's state of health, the state of his «I». Moreover, this state of health is caused by maximalist assessments, first of all, by oneself, self-analysis, a sense of tragedy of self-awareness, inextricably combined with a sense of national tragedy. The image of pain in Stus's poetry is dominant, as in his fate. Pain for himself, for your generation, for the offended Ukraine. The motive for personal pain is intertwined with generalized pain [6].

Social circumstances minimize the possibility of realizing the creative personality, all the more powerful sounding notes of pessimism, hopelessness, and understanding of life as not life, but the vibration between being and death. The poet expresses this mood in the poems of the collection «Merry Cemetery», written still at will, but the mirrors of the poet's self-examination cover his state of loneliness, dullness, his soul «in tears,» and finally the state of high-spiritual personality in the conditions of the spiritual and national crisis in a totalitarian society [12].

The poet's love for Ukraine becomes his unproductive wound, not disturbing pain and anger at the same time, which we can follow in his poetry: «For me, Kyiv stretches in dreams...»; in the poem «Again my friends are leading me...» in an idyllic picture of life, the perception that «neither is there to live, nor die, nor breathe freely!» is broken. And in the images of the «Void Bike», which shouts, a horse, rustling in the dawn, the wolf, who breaks in the «hungry vice», reads out the oppressive social atmosphere of a totalitarian

society that is experiencing an extraordinary tragedy in a poetic nature. The poems of the collection are as the only work in which anger, pain, despair, beauty, and love; but overall attracts a dead end [6].

The consciousness of his righteousness helps the poet to go honestly to the end of the martyrdom path with the faith that he is related to the people, will combine, at least in death, because the state of the soul of the poet, his creative credo, his life position was caused by the social and national status of the native people.

Today, the prophecy of the poet came true and he was related to his native land, and his work – this tragic chronicle of the era – is being studied by us, his fellow countrymen, for whom he gave his life, – his last poetic singing is still in prison. Although the poet himself was always free to the soul. This is evidenced by the symbolic name of his latest collection, and all the creativity in which V. Stus, without compromises and doubts, carried his unbroken word of truth about the tragic fate of Ukrainianism [13].

Four years after the death of the poet – in 1989, when the ashes of Vasyl Stus were dispersed by the inhabitants of Kyiv and Ukraine on the last path, hundreds of red-black and blue-yellow flags sparked brightly over the mourning procession. The capital was leaning against a man who was twice pushed into a camp unknown [14].

In 1991, Vasyl Stus was awarded the State Taras Shevchenko Prize. On December 25, 1997, Vasil Stus was awarded the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise of the V degree by the Decree of the President of Ukraine «For outstanding services to the Ukrainian state in the development of national culture, and civic courage in defending the ideals of humanism and independence of Ukraine». November 26, 2005 By the Decree of the President of Ukraine, the poet was awarded the title of Hero of Ukraine [14].

Vasyl Stus lived, worked, and died so that the Ukrainian People had what he deserved – freedom, independence, the right to their mother tongue, historical memory, and original culture. As a writer and citizen, V. Stus belongs to those spiritual leaders of a nation whose relevance does not diminish over time, but becomes more and more important [15].

He lives among us with his steadfastness as a person who opposed the totalitarian regime and stood so that we could remain Ukrainians to learn to be true patriots of our state.

On the eve of the release of the biographical film about Vasyl Stus (2019) it became known that the script was modified in the film with respect to his lawyer – Viktor Medvedchuk, who acted as a defender in the processing of the poet. He also removed all references to him (lawyer) of family ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin. During a meeting, Medvedchuk acknowledged the guilt of his client and asked the court to take into account mitigating circumstances. Despite the petition of the poet, the court refused to remove the counsel. The court scene was removed from the last frames of the script along with two dozen other scenes [16].

Actor and TV presenter Gennady Popenko wrote in a post on Facebook that from the movie «Stus»

the scene with a young lawyer was removed, because «producers have called from the administration of Medvedchuk» and said that if they want to finish the picture, then the court scene needs to be removed. Director of the movie Roman Brovko claims that he removed the scene at the request of the son of the poet Dmitry Stus. The reason for removing the scene with Medvedchuk was the desire to avoid using the memory of the poet as an instrument of political struggle in the midst of an election campaign [17].

Medvedchuk himself said that he «fulfilled his official duty» and considers himself pure «before the destiny and life path» of the poet: *«I did not violate the law, and numerous commissions from the advocacy during the years of Ukraine's independence established my own right that I was correct as a lawyer ... Before my colleagues, I am pure. Before the destiny and life of Stus I was clean, I did everything I could, if he did not fight with the Soviet authorities, he would not be a fighter for the independence of Ukraine, «Medvedchuk said [18].*

**Conclusions.** Thus, during the study, it was possible to analyze the complex life path of Vasyl Stus and discover the contribution of the poet in preserving the identity of Ukraine in the non-stationary period of the second half of the twentieth century. The factors influencing the poet's perception of the poet, including the social impoverishment caused by the war and the famine of 1947, as well as the peculiarities of upbringing in the national-patriotic spirit, have been identified.

The poet's struggle with the communist ideology of the totalitarian Soviet state was clearly followed. In his own work, the dissident poet defended Ukrainian independence and fought against the comprehensive routine russification. It was because of this that he was forcibly imprisoned in Soviet prisons.

Even in conditions of independence, the work of the poet and his complex life is represented in the writings of contemporary artists, a striking example of which is a documentary film, which serves as an example of the imitation of the patriotic views of a true citizen of his country.

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