

THE CONCEPT OF THE SIXTIERS IN CULTURAL DISCOURSE

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КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ШІСТДЕСЯТНИКІВ У КУЛЬТУРНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ

ЯРОСЛАВ ПОЛІЩУК

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АНОТАЦІЯ. Автор простежує становлення концепції покоління шістдесятників – від кінця 1950-х до 2020-х років – у суспільно-культурному дискурсі України. Цей поколіннєвий проєкт мав свої перемоги і поразки. Після блискучого дебюту шістдесятників та декларації ідеї правди і спротиву щодо тоталітарної системи настав тривалий період застою та маргіналізації цієї формації. Сатисфакція за тривале мовчання стала можливою вже за доби незалежної України, але шістдесятники скористалися нею головно в політичній сфері. Однак у літературі періоду Незалежності їхня присутність доволі скромна, радше символічна. Таким чином, мистецька самореалізація цього покоління є лише частковою, незважаючи на факт, що саме культурницька місія стала основою концепції генерації шістдесятих.

Ключові слова: покоління шістдесятників, концепція, інтелектуали, культурний дискурс, ідея, радянський період

KONCEPCJA POKOLENIA LAT 60. W DYSKURSIE KULTUROWYM

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STRESZCZENIE. Autor artykułu śledzi kształtowanie się koncepcji pokolenia lat 60. – od przełomu lat 50. i 60. XX wieku po lata ostatnie – w dyskursie społeczno-kulturowym Ukrainy. Ten projekt pokoleniowy doznawał zarówno wzlotów, jak i upadków. Po wspaniałym debiucie pokolenia lat 60. i zadeklarowaniu przez nich idei sprawiedliwości oraz sprzeciwu wobec systemu totalitarnego nastąpił długi okres stagnacji oraz marginalizacji samej formacji. Zasłużoną satysfakcją po czasie trwałego milczenia przyniosła doba niepodległości Ukrainy; jednak „sześćdziesiątnicy” potrafili skorzystać z niej w różnej mierze, przeważnie w wymiarze politycznym. Jednakże w literaturze okresu Niepodległości ich obecność jest zaznaczona słabo, prawie symbolicznie. Zatem samorealizację artystyczną tego pokolenia wypada uznać za częściową, mimo że właśnie misja związana z promocją kultury była sednem koncepcji generacyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe: pokolenie lat 60., koncepcja, intelektualiści, dyskurs kulturowy, idea, okres sowiecki

The significance of the generation itself in the development of culture is beyond doubt, particularly against the backdrop of the dramatic 20th century, when the conceptualisation of generations took place with special force and intensity. Using the example of recent history, we are convinced that generational change not only illustrates the movement of time, but also the movement of ideas, because it is usually associated with a change in worldview and ideological guidelines that people follow [Matusiak, Świetlicki 2016]. Consciousness of common goals and principles is formed within one generation and this becomes a guarantee of solidarity in the discussion of basic values. In this way, the concept of generation is gradually formed [Ossowska 1963: 47].

The scientific conceptualisation of the problem of generations is going through a phase of active discussions [Matusiak 2016; Kamińska 2007; Levada, Shanin 2005; Zenkin 2005; Dnistrovyi 2001]. It is obvious that the works of Wilhelm Dilthey, Carl Mannheim, Jose Ortega y Gasset, and Herbert Marcuse, which became the basis of knowledge on this topic, brought together very productive ideas about generations and their role in social development [Mannheim 1992/1993]. A new wave of interest in generation theory appeared in the 1960s [Ossowska 1963]. It is characterised not so much by academic research but rather by the spread of the category of generation to mass culture, as well as the formation of various quasi-scientific concepts that seem attractive, although they simplify the scientific understanding of the problem. It is no coincidence that this wave of interest occurred in the second post-war

decade. It was a time of active rebellion by young people in the West, as well as the penetration of liberal ideas into the socio-cultural space of the Soviet Union, and it inspired the revival of scientific studies of generational issues [Zenkin 2005].

In culture, the relationship between generations can be treated in two ways. On one hand, the relations between parents and children are fundamentally important, because core values are inherited thanks to them. This is the basis of tradition, without which culture is essentially impossible. On the other hand, the “rebellion” of children against their parents, which psychologists often talk about, also has its own motives. It ensures evolution, when cultural identity is not simply handed down, but is challenged, tested, and therefore strengthened and developed.

Obviously, not every generation can develop a clear ideological program; its implementation depends on specific socio-historical circumstances, which can be assessed as favourable or, on the contrary, unfavourable and repressive in this sense [Levada, Shanin 2005]. If we talk about the Ukrainian 20th century, then the inequality and discontinuity of the generational transfer are all too obvious. It is related to the intricate condition of Ukrainian society, which has repeatedly exposed itself to sharp conflicts with the authorities or suffered catastrophic defeats. In this case, the natural change of generations was often distorted due to wars, mass repressions, deportations, etc. [Jakubowska-Krawczyk 2018]. It is noteworthy that in times of social catastrophes, the biggest losses occur primarily among active citizens, that is, those who possess charisma and are able to implement progressive ideas.

Due to the factors mentioned above, two generations may be found to have been pivotal in Ukraine in the 20th century: the generation from the 1920s (the so-called Executed Renaissance) and the Sixtiers [Danylenko 2008: 122–126]. It was they who were conceptualised to the greatest extent, that is, they were considered to be the bearers and implementers of certain values that were of a strategic nature and laid the perspective of development. It is distinctive that in both of these cases the basis of the generation was created by creative intellectuals – writers, journalists, scientists. Literature itself was considered a leading-edge foreground for approving new ideas and reforms; the persecution of intellectuals, as well as the total censorship implemented by the communist authorities, fully confirm this thesis.

It was intelligentsia who constituted the Sixtiers. They were people brought up in the post-war conditions of the liberalisation of the Soviet political regime, which remained totalitarian at its core [Judt 2020: 20–22; Hrytsak 2021: 331]. Among the leading figures of this generational movement were poets (Vasyl Symonenko, Ivan Drach, Mykola Vinhranovskiy, Lina Kostenko, Vitalii Korotych, Ihor Kalynets, Borys Necherda), novelists (Valerii Shevchuk, Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, Volodymyr Drozd), literary critics and publicists (Ivan Svitlychnyi, Ivan Dziuba, Viacheslav Chornovil, Yevhen Sverstiuk), artists (Alla Horska, Viktor Zaretskyi, Opanas Zalyvakha), film directors (Yurii Illienko, Leonid Osyka), stage actors (Les Taniuk), historians and archaeologists (Mykhailo Braichevskiy, Borys Mozolevskiy, Valentyn Moroz). All

the people mentioned above were inextricably co-referent to literature and often conveyed their beliefs through artistic texts, either directly (e.g. poets and critics), or indirectly (e.g. historians, theatre and film directors). According to V. Danylenko's definition, a generation "forms an age core of writers who are close in outlook and understanding of their role in literature" [Danylenko 2008: 120].

The aggregate consciousness of the generation was formed right through literature and art; in this sense, the Sixtiers began their history as typical cultural activists. However, as a modern researcher points out, the generational movement went through several phases of development, repeating the experience of national formation and national liberation struggle that was not realised in the past [Kasianov 1995: 31]. At first, it went through an *ethnographic* stage that can be traced in many private biographies of the Sixtiers. Numerous excursions of young people to memorable places of their native land are proof of this, as well as the constant interest in studying national folklore and customs, up to the cult of folk culture, which, it is worth noting, did not contradict the ideological guidelines of the communist regime regarding the priority of "common people" and "working people." It was still opposed to the bourgeoisie and capitalists as the embodiment of social evil. The *national-cultural* phase was most vividly observed and presented, embodied in creative evenings, performances and public actions, but also in publications that in a way vindicated, in the cultural space, the body of work of repressed figures of the past (Yevhen Pluzhnyk, Volodymyr Svidzinskyi, Vasyl Chumak, etc.). In the end, after a series of persecution acts taken by the authorities, the most determined and principled wing of the Sixtiers moved to the stage of *political* confrontation, which formed the image of dissidence in its modern sense.

The desire to discover the truth and live according to the truth¹ sounded most acutely in the generational ideology. This was striking for the communist system, which was essentially built on lies and the manipulation of reality; it imitated democracy, freedom of speech and thought, although in reality it was totalitarian. The idea of truth, which was expressed in the works of the Sixtiers (Vasyl Symonenko, Lina Kostenko, Ivan Drach, etc.) involved a reinterpretation of the picture of reality, in particular the assessment of the past and present [Gabor 2009]. Regarding the past, it relied primarily on the awareness of experienced and unsaid *trauma*, resulting from the revolution and liberation struggle of 1917–1920, Stalin's terror of the 1930s, and the tragic events of the Second World War. These three layers of cultural memory are unevenly presented in the works of the Sixtiers. Most often,

¹ A little later, such a moral maxim was formulated by Alexander Solzhenitsyn in the essay *Live not in lies* (1972), which appeared in a self-published publication after the author's arrest (1974) and was an actual appeal directed to the Soviet intelligentsia [Solzhenitsyn 1996: 388–389]. This formula, in quite a good way, expresses the main intention of the Sixtiers, which demonstrated disobedience to double morality, common in the Soviet reality, when some slogans were proclaimed in public and other were professed in private life.

they were about the war (since this topic was emphasised in those days as a propaganda narrative), less often and more restrainedly about the Stalinist repressions. However, unspoken facts of the revolution were almost not mentioned; this topic remained taboo until the end of the 80s, when the Soviet system began to collapse.

The fight for the truth was associated with a rejection of violence, which was one of the main instruments of power in the Soviet Union. In the minds of the Sixtiers, it was not by chance that there was a policy of peaceful forms of struggle (for human rights, for freedom of speech, for individuality), as opposed to the general atmosphere of indoctrination and violence entrenched by the authorities of that time. The tendency to achieve a goal by non-violent methods was manifested in “literature” worship (both in artistic works and in journalism, which overwhelmingly took place in the form of self-publishing). The Sixtiers addressed their contemporaries in this way and emphasised, at the same time, that they believed in the gradual development of society, in the power of speech and persuasion, and that fear and violence should be rejected [Rarytskyi 2016: 386–389; Tarnashynska 2010].

The generational initiative in the conditions of Ukraine at that time (more precisely, the Ukrainian SSR, which was part of a large state and was under strong pressure from the centre in matters of national and cultural identity) had centripetal tendencies, which confirmed attempts to restore the integrity of the colonised culture, not only controlled from Moscow, but also divided into small local circles that had no connection with each other. It was about Kyiv as a centre of attraction of young talents, as well as a place for the collective demonstration of the generational idea. Young people from the provinces gathered and organised in Kyiv, a city with which they associated not only the opportunities for good education and career growth but also the formation of a worldview, a kind of hardening of the spirit.

It is noteworthy that the phenomenon of the Sixtiers had every reason to develop into a systemic movement, obviously, under favourable social circumstances, and not under the conditions of prohibitions and repressions, which the Sixtiers had already encountered in the first years of their work. The basis for such a hypothesis is provided by the experience of the founding and operation of creative organizations that brought young talents together. An important role in the development of the common ideology of the Ukrainian Sixtiers was played by the Clubs of Creative Youth (KTM), in particular “Contemporary” in Kyiv (founded in 1960) and “Prolisok” in Lviv (1962). These circles were living centres of creative thought, and their activity confirmed in the best possible way that new ideas have power and significantly influence public opinion. A solidarity consciousness was created in this way. It united people of different origins and preferences, and they became a single force that had the characteristics of a generational movement. In the memories of the Sixtiers, the sense of solidarity is often emphasised, and it was generated by the activities of the youth groups of that time. Thus, Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska claimed:

The most important thing was that the Club united polarised people from different creative fields, who had been separated until now – writers, artists, musicians, theatre actors. We realised that we are a band, that we are a force. The main unifying figures were Ivan Svitlychnyi, Alla Horska and Viktor Zaretskyi, Les Taniuk. Literary evenings, tours to sightsee the monuments of Ukraine, various informal gatherings in the workshops of Kyiv artists [...]. Observation of traditional holidays, soirees for young composers (L. Hrabovskyi, V. Huba, B. Filts), participation in various protest actions [Kotsiubynska 2006: 38–39]².

The young people's debuts revealed their allegations to the previous generation: "the generation of parents," which was, in one way or another, involved in the totalitarian past. The elders were accused of at least passivity and adaptability, which enabled the rule of the Soviet repressive apparatus, and what is more, accused others of responsibility for the crimes of Stalinism. Such inculcation can be found, for example, in the poems *Where are you now, torturers of my nation?*... by Vasyl Symonenko or *Ode to an honest coward* by Ivan Drach. Literary "generals" reacted bitterly to such accusations. They saw certain risks in the rebellion of the youth, not only for themselves, but also for the entire Soviet culture, which was impossible to imagine without censorship and the specific language developed under its conditions, which was called the method of socialist realism. Because of that, in official circles there were sharply critical assessments of creative youth. Thus, Pavlo Tychyna, Platon Voronko, Yurii Zbanatskyi, Mykhailo Chabanivskyi and others condemned the Sixtiers; however, the object of their criticism was not so much the ideological content as the innovative form and boldness of these young people's experiments. A harsher assessment sounded in party circles, where the works of young people were accused of being "ideologically distorted," and this was already the basis for harassment and repression.

Attempts to reform (in particular, humanise) the Soviet regime turned out to be a pipe dream for the young intellectuals. Some of them paid for it with political arrests and long-term persecution, and sometimes with death. Already after 1964, the authorities had begun to hunt for the "inconsonants" [Kasianov 1995]. Eventually, the idea of a generation, which started to turn into a systemic movement, was discredited. It turned out to be impossible to live according to the truth in the Soviet Union, because it threatened to destroy the foundations of the entire state machine. National culture warfare was also strongly eradicated by the Moscow government, which severely punished all manifestations of independent consciousness with the aid of its secret service.

² In the original text: „Найголовнішим було те, що Клуб об'єднав розрізаних досі однодумців з різних творчих галузей – літераторів, художників, музикантів, театральних діячів. Прийшло усвідомлення того, що ми – гурт, що ми – сила. Головними об'єднавчими постатями були Іван Світличний, Алла Горська і Віктор Зарецький, Лесь Танюк. Літературні вечори, екскурсії пам'ятними місцями України, різні неформальні зібрання у майстернях київських художників [...]. Плекання традиційних свят, вечори молодих композиторів (Л. Грабовський, В. Губа, Б. Фільц), участь у різних протестних акціях”.

The unequivocal and categorical position of the authorities regarding the young generation and its ideas led to the rapid collapse of the Sixtiers' centres. The ban on peaceful actions (evenings dedicated to Taras Shevchenko, authors' creative meetings, etc.), the ban on the Club of Creative Youth, as well as the persecution of the most active youth representatives, led to a serious fracture of the young generation and Soviet traditionalists. It was not just a matter of a generational conflict between parents and children. In the conditions of servile existence in the USSR, it became something greater – an attempt to reform the social and cultural relations, which was shackled by the totalitarian system.

The final defeat of the young forces can be associated with the events of 1965 and 1972, when mass arrests were carried out among the Sixtiers and the leading figures of the generation. They paid for their social and creative activity with long-term imprisonment or at least dismissal from work, being deprived of the opportunity to study, being defeated in rights. Therefore, the solidarity consciousness of the generation could not be expressed publicly; instead, it was relegated to the margins. In turn, this pushed the leaders of the generation to radicalise their own position, which was quite difficult for them, since they were brought up as Soviet people and showed loyalty to the current government in the country. Kasianov writes about this:

There were no direct opponents of the regime among the Sixtiers. Moreover, almost all of them sought to improve this system (of course, in their own sense). However, the constant persecution caused the gradual evolution of part of the Sixtiers into Stalinism's opponents. The national movement of the Sixtiers began with cultural production – with the return to a centennial stage of this sort of activity. As a non-conformist phenomenon, it also developed from the initial stage – the emotional rebellion of the youth (the 1960s – in general, the era of youth riots all over the world) against the older generation of the intelligentsia. True, the regime itself took care of the socio-political maturation of the Sixtiers, by unleashing a campaign of repression and oppression against them [Kasyanov 1995: 30–31].

The modern researcher, who looks for traces of such consciousness, has to work with fragmentary materials published in memoirs, diaries, as well as in the preserved epistolary of Ukrainian dissidents [Rarytskyi 2016: 389]. Already in the early 1970s, the generation's attempts at legal self-expression were nullified. If the Sixtiers retained their potential, it could be expressed in a latent form and from a very limited perspective. There was a fracture among the most charismatic representatives of the generation. The bravest of them formed a human rights fighters circle. While maintaining the tactics of peaceful resistance, they were forced to radicalise their position, because they entered into an open conflict with the system. Of course, this was an exceptional path that only a few people followed, and the public resonance of the dissident movement was minimal. Within the generation, the position of loyalty and cooperation with the authorities dominated. A compromise with the Soviet system ensured a successful career, as well as certain living conditions. Because of that,

the majority of writers who made a brilliant debut at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s accepted the authorities' rationale and adjusted their own views in accordance with their requirements. At the same time, there were authors who, after their brilliant debuts, were forced to give up their great creative ambitions and become typical Soviet writers. They lost a lot, as well. There was a certain regularity observed by Stanislav Rassadin: among the writers who entered the literature scene at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, there were quite a few whose path would be a continuous upward trajectory, or at least did not lead to a decrease in the artistic level [Rassadin 2006: 288]. Usually, however, the opposite happened: the career of a Soviet writer required the renunciation of one's own creative individuality and such writers were exposed to the inevitable loss of creative potential; a gradual decline.

Individual authors, for particular reasons, remained in the zone of being silenced and shunned, because of which they could not publish their works for a long time. Among the most famous were Lina Kostenko and Valery Shevchuk, who lived in internal emigration until the 1980s. However, standing in the uncensored world, in addition to losses, also had its advantages. Firstly, such writers could develop their creative ideas relatively freely, without resorting to a primitive conjuncture, without adapting to the requirements of the authorities. Secondly, they managed to save moral face, which would prove important later in the period of Independence, when such intellectuals became moral authorities.

An interesting metamorphosis took place with the generation of the Sixtiers. The ideas of the dissidents – that “small group” of the creative intelligentsia whose influence on public opinion the authorities managed to quickly eliminate at one time – later gained popularity. They were reignited during the period of Gorbachev's perestroika, that is, in 1987–1991, when society once again returned to the moral commandments of truth, justice, freedom and respect for individuality. Moreover, in the 1990s, they became the basis of a common identity that united the representatives of this Soviet generation. Those who, in the late Soviet period, were completely loyal to the Soviet government, served it and performed certain functions, entered the new era with the consciousness of their involvement in the movement of the Sixtiers, that is, in the culture of resistance to the system and dissidence. What was previously marginalised now became central and fundamental. At least in the public speeches and memories of many representatives of the generation of the 1960s, there were accents on the connection with the opposition movement; it became commonplace that aims to establish the authority of an individual through participation in a general movement had unconditional authority. Often, such memories are not entirely convincing when it comes to “guns in pockets,” “silent opposition” and so on. However, the trend is telling: the idea of dissidents, whose time has come, gained more and more popularity and became associated with the mission of an entire generation, despite the unfavourable reputation of this generation as a whole.

During the period of independent Ukraine, the concept of the generation of the Sixtiers underwent decisive changes at least twice. The first decade of Independence was the period when Sixtier intellectuals entered politics, becoming national deputies, ministers, ambassadors, etc. They created the foundations of statehood and established state institutions. The active involvement of the Sixtiers in political life caused a completely predictable reaction, when they effectively ceased (with minor exceptions which must be discussed separately) their participation in the literary process or limited it to the role of managers, such as the leadership of the Union of Writers or other public and creative organizations. In the 2000s, the generational concept of the Sixtiers was finally formalised: it found its own expression in numerous memoirs, scientific works and other publications [Zborovska 2001; Tarnashynska 2010; Rarytskyi 2016], as well as through mass media. At this time, there were attempts to idealise the Sixtiers, such as Lina Kostenko's novel *Notes of a Ukrainian madman* (2010), which I have already written about [Polishchuk 2014].

It is worth noting that already in the days of independent Ukraine, the Sixtiers were severely criticised by younger contemporaries, which was reminiscent of the same spirit of the "parents and children" dispute that took place at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, when the Sixtiers themselves contested their predecessors [Dnistrovyi 2001; Jakubowska-Krawczyk 2018; Kharchuk 2008]. Now, similar claims were made about the Sixtiers themselves: they were accused of collaboration with the communist authorities, especially during the transitional period of the 1990s, as well as complicity in corruption and covering up the government's lies. Another object of criticism is the principled thoroughness of the 1960s, which prevented them from opening up to western influences, getting out of the cultural din, and becoming Europeanised, despite individual attempts [Sverstiuk 1993; Dnistrovyi 2001]. Thus, history repeated itself: the conflict of generations witnessed the conflict of two value systems competing for influence on public consciousness.

In post-Soviet Ukraine, a truly ambivalent situation developed, when the values carried over from the Soviet past conflicted with those that began to be established in the early days of independence. The values of survival and adaptation inherited from the USSR (which in practice turned into moral compromises and double standards) are associated with the generations of the 1960s and 1980s, that is, the last Soviet generations [Balakireva 2008]. At the same time, the need for a new value scale was based on tradition, which is provided, among other things, by the experience of moral stoicism of Soviet dissidents:

Young people, along with the middle class and residents of big cities, are attracted most towards the values of self-expression and are therefore potential agents of change. Previous surveys show that new generations of Ukrainians inherit "parental" (traditional) values and at the same time produce modern (postmodern) values. Throughout the years of independence, the top three priorities in their lives include family, friends, work, free time, followed by religion and politics.

[...]. In this way, the Ukrainian young generation is close to their peers in European countries, focusing on such postmodern values as independence and self-realization [Zaremba 2017: 126].

It should be admitted that the concept of the generation of the Sixtiers, which took shape over a long period, namely, from the end of the 1950s to the 2020s, is quite clearly manifested in the social and cultural discourse of Ukraine. Unlike other Soviet generations, the Sixtiers appear to be a relatively realised formation. However, the generational project had its victories and defeats. After the brilliant debut of the Sixtiers and the declaration of the idea of truth and resistance, a lasting period of marginalisation of this formation came. Deserved satisfaction after the long period of being silenced became possible when independent Ukraine arose, yet the Sixtiers used this new-found freedom mainly in the political sphere.

The realisation of the generational idea of the Sixtiers in the 1990s took place mainly in the political sphere. It was a return to a repressed experience from the past. However, in the literature of the period of independence, the presence of the Sixtiers is quite modest, and rather symbolic. This shows that the artistic program of this generation remained unfulfilled, despite the fact that it was the cultural mission. It became the basis of the concept of the Sixtiers' generation.

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