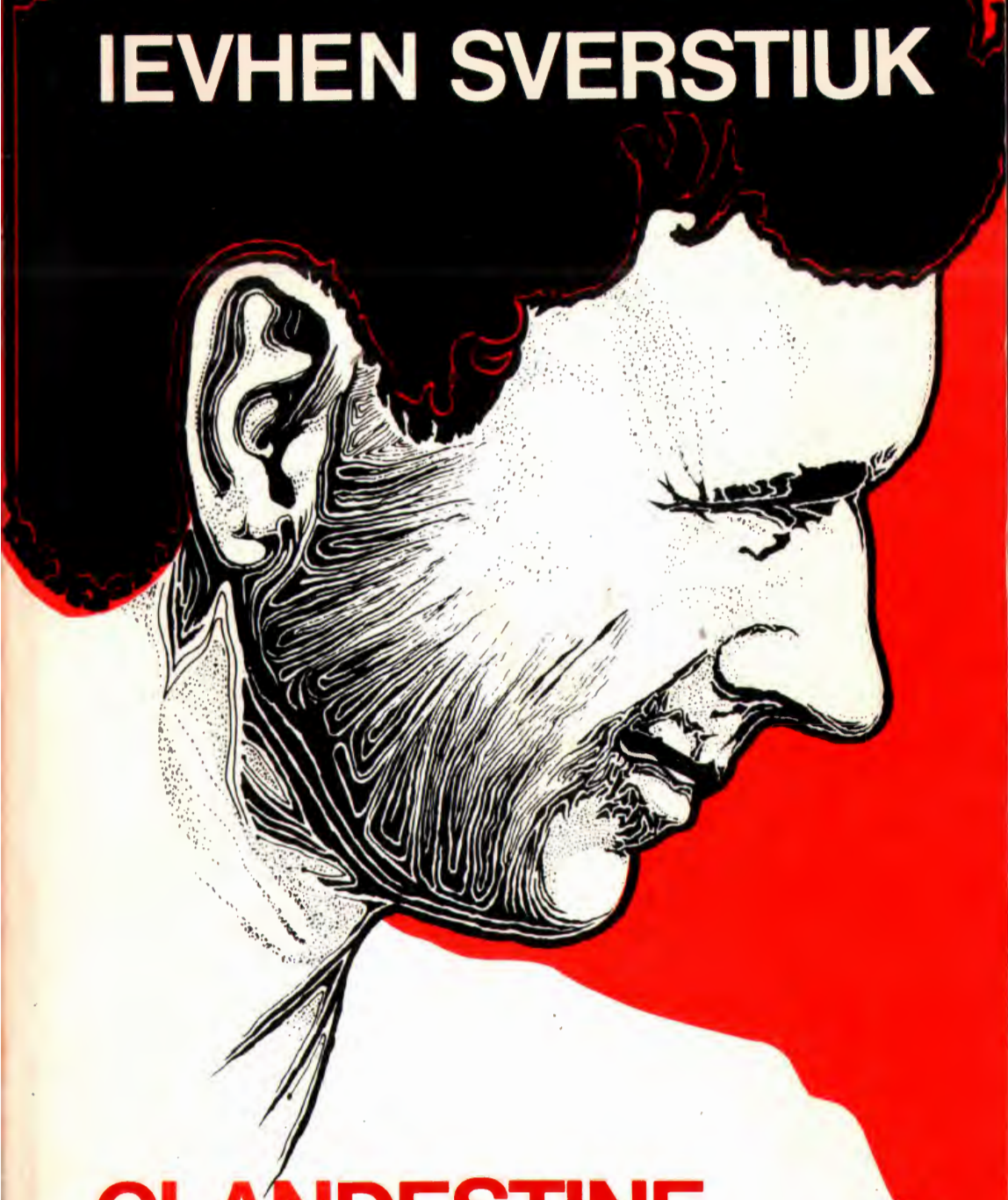
IEVHEN SVERSTIUK



CLANDESTINE ESSAYS

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY GEORGE S.N. LUCKYJ

Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies

Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute
Monograph Series

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Ievhen Sverstiuk

Clandestine Essays

Translation and an Introduction by George S. N. Luckyj

Published by the Ukrainian Academic Press
for the
Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute 1976

The Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute was established in 1973 as an integral part of Harvard University. It supports research associates and visiting scholars who are engaged in projects concerned with all aspects of Ukrainian studies. The Institute also works in close cooperation with the Committee on Ukrainian Studies, which supervises and coordinates the teaching of Ukrainian history, language, and literature at Harvard University.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Sverstiuk, IEvhen.
Clandestine essays.

(Monograph series - Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute)
Includes bibliographical references.
CONTENTS: A cathedral in scaffolding. –Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi is laughing. –Final plea before the court.
1. Ukraine–Politics and government–1917- –Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Dissenters–Ukraine–Addresses, essays, lectures. I. Title. II. Series: Harvard University Research Institute. Monograph series - Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.
DK508.8.S825 322.4'4'094771 76-20768
ISBN 0-87287-151-7
ISBN 0-87287-158-4 pbk.

Ukrainian Academic Press, a division of Libraries Unlimited, Inc.,
P.O. Box 263, Littleton, Colorado 80120

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INTRODUCTION[1]

After Stalin's death intellectual dissent in Ukraine was slow in developing. The "year of protest–1956" which in Russian literature left great scars on socialist realism, produced no turmoil in Ukraine. The greatest work of Ukrainian literature of that time, Oleksandr Dovzhenko's *Zacharovana Desna* (The Enchanted Desna, 1957) was, after all, concerned neither with the present nor with the future, but with recollections of the past. It made no claim to esthetic innovation. Some stirrings of the "young poets" (Kostenko) became noticeable in the late 1950's but not until the next decade did they come fully into the open.

The reasons for the relative silence in Ukraine in the fifties are not difficult to detect. The devastation in Ukrainian literature and culture left by Stalinism was of enormous proportions, greater than that which fell upon Russia. The wholesale destruction of Ukrainian writers, scholars, critics, and artists in the 1930's struck fear into the hearts of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. It was intensified by the blows against the peasantry, still the backbone of the Ukrainian nation, and against the Ukrainian communist leadership, which provided the only shield of political power. In Russia, national heritage and Party leadership emerged after the death of Stalin if not intact, at least viable and strong. Strong enough to nurture the forces of discontent. In Ukraine, the Ukrainian intelligentsia, haunted by the stigma of "nationalism," was spiritually paralyzed. The Ukrainian communists, under the strong influence of Khrushchev, their boss in the critical period of 1938-49, were enlisted in the various tasks of Soviet empire-building in the role of junior partners. They gave up trying to defend Ukrainian cultural and political autonomy, a role attempted by their predecessors, Shums'kyi and Skrypnyk. Now there was no one in Kiev in a position of power or with nationwide prestige to oppose either the growing Russification or the theories of the "merging" of languages emanating from Moscow. It seemed as if Stalinist repression had been effective.

Yet those who predicted a new Russian-Ukrainian amity, achieved on Russian terms, spoke too soon. Although subdued, the Ukrainians were not conquered. De-Stalinization induced some re-examination of their recent

past. However timid at the beginning, the partial rehabilitation of the writers and scholars who had perished in the 1930's raised some disturbing questions in the minds of the young generation. Not the least important of them related to the tardiness and incompleteness of the rehabilitation. Republication of proscribed works began in Russia in the mid-fifties (Babel, Bagritskii, Olesha, Esenin); it reached a similar crest in Ukraine in the mid-sixties (Kosynka, Pluzhnyk, Zerov, Slisarenko). Undoubtedly, those responsible for decisions in Ukraine were very cautious. However, what was recovered from oblivion conveyed a great deal of the rich literature that had enjoyed such a flowering in the 1920's. Some of the leading writers of that era, notably Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, the author of the slogan "away from Moscow," were not rehabilitated. But those who were, must, in some measure, have provided the spark for the upsurge in the literature of the sixties. A freer discussion of Ukrainian history and folk culture also stimulated the search for a national identity.

Yet when they came to the forefront of Ukrainian literature, the men and women of the sixties (*shestydesiatnyky*), who were mostly poets, were not nationalist. To be sure, some of their works—and especially their achievements in revitalizing and enriching the Ukrainian poetic language—appealed to national sentiments. Yet the main impact of the "young poets" in Ukraine, just as it was in the 1920's, was made on universal, esthetic grounds. To say that their protest is expressed in human rather than national terms simply because the latter are still taboo is to misunderstand the nature of modern Ukrainian literature. Like every other literature, it no longer wants to be concerned merely with national politics but with the human condition. In this it follows the finest traditions of Ukrainian literature from Shevchenko onwards.

This is not to deny that in the past Ukrainian literature has often been ideologically committed. The founder of modern Ukrainian literature, Taras Shevchenko (1814-61), gave it an ideological orientation, though in his best works he rose above national issues. But the Ukrainian writers' preoccupation with the national destiny was thrust upon them by circumstances. In nineteenth century Russia, Ukrainians were denied political and linguistic freedom; therefore, literature became a vehicle of social, political, and cultural aspirations. As soon as conditions improved (notably after the 1905 revolution), the writers departed from politics, though the break with commitment was rarely complete.

The Soviet regime in Ukraine was established as the result of a three-cornered fight between the nationalists, the Ukrainian communists, and the Russian communists. Though the latter were in control, they made

considerable concessions to the national Ukrainian demands during the first decade (1922-32). The literary revival of that period, a product of these concessions, is often regarded as showing great national vitality. This is true only to the extent that nationalism is a part of any emerging culture. In fact, many Ukrainian writers and intellectuals of that period looked beyond nationalism. The fact that they were later accused of being nationalists does not make them so. While some intellectuals–especially Khvyl'ovyi's group–were interested in political and national power, others–the Futurists, the Neoclassicists, the group *Lanka* (Link)–were genuine, uncommitted "fellow-travellers." These distinctions were quite clear and were beneficial for the national life in general. All groups were indiscriminately lumped together by the communists (and often by émigré critics) only after they were destroyed in the 1930's. It is interesting, however, that the apolitical intellectuals suffered in the purges as much as the politically committed. Stalinist measures were not only anti-Ukrainian, they were anti-humanist as well. This, as we shall see, explains why the protest documents from Ukraine of today are made not only on behalf of a nation, but on behalf of humanity.

There are several links between intellectual life in Ukraine in the 1920's and the 1960's. The emergence of the "modernist" poets of the sixties cannot be explained as a purely national phenomenon because they are concerned with the restoration of freedom not only for Ukraine but for all men. National sentiments are prominent in some poets (Drach, Vinhranovs'kyi), but greater concern is voiced for social justice and individual freedom. "A small group of people in Kiev," wrote Valentyn Moroz, "scattered sparks all over Ukraine, and where they fell the ice of indifference and nihilism that had accumulated over long years began at once to thaw."[2] Some of the writers sympathized with the authors of underground documents, but they hesitated themselves to take up the tasks of political protest. That task is now performed by the intellectual underground. The functions of writers and of underground intellectuals (some of them former writers) are separate though complementary.

During my visit to the Soviet Union in 1964 I witnessed the fire at the Library of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev, on May 24th. Standing in a crowd of rather apathetic spectators I was struck by the magnitude of the blaze (it was still burning the next day) and I wondered about Soviet firefighting methods. Next day, when no word about this disaster appeared in the local press, I talked to some Ukrainian writers who thought the fire was an act of sabotage. My question as to who could be the saboteur remained unanswered. Not until nine months later did I read an answer in a document smuggled out of Ukraine and printed abroad.[3] It was one of the first such documents to reach the West.

The suspicion that the fire was an act of arson was confirmed by Soviet authorities, who arrested and tried a librarian, Pohruzhal's'kyi, on these charges. The court found that his motives were personal, arising out of a disagreement with the chief librarian and out of his unbalanced character. He was sentenced to prison for ten years. The document rejected this official version of the incident as a travesty of justice. It claimed that the arsonist's motive was political and that the fire was engineered by the KGB. The books and archives destroyed, it appeared, were in the field of Ukrainian folklore, literature, and history (including the archives of the Central Rada, the anti-Soviet government in 1918-19). The tragic incident, it was charged, was part of a conspiracy, begun by Stalin and continued by his successors, to destroy the Ukrainian national heritage and to erase the country's independent history in order to Russify it more easily. "Ukrainians," the call went on, "do you know what was burned? A part of your mind and soul was burned."[4]

Another publication that showed continued resistance to the Soviet regime found its way to the West in 1965. It was a collection of poems and a diary by Vasyl' Symonenko.[5] Symonenko is no longer alive. He died in 1963 at the age of 28. Some of his poems, unpublished in Ukraine, as well as his diary, appeared in a New York edition of his works. As a poet Symonenko was no innovator. His greatest virtue was simplicity, and his ideas were expressed with unusual boldness. They showed great concern with problems that were first raised by Shevchenko over a century ago: justice, freedom for Ukraine and other non-Russian nationalities (in Shevchenko, the peoples of the Caucasus; in Symonenko, the Kurds), and the question of life under a stifling bureaucracy. With equal vehemence both poets castigate tyrants and plead for the rights of ordinary people. A committed poet, unlike most of his contemporaries, Symonenko was driven to write "literature for the desk drawer." There is evidence that through his work, circulated clandestinely, and because of his untimely death he has become the object of a cult among Ukrainian youth. Sverstiuk spoke poignantly about him as the one who "felt joy and bitterness in his duty to his own people."[6]

The second half of the 1960's saw the culmination of the Ukrainian dissent movement and the peak of *samvydav* (samizdat) activity. Much of it took the form of letters and petitions signed by various groups of intellectuals, professionals, and working-class men and women.[7] Four major writers (not counting scholars like Braichevs'kyi) emerged at that time: Viacheslav Chornovil, Ivan Dziuba, Valentyn Moroz, and Ievhen Sverstiuk. Each is very different and deserves a separate study. What united them was a common concern for human and national rights, yet each made a very special

contribution to the dissent movement—a movement that was, of course, much wider and that included many other intellectuals.

The major achievement of Chornovil (b. 1937) was primarily his compilation of a large volume of documents, which appeared in the West in 1967 as *Lykho z rozumu* (Woe from Wit; translated as *Chornovil Papers*, Toronto, 1968). The most interesting part of the collection, which was prefaced by an essay by Chornovil, deals with documents on the miscarriage of Soviet justice, illustrated by twenty individual cases. The literary contributions to the volume are of lesser importance.

Dziuba (b. 1931) was a prominent literary critic who wrote a long scholarly treatise entitled *Internatsionalizm chy rusyfikatsiia* (Internationalism or Russification, London, 1968). It was a devastating expose of abuses in the Leninist nationality policy in Ukraine. The book was first sent in typescript to high Party officials in Ukraine and only later smuggled abroad, where it had broad reverberations. Dziuba's argument is advanced from a Marxist point of view, emphasizing the Stalinist distortion of the nationality policy in Ukraine and amply documenting the actual Russification of the country. He puts the blame for the present discontent in Ukraine squarely on Moscow's centralist policies, which he regards as the direct continuation of traditional tsarist repression.

A writer who occupies a special place in this group and has by now received wide international recognition is Valentyn Moroz (b. 1936). His first long essay "Reportazh iz zapovidnyka im. Berii" (Report from the Beria Reservation; available in M. Browne, ed., *Ferment in the Ukraine*, London, 1971, and also *Report from the Beria Reserve*, Toronto, 1974, and *Boomerang*, Baltimore, 1974) is reminiscent of George Orwell and offers a superb analysis of totalitarianism. It ends optimistically, since in 1967 Moroz was convinced that a great awakening was taking place in Ukraine and that the authorities were powerless to stop it. Soon after that Moroz was arrested and then briefly released. Between 1967 and 1971 his outlook changed somewhat. In the beginning he was chiefly concerned with human freedom. Later he focused much more on national identity, to the point of becoming a militant nationalist. His views were best expressed in the three essays "Khronika sprotyvu" (Chronicle of Resistance), "Moisei i Datan" (Moses and Datan), and "Sered snihiv" (Amid the Snows). Their central theme is a reiteration of Ukrainian national identity and cultural freedom in the face of Russification. Moroz is now an exponent of what is called "integral nationalism," and his firm conviction is that one must defend Ukrainian national existence with a fervent possessedness (*oderzhymist'*). Consequently, he was moved to attack other dissidents (e.g., Dziuba) for their lack of militancy.

The fourth dissenter, who thus far is little known in the West but who has made a significant contribution to the "literature of protest," is Ievhen Sverstiuk. He was born in Volhynia in 1928 and became a leading literary critic in the 1950's. After Khrushchev's fall in 1964 he was dismissed from work for the outspokenness with which he had addressed a gathering of teachers. He continued publishing in Ukrainian journals in Czechoslovakia. His essay "A Cathedral in Scaffolding" was published in 1970 in Paris and his "Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi Is Laughing" appeared in Germany in 1972.[8] Early in 1972, Sverstiuk was arrested during a new wave of repressions directed at Ukrainian intellectuals. In March 1973 he was sentenced to seven years in a concentration camp and five years in exile. He is now serving his sentence in one of the Perm camps. Sverstiuk is married and has a son and a daughter.

Although Sverstiuk's essays were never published in Ukraine, they enjoyed wide clandestine circulation. The first was written in response to the novel *Sobor* (Cathedral) by Oles' Honchar, which appeared in 1968 and sparked much critical controversy. Sverstiuk's essay follows the novel very closely, so that at times a reader unfamiliar with Honchar's work may find it difficult to appreciate Sverstiuk's argument. Some footnotes illuminating this relationship have been added. Sverstiuk's style tends to be abstract, rambling, and involved, and it presents problems not only to the reader but to the translator as well. On rare occasions, for the sake of clarity, these stylistic intricacies have been by-passed and in several places the text has been condensed. Any direct omissions are always marked by [. . .], while the author's own three dots, which he frequently uses, have also been retained. Almost all the quotations in the text, which are without any reference, come from Honchar's novel. It would have been possible, of course, to produce much more detailed annotations explaining various allusions and references. This, however, would have led to a massive textual study; to avoid this, it was decided to keep the explanatory notes to a minimum.

The tone of Sverstiuk's argument may also puzzle the reader. On the one hand, he gives in his first essay a detailed commentary on characters and episodes from the novel while, on the other hand, he moves to philosophical generalizations on many diverse topics. This art of "reading between the lines" is extremely well developed in the Soviet Union. Sometimes his generalizations contain original and well-defined ideas, but at other times they verge on the commonplace. Yet it is precisely this mixture which is so characteristic of the dissident Soviet thinkers. Frequently, ideas that animated Europe in the nineteenth century and that to us seem somewhat worn, still represent for them the eternal verities. These include attitudes on revolution, on the people, and on art and literature.

Sverstiuk is obviously within the Slavic tradition when he shows his profound belief in the moral purpose of literature. In this and in other respects, his essay resembles Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize speech. Similarly, Sverstiuk's preoccupation with national history may seem rather oldfashioned to a Western reader. Yet this concern can in no way be called narrowly nationalistic, since it is combined with an equally strong interest in the problems of ecology, social improvement, and the democratic process. For him a sense of national dignity is a basic prerequisite for everything else. In pleading for the restoration of Ukrainian national pride based on knowledge of history and literature, he speaks for Ukrainian youth today, disenchanted with the Soviet establishment and opposed to the official policy of Russification. However, unlike other Ukrainian dissenters (notably Valentyn Moroz), Sverstiuk does not preach the gospel of nationalism. He is aware of the complexity of modern society for which nationalism by itself offers no cure. Yet in Ukraine, argues Sverstiuk, no progress can be achieved unless and until national goals are fulfilled. To anyone in the West, these goals (the use of one's native language, freedom in the interpretation of history and literature) may seem minimal indeed. But to Soviet Ukrainian dissenters they are the most important of "non-negotiable demands."

These demands also include a plea for ecological sanity, for the recognition of the value of public opinion and the reinvigoration of a soulless bureaucracy by contact with the grass roots. The ills Sverstiuk condemns are not limited to the Soviet Union—it is only that there they are never openly discussed. He speaks, therefore, as a true patriot and a humanist, for to him individual freedom means more than collective welfare. He claims that the second is impossible without the first. He also believes that human individuality must first express itself through a national framework ("He who puts himself outside the sources of the national sea is almost divorced from humanity"). Here again we can hear an echo of Solzhenitsyn, for whom "nations are the wealth of humanity; . . . even the least among them has its own special colors, and harbors within itself a special aspect of God's design."[9] For Sverstiuk, God's design is never in doubt. It is stated clearly and defended with a vehemence that may surprise an American reader because it is so close to what he himself probably believes.

The forthrightness and vigor with which Sverstiuk proclaims his ideas are remarkable. In a free society they would have won him a high reputation. He is, indeed, a good example of a literary critic for whom literature is a matter of national and human existence. His essay on Kotliarevs'kyi contradicts many accepted scholarly opinions, but the driving force of its argument is impossible to refute. Its freshness is infinitely preferable to the

stuffiness of the usual panegyrics in honor of the "father of modern Ukrainian literature."

Sverstiuk's approach to Kotliarevs'kyi is highly relevant to Ukrainian literature today. Just as in Kotliarevs'kyi's day, the future of this literature is in the hands of a few courageous patriots who are not afraid to oppose official policy. The present generation of Ukrainian dissenters continues Kotliarevs'kyi's tradition of stubbornly clinging to their native roots while creating art forms of universal significance.

Many divergent trends in Ukrainian intellectual history come together in the writings of Sverstiuk. He reconciles those past apostles of the Ukrainian national renascence who were guided by the heart (Shevchenko, Lesia Ukrainka) with those who relied on reason (Kulish, Drahomanov, Lypyns'kyi). He combines impassioned concern for his country with a universal, rational program. To have accomplished this much in the present intellectual climate of the Soviet Union is no small achievement.

Predictably, the dissent movement in Ukraine was met with alarm and repression on the part of the authorities. The extent, the nature, and the main thrust of the dissent were never publicly revealed. Instead, the secret police were given orders to arrest the chief dissenters, who were then in most cases tried *in camera* and deported to labor camps. There were three distinct waves of arrests and persecutions, rising in intensity: in 1961, 1965, and 1971-72. At first the KGB uncovered alleged secret organizations (e.g., The Ukrainian Union of Workers and Peasants) and broke them up in a series of arrests.[10] Later, in 1965, when the dissent movement spread much more widely, scores of intellectuals were jailed (among them Moroz) and subsequently tried on the all-inclusive charge of spreading anti-Soviet propaganda. The most severe repressions came in 1971-72 when hundreds more came under arrest. The severity of the sentences was also increased (Moroz received nine years of imprisonment plus five years of banishment; Chornovil, Sverstiuk, and Svitlychnyi received seven years imprisonment and five years banishment each; Kalynets' received six years imprisonment and three years banishment, to cite only a few). For most, the reaction to these Draconian measures was to continue to defy their accusers and to plead their innocence. Valentyn Moroz, incarcerated in the Vladimir prison, staged a 145-day hunger strike, which attracted much attention throughout the world. On the other hand, Ivan Dziuba, a man of delicate health, was pressured to sign, late in 1973, a confession of his "mistakes." He has been released but so far has not written much to repudiate his earlier views. Severe pressure was applied to other dissenters, several of whom (e.g., Leonid Pliushch) were confined to psychiatric prison wards. For a time it seemed that the movement was

crushed, but in 1974 there appeared the first signs of continued resistance, as the underground paper *Ukrains'kyi visnyk* (Ukrainian Herald) resumed clandestine publication.

While it is impossible to assess accurately the impact of the dissenters on the Ukrainian public (the recent dismissals of scholars alone suggest that the sympathy for dissenters is fairly widespread), it is quite clear that the ferment caused an upheaval in the Ukrainian communist establishment. It would be naive to suggest, as some do, that the dissenters had at first the active support of the Ukrainian Party boss Petro Shelest. It was probably true that he was willing to listen to some of their arguments (notably Dziuba's). A hardliner himself (especially during the 1968 Czech crisis), Shelest was nevertheless prepared to uphold the last vestiges of cultural and economic autonomy of the Soviet Ukrainian republic. This became increasingly difficult in the face of Brezhnev's neo-Stalinist centralist policies. By the 24th Party Congress (March-April, 1971) it became clear that the new "integrationist" policy of the Party was but thinly disguised Russian imperialism.[11] In the spring of 1972 Shelest was removed from his post. This coincided with the purge of his followers and new arrests of the dissidents. The repressive measures did not assume the proportions of Stalinist terror and were used selectively. The dissent movement (comprising many trends and personalities and without a united front) suffered a serious blow. In Russia, after the forcible expulsion of Solzhenitsyn, some dissenters were allowed in 1974 to leave the country for the West, while in Ukraine so far this has not happened. Russian dissenters from Ukraine who were allowed to leave (Viktor Nekrasov) have since confirmed that the Ukrainian protest movement is far from dead. They also confirm the timidity and obscurantism of the present literary establishment in Ukraine.

In a country bereft of enlightened native leadership and smothered by Russian bureaucracy, those voices which may be heard from prisons and camps offer a message of hope and moral encouragement. Recently, the young poet Ihor Kalynets', now in a camp, is reported to have said this: "Like every prisoner, I long with all my heart for freedom, but realizing quite soberly the present oppressive situation in Ukraine, I prefer the camp."[12] Tragic as they are, these words remind us of Sverstiuk's call "with our spiritual growth and moral authority . . . to defend our place under the sun."

Footnotes

1. Certain parts of this introduction appeared earlier in different form in the *Problems of Communism*, vol. XVII (Washington, 1968), pp. 14-20, and *Slavic Review*, vol. XXXI, 4 (Seattle, 1972), pp. 863-69.

2. V. Moroz, "In the Midst of Snow," *Report from the Beria Reserve* (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1974), p. 90.

3. "Z pryvodu protsesu nad Pohruzhal's'kym" (Concerning the Trial of Pohruzhal's'kyi), *Suchasnist'*, vol. V, 2 (Munich, 1965), pp. 78-84.

4. Ibid., p. 82.

5. Vasyl' Symonenko, *Bereh chekan'* (Edge of Anticipation) (New York: Proloh, 1965).

6. "Vystup na vechori Vasylia Symonenka" (Speech at the Commemoration of Vasyl' Symonenko), *Ukrains'kyi visnyk*, IV (Paris-Baltimore, 1971), p. 118.

7. Cf. M. Browne (ed.), *Ferment in the Ukraine* (London: Macmillan, 1971).

8. The most comprehensive collection of Sverstiuk's published and unpublished essays appeared under the title *Sobor u ryshtuvanni* (Cathedral in Scaffolding) (Paris-Baltimore: Smoloskyp, 1970). His other major clandestine essays are available in Ukrainian: "Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi smiietsia" (Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi Is Laughing), *Suchasnist'*, vol. XII, 5 (Munich, 1972), pp. 35-59; "Slidamy kazky pro Ivanovu molodist' " (On the Track of a Fable about Ivan's Youth), *Suchasnist'*, vol. XII, 7-8 (Munich, 1972), pp. 5-13; "Vidkrytyi lyst do redaktsii 'Literaturnoi Ukrainy' " (An Open Letter to the Editors of the 'Literary Ukraine') (together with Viktor Nekrasov, Ivan Dziuba, Mykhailyna Kotsiubyns'ka, and Lina Kostenko), *Suchasnist'*, vol. IX, 2 (Munich, 1969), pp. 86-88, and "Chym hlybshe v zemliu tym vyshche v nebo" (The Deeper into the Earth the Higher into the Sky), *Vyzvol'nyi shliakh*, vol. XXVI, 6 (London, 1973), pp. 568-78.

9. A. Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 19.

10. Cf. Konstantyn Sawchuk, "Opposition in the Ukraine: Seven Versus the Regime," *Survey*, vol. XX, 1 (London, 1974).

11. Cf. Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, "Soviet Nationalities Policy and Dissent in the Ukraine," *The World Today*, vol. XXX, 5 (London, 1974), pp. 214-26.

12. *Svoboda*, March 28, 1975.

A CATHEDRAL IN SCAFFOLDING

My civilization is rooted in the cult of Man,
revealed through persons. Throughout the ages
it has striven to reveal Man, just as it
teaches us to see a Cathedral in stones.

–Saint-Exupéry

Cathedrals, those great monuments of the human spirit, have risen across the land since ancient times. They are surrounded by the elongated structures of the new technology. As in ancient times restless man clings to a piece of earth and the tall sky to find his bearings, to find himself for a moment and to fulfill something in himself.

But the earth is covered with asphalt and concrete, the sky is overcast with smoke and the roar of engines, and life is flying off somewhere in a desperate panic, leaving not a clear hour for the soul to reflect on the things that matter.

Where is life going? Are we leading life or is life leading us, offering us cheap substitutes for the Word–television, football, alcohol?

Does a man amount to anything in this stream of life? Or is he a passenger on a blind ship voyaging in the middle of the night? If he does not amount to anything, how can the ship mean anything? But does man mean enough to make it worth stopping at the edge of the precipice by the force of his own intellect and will?

In order to remain a man, he *must* mean at least that much . . . But to do this he needs the greatest concentration of intellect and spirit. He must be reborn in order to understand that everything depends on him personally–both the heritage of his ancestors, and the fate of the world, the fatherland of mankind.

Today, as never before in history, everybody must be a person within the human race, to feel in every nerve its pains and anxieties. Today especially each one must feel an organic part of the great cathedral of human

civilization, a vital stone in that cathedral selflessly supporting the entire structure. For although it is imperfect, unfinished, and a little old-fashioned, it is still the only edifice of the human spirit. We must finish this construction and not start building anew.

Today everyone who realizes this understands that the point does not lie in poeticising the universal Cathedral, but in the concrete embodiment of it, in creating one's own *individuality as a part of one's nation*, as a hopeful basis for cultural and spiritual life. Each of us faces dire alternatives–either to be the son of his own people or to be a worthless hired man and a marauder.

In the modern search for the individual's place in life, man is faced with a heavy responsibility and ponders his own conscious and unconscious participation in contemporary affairs. Here, behind the facade of daily professional work, behind the active participation in constructive social life, there opens the obverse side–the passive participation of contemporary man in the process of social degradation, the acceptance of the ruinous activity of the unintelligent will which takes our silence as a sign of consent.

We are passing through an unheroic phase of history when the man who has escaped passive conformism and follows the voice of his own conscience is a hero. The cautious are the most irresponsible. They are aware of only one thing–not to push their fingers between the spokes of the wheels regardless of whether the wheels are moving forward and pulling something or not. They imagine it is enough to keep out of sordid matters and to wait until others become involved.

But let us remember that history has stamped on our foreheads all the caution, passivity, vacillation, and laziness of our forefathers and each new generation has to pay for this from the cradle with its honor and livelihood. Then once more history searches for the spiritual heritage of our Don Quixotes in the silt of the slaves' heritage.

Now, the times have long gone when a vegetative existence and the anabiosis of whole generations left only a blank spot on the map of the world. Now the times are different. Whether we like it or not, we form a link in the chain of life of our planet, which is covered by a nervous network of atomic landmines and political volcanoes that rumble, ready to explode.

The worldwide crisis of spiritual life in the face of the onslaught of science that can physically alter and even destroy our planet is the greatest and newest problem in our history so far. In the past there was no lack of insanity to further criminal deeds (wisdom always gave way to force) but madmen lacked the fabulous power of destruction.

Today the lack of great wisdom, of great respect and love for man, of great responsibility for the ancestral heritage is felt as the deepest wound of

mankind. It is a wound that could be mortally infected. The worst carrier of this is the half-educated sergeant, the semi-intellectual. He learned in high school or the seminary the phraseology of culture and civilization. But he does not know the concentrated spiritual force, the life force, that stands behind the words, and so he likes to counterfeit words, juggle with them, creating a brilliant display, a temporary illusion of truth. Unmindful of the age-old laws of life's development, he acts as if they did not exist at all. Later, ten geniuses will be unable to put to rights what he has undone . . .

The international tribunal that sentenced the fascist experimentors gave the smallest of lessons by punishing the bankrupts—it did not condemn for all time and extirpate that principle of negation.

And yet today we live in the hope that mankind will cleanse itself spiritually and will grow with the force of the instinct for self-preservation. There is no other way.

The Writer

Since time immemorial someone has had to perform the thankless task of the poet and prophet, to break the bonds of the customary illusions and prejudices of his generation in order to begin to comprehend all that exists under the open sky, and say his independent word. In our land the writer has always been its poorest son, and it was to him that its heavy torments and noble legacies were revealed.

Today he looks around and notices that he is following an old rut, away from the greatest tribulations and searchings of our time. He catches himself teaching people instead of learning from them.

How could it happen that a writer who all his life, as it were, loved the people failed to consider *the most essential* thing about them? Exupéry told the truth when he wrote: "You cannot say anything essential about a cathedral if you talk only about its stones." So it is with me. I, too, "identified the cathedral with the sum total of its stones. Yet slowly my preconceptions have evaporated and I have decided to reconstruct the human being."

But how? Begin with the truth.

Today any writer who does not understand this cannot count on the attention and respect of the reader. No matter what, he must be a citizen,

responsible for his honor, his country, his people—as an envoy before mankind. He must look at the world from the highest vantage point—the summit of his own country.

But where is this highest point? Because of the lack of scientific generalizations, statistics, sociology, or even ordinary journalism, we must listen, as we did before, to the voice of the people and reckon with the obvious facts. Perhaps the most telling facts in Ukraine are, first, the flooding of the fertile, settled areas along the Dnieper to create putrid seas for cheap hydroelectric stations and, secondly, the organized destruction, from time to time, of ancient churches.

Despite the protests sounded by common sense and conscience and voiced by scientists, writers, and public opinion, this process continues. . . . And, sad to relate, today no one will accept responsibility for it. No one takes the blame! Yet the people have known for a long time: that which hides its eyes and name is the most dangerous. Is not this fact in itself terrible because of the evil enigma of the face hidden from the people? Does it not fill with fear all contemporaries, witnesses, and passive participants, and does it not remind us that we are all responsible, because of our indifference and silence? Because we do not look for the one who is responsible and we tolerate dishonorable informers. Because we do not feel personally responsible for the heritage of our ancestors and we, in fact, value our material comfort more than the national and spiritual treasures of our people.

With his novel *Sobor* (Cathedral)[1] Oles' Honchar went to the very heart of these contemporary issues and stirred them like a hive. This is no ordinary work in which the author tries to discuss more or less vital problems for the benefit of the average reader. No, here the author takes something very painful from the people's lips and problems arise which await our reason and our hands.

The old Cossack cathedral encased in scaffolding sounds the alarm far and wide with the muted sound of its sunken bells. Mysticism? Our frogmen did not find them? But with our eyes and hands we never find what is most important. . . .

The Cathedrals of Our Past

Ancient churches reach high into the sky across our land as they have always done. Golden-domed, with tattered roofs, in rotten scaffolding. These are protected by law, but not by the people. . . . And there are those that glow invisibly in the depths of our national consciousness. Oles' Honchar has made, it appears, the first attempt in Soviet literature to comprehend their eternal silent music and their national symbolism.

What we are obliged to discover today was elemental for our forefathers. Wherever the Zaporozhians settled, a church was erected as a symbol of their spirit.

> When the Zaporozhians
> Left the Great Meadow and the Sich[2]
> They took with them the Holy Mother
> And nothing else besides.
> This they took to the Khan
> In the Crimea, their new Zaporozhe.
>
> (T. Shevchenko,[3] "Irzhavets' ")

The poet refers here to the first Ukrainian political refugees, after the defeat of Hetman Mazepa[4] and the Zaporozhian leader Hordienko[5] in 1709. Before the invasion by "Peter's[6] henchmen" they left everything behind and, according to popular tradition, took with them only "movable churches" so as to defend forever their spiritual possession of a foreign land.

> But
> Although the Khan
> Allowed them to settle on the sands
> He forbade the Zaporozhians
> To build a church.

Was this the sentimental belief of saintly anchorites who only know how to pray? Or was it a banner, proclaiming the Cossack human and national being?

Those familiar with Ukrainian history know the deeper meaning of this phenomenon. These reckless heroes had no fear of death and considered it an honor to die in battle. They had no fear of hell itself and no tortures on earth

frightened them. And so their faith was not born of a servile fear of punishment by a despotic deity (a heavenly variant of the autocratic tsar). It was a religion of Free Men. Their God was a god of Freedom, Truth, and Love. Leaving everything behind they took with them their God–their Cathedral, which they erected everywhere on every occasion. Through it each expressed *the better part of his personality*, his people, and his will to fight for his country.

They erected their Cathedral as a spiritual symbol, as the tallest tower to watch over their spiritual continuity, as the voice of their ancestors, and as a testament to their children who have no right to sell themselves to foreign gods and abandon the ideal of Man expressed by the Cathedral.

The voice of one's people resounds in the air for each generation and each generation must be able to rise high enough to hear it. It must pass the torch and erect its sublime Cathedral–that is, its great pride, its great calling.

Whenever there is no understanding of this "golden thread of history," no resonance between the past and the future, the spiritual meaning is lost and painfully degraded without leaving a trace even in the memory of children (who remember someone for eating and dressing well–the goal of all his work and ambition). A generation like that does not fulfill its historic mission. It has nothing to pass on to the future. Material values, even if they exist, are fragile and disappear quickly like a father's heritage in the hands of a prodigal son.

When the heads of the vanquished are bent low and their energies go into efforts to secure their daily bread, then individual tall figures arise on the impoverished ground as voices of the self-preservation of a nation which must place its torch in the hands of a hero who will quickly immolate himself on behalf of us all, as thousands, nameless or famous, have done before him. They do not represent those of their contemporaries who bowed down before Baal, nor those who bent without a word of protest. They express what sounds above the heads of lazy contemporaries as an echo of the voice of their great ancestors. "Like the accursed at the crossroads of the world," like Moses, expelled by demagogues, like the bitter prophetess Cassandra, they are voices crying in the wilderness and they encourage their contemporaries to "speak to deaf ears and dumb mountains" (Franko[7]). They proclaim for us the ever-living meaning of the past. . . .

In the Cossack Cathedral, built during the tragic period of a farewell to arms, there existed the proud memory of one's name and one's dignity. This was a treasure of the generations, who never entirely disappeared but left what was best to those of their children worthy of it.

What would be left of their daring heroism if they had not composed songs, had not built churches? In the Cathedral they erected a symbol of *the highest spirituality, and by preserving it, they remained themselves.* When, not understanding this, we sing

> Our *duma*, our song
> Will never die.
> It is our glory,
> The glory of Ukraine
>
> (Shevchenko, "Do Osnovianenka")

we show our complete ignorance of these words. If they, along with their ideals, their glory, and their heritage have diminished in their descendants, it is not because of the burden of the past and the needs of the present. Everything diminishes in a small and petty heart, just as everything "is extinguished in our slave soul" (Lesia Ukrainka[8]).

Does this not happen because our hearts stop beating with the great spirit of our ancestors? As they wilt, they busily search for an easy substitute for the ancient heritage and stop, as usual, at the neighbor's accordion. . . .

Cathedrals glow in the national tradition and consciousness. That is why every Zachiplianka,[9] avoiding Loboda, waits for its Bahlai. Loboda's hope that people from the grassroots level would petition for the repudiation of the Cathedral will never be fulfilled.

To be sure, Shpachykha[10] renounced the Cathedral when she saw riding-breeches under the new priest's vestments. For the same reason people will renounce bread on which a green fly has sat. Perhaps they feel nauseated by the green flies or perhaps they are certain that the flies cannot be chased away. But they do not give up bread. Our nation has never yet lived without spiritual nourishment, and its entire history, however little it is known to us today, confirms Franko's words:

> And they will pass into the unknown ages
> Full of longing and terror,
> Making a path for the spirit
> And dying on that path.
> . . . Making a path for the spirit . . .

Spiritual Foundations

The basic meaning of Honchar's novel is the search for spiritual foundations, the search for living sources of humaneness, the deciphering of national traditions and values to which a people can hold to save its own being and character in the shaky world of standardization.

"Man has an instinct to do good," thinks old Izot Ivanovych.[11] "When you do him the slightest good his heart rejoices. They used to say that invisible comradely Spirits sit on man's right and left shoulder. One of them spurs him to do good, the other, evil. . . . Don't you think they still exist? They sit on each of us, on the left and on the right shoulders. . . . It depends which of them you listen to. . . ."

A people's wisdom is the beginning and the end of all philosophies. All wise men built "a citadel in the human heart," created hymns, temples, poems, cathedrals *to confirm the goodness in men.*

"The pity is," the old man meditates further, "that the comradely Spirit falls asleep. . . . The soul is covered with meat and fat. [. . .] When it is replete with them it can no longer feel pain and asks for nothing more."

We can get used to anything and all we need then is a stiff drink. . . .

Ivan Bahlai[12] [. . .] realized yet another important truth about people. "It is impossible to build life on suspicion and mistrust, it is impossible to live on hatred. Something higher is alive in man—the need for unity, support, and fraternity."

The novel poses the great problem of Man and his spiritual milieu, which must strengthen and crystallize into something noble, a set of human principles which must be defended from the decay brought about by soul-destroying influences.

This, indeed, is the starting point for Marx. "The world around us must be so arranged [. . .] that man can feel free in his relations with others, that he can feel human." A man needs stable and favorable conditions in order to follow the path of goodness, believe in high ideals and immunize himself against petty material temptations and the lures of licentiousness.

In his search for the essence of humanity Dostoevskii finds an inherent contradiction. In the language of the judge who admonished man in the person of the philistine Dimitrii Karamazov it went like this: "The feeling of baseness and of a fall is just as inevitable to these licentious, uncontrolled natures as the feeling of high nobility. . . . They need this unnatural mixture constantly. Two bottomless abysses at one and the same moment. Extremes meet here and all contradictions coincide—the ideal of Sodom and the ideal of a Madonna."

Perhaps one of these doubles keeps the other captive? Or perhaps their duality is the result of our analysis. Tolstoi puts it more simply: "People are like rivers; the water in each is the same. Each human being bears in him the seeds of all the human qualities."

Dostoevskii experimentally muddied this water, balanced the doubles, depriving them of the stabilizing foundation of all morality—the idea of God and the immortal soul. After Ivan Karamazov proclaimed the principle "If there is no God, everything is permissible," Dmitrii Karamazov was shaken and the evil, slumbering Smerdiakov was stirred into action. . . .

Kant based his "On the Coexistence of Good and Evil" and "On Original Evil in Human Nature" on historical facts. First of all on the manifestation of man's cruel willfulness in a so-called natural state—i.e., among savages. He relied on the civilizing role of progress, which would stimulate man *to combat temptations in himself* and thus perfect himself. Man, he argued, "becomes evil only *because of temptations*, therefore he is not *essentially* evil . . . and is still capable of improvement." For any thinking man it is hardly possible to disagree with this.

All the philosophers have relied on man's good will and all the great political leaders have tried to enact wise and firm laws to protect what is sacred in man. All have found one and the same way out: the creation of institutions to strengthen man's good will.

Even though the great idealist Kant did not believe in the revolutionary improvement of human conditions, the revolution proclaimed the destruction of rotten and fictitious foundations, of frail and corrupt laws, the removal of people depraved by license and irresponsibility, of all injustices and lawlessness, in order to build genuine, strong foundations for the regeneration of man, on which to graft the ideals of goodness and justice, thus making it easier for him to undertake free choices.

When Lenin, even during the revolution, wrote about the preservation of monuments and about taking over all the cultural riches created by mankind in the course of history, he meant, of course, first of all, the spirit of preservation and creativeness, as well as the rescue of the foundations on which the spiritual aspirations and needs of man rest.

From the very beginning of the revolution what mattered was the creation of new conditions, new laws for the education of a new man who would replace the slave, the conformist, and the lackey. That is why public *openness* was proclaimed (not temporarily but for all time) contrary to the prevailing secrecy of the old regime, and *democratic freedoms* were established contrary to the old rule by decree, as well as *democratic laws* (government by the Soviets as opposed to the dictatorial and rigid practice of rule from above).

Free men were expected to create public opinion, and the public opinion of the workers was supposed to guide the actions of the government. Only public opinion, national conscience, honesty, truthfulness, and decency as well as the court of public judgment could replace and take over the functions of the old institutions of religion and morality. Before the People as before God. Public opinion was regarded as the supreme authority and legislative power of the Soviet Republic. Members of the government were to have no special privileges and no caste or private interests except their duty to carry out the will of the people as expressed by public opinion.

All these elementary truths I mention in order to be quite clear: the euphemistically termed "violation of the Leninist norms of legality," the license under the "personality cult," the "violation of workers' rights," while retaining revolutionary phraseology, was in fact a colossal counter-revolution and an anti-Soviet movement towards a despotism reminiscent of the old regime.

This was Stalin's greatest crime against the people because "the violation of legality" destroyed the foundation of public opinion, of the conscience, the dignity and independence of the person. *Human decency*, which supports civilized society, was eroded.

Ever since man stopped caring what other decent people thought about him and started to seek favors from organs of the state that were guided not by law, but by secret directives, ever since man became afraid to defend the truth and started to please those in power, ever since man stopped thinking independently of the fate of his country, his neighbors, or his own conscience and relied entirely on the higher-ups and began to accommodate himself to their weaknesses–public virtues have been relegated to the background and have given place to animal instincts of self-preservation. Man has forgotten the old truth formulated by Juvenal: "Know that the greatest disgrace is to prefer dishonor to death."

We must not accuse our fathers and forefathers. Many of them preferred death to dishonor. Many of them *did everything they could* to protect not only themselves but the principles of justice as well. But the general *tendency* was such that it favored the opportunist who demonstrated how to watch over and exploit his neighbors. The social process was fed by an artificial selection of the worst elements.

Unstable human substance–from time immemorial it has been sustained by the moral laws of decent people who are independent in their probity. Ever since it was crushed, a new type of man has developed: irresponsible, indifferent, opportunistic, one who does not withstand, but on the contrary supports, the hysteria of the governing organs. In our country

this new type of man has even developed his own language which, while it does not exactly adhere to native forms, does not go against the "national form" either; he has developed his own tactics about which one cannot tell whether they contribute to rescuing or to drowning. . . .

Let history judge Stalin—it is not for us to say to what extent he was hypnotized by the messianism of his Western neighbor [Hitler] who openly "came into this world not to make people better but to exploit their weakness." In the meantime, this hypothesis may be put forward: with all his negative personal characteristics, he [Stalin], in a most responsible position, remained an unbelieving seminarian who was not afraid of the corrupting force of absolute power since he did not understand that to violate legality at the top has the effect of geometric progression, multiplying at the bottom. Being what he was he could not understand that the duty of one who wields supreme power is *to protect the laws* and that misuse of power devalues all laws which, in a country of age-old lawlessness, become a matter of form and are quickly forgotten. Absolute power corrupts absolutely not only all those around but the one in power too, for he wants to crush the individual in order to subdue him. Thus, when his gilded monuments passed into oblivion, there were no laws or people who would defend him. This was what always happened to those who cherished power more than people.

The new religion "did not take place." People have seen the ineptness of the new god who decomposed from immense sacrifices.

> He was more sly and evil
> Than some Jehovah or other, whom he had cast down
> And burnt to ashes
> And then plucked him from the abyss
> And gave him a table and a corner of his own.
>
> (Boris Slutskii[13] in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1963)

The years of service to him [Stalin] have led to demoralization. "The greatest philosophy" was reduced to the fourth chapter of the "Short course"[14] a half-literate, pragmatic extract of dialectical materialism which had to be learned by heart. But for the true servant of the cult even that philosophy was too difficult and, above all, redundant. It was sufficient for him to invoke the very name of the "great teacher."

A new god was created: The Plan. Millions of tons of cast iron, steel, bacon, and meat became the highest reward—per capita. . . .

We realized that it was very easy to sink. It was merely necessary to remove or disguise the monuments to those who shone as high priests of the spirit, the eternal high calling, reproaching and reminding.

We are sinking down to an instinctual, physiological materialism to the accompaniment of monthly and yearly production reports, to the tune of loudspeakers and anesthetizing prattle about football, ballet, and the cosmos. We are sinking down to the ideology of a fly who lives but a single day. For whole decades we threw out yesterday's papers as ideologically obsolete and we pushed yesterday's gods down from their pedestals. To secure today's peace we positioned dozens of fire-extinguishers and professional watchmen so there would be no trouble whatever. Wherever these creatures are found the past ceases to exist, there is no chance for the future, they represent the present.

For thousands of years the best and noblest minds have tried to cultivate the energy of the human spirit.

> The spirit compels the body to struggle
> For progress, happiness and freedom . . .

This spiritual energy alone—the "eternal revolutionary," as Franko called it—expresses the true nature of man and gives lasting meaning to the life of the generations, linking together their greatest endeavors. Material comforts disappear without trace, each generation earning its own livelihood, but sometimes in a thousand years there may come to light the treasures of forgotten civilizations that disappeared during the time of spiritual decay because of a weak link that did not hold fast during a historical crisis.[15]

Throughout history our forefathers strengthened the backbone of our nation so that we might, as an elementary law of nature, repeat phylogeny in ontogeny. Each of us ought to have this backbone. To form it, each of us has to live through and experience the stages of becoming a nation.

That is why people instinctively cling to anything that elevates them spiritually and yearn to discover their own history. Today they justly scorn all those who so haughtily and irresponsibly negate national customs, traditions, and treasures since they know that these simpletons have nothing to offer. Today they shake their heads at "protégés" of the new religion of atheism, who make their offerings with cheap blasphemy and populate ancient churches with stuffed animals, themselves becoming dummies stuffed with mixed fodder.[16]

But what can be done with the new victims of demoralization, with young men born with spiritual dystrophy, who impudently and superciliously

smile at things they do not understand and mock their own mothers? When the ground gives way under our feet we involuntarily try to find support. We seize a page from an old chronicle, cherish Cossack relics and our cathedrals of the past—as the lost secrets of spiritual survival. After all, they had the miraculous power to turn men into heroes.

When History Begins

If a man's spiritual development can be judged by the way he comprehends his life, so too one may judge a nation by the way it remembers and understands its past. Having lost their independence and freedom, our forefathers still preserved the Kievan and Galician-Volhynian chronicles in the monasteries; at the time of Ruin[17] the chronicles of Velychko, Samovydets', and Hrabianka[18] were produced; and later the *Istoriia Rusov* (History of the Rus'ians),[19] the historical songs, and the *dumy*,[20] so that the great national drama might not be erased and forgotten by subsequent generations. In the meantime, just as the last acts of this drama—the Koliivshchyna[21] and the destruction of the Sich—were being extinguished in people's memories, the sepulchral silence seemed to imply that all was lost.

The blessed "south of Russia" received a new historical interpretation:

> They say, you see, that everything
> Used to be ours,
> But was rented to the Tatars
> And Poles as pasture land . . .
>
> (Shevchenko)

Little Russia,[22] hungry and tattered, became famous as the granary of the Empire, as a most hospitable land which yields up everything without resistance—most of all its talents, its intellectuals. [As Shevchenko wrote] "the clever German is now planting potatoes on the Sich." Only here and there a blind minstrel would sadly sing about the destruction of the Sich or about Bohdan [Khmel'nyts'kyi].[23] [. . .]

Ever since "Catherine's[24] bastards spread like locusts" over Ukraine, the past was proclaimed to be non-existent. But the past does not disappear.

Blood, heroically shed, does not vanish. It is transformed into a new form of spiritual energy which regenerates man. The past is resurrected in a genius.

"Taras [Shevchenko's] muse has smashed some subterranean vault which for centuries was locked by many locks, sealed with many seals, buried in the ground, which was then ploughed and cultivated so as to deprive posterity of the very memory of the place where the vault lay" (Kostomarov[25]).

Our Prometheus entered with his fire and awakened the Cossack world, put to sleep by evil witches.

The chief of police, Orlov, reported to the ministry in a top-secret message:

"Shevchenko wrote verse in the Little Russian language in which he lamented the alleged afflictions of Ukraine, proclaimed the glory of Hetman rule and of the ancient freedoms of the Cossacks, expressing many rebellious thoughts and pouring out calumny and bile on those whom he should have regarded with the utmost respect."

It seems that the "calumny" was the last straw, but the most serious charges were brought against his "lamentations" and "glorifications." He paid dearly for this "idealization of the past."

And yet, from that time on, the rebirth had begun among the people and a new type of intellectual was born who was reared in Ukrainian history rather than in the "history of the Fatherland."

This new type of man developed in spite of interdiction and surveillance, both open and secret, and our history developed with him; and no one, apart from ignorant priests, now attempted to curse Mazepa because he had allied himself with the distant chivalrous European Charles XII and not with the neighborly barbarian, Peter I. . . .

After the revolution, when all the "top secrets" were opened, the growth of education and culture [in Ukraine] promised to bring back to the entire people their history and their own, unborrowed spiritual heritage. But in the 1930's again "there were no thieves but the father was stolen."

Colorless textbooks of Ukrainian history appeared one after another and immediately they were criticized as "full of flaws" and "nationalist." One had to be very courageous and stubborn not to realize that the subject itself was "full of flaws."

Voices from below were heard: "I am a heifer: all I care about is my belly."

Voices of a new type of scholar answered: "We are like roosters: we herald a dawn which never appears." Then a new official two-volume *Istoriia URSR* (History of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) appeared on the shelves.

It is small wonder, then, that many of our countrymen, in spite of their degrees and diplomas, do not know the history of Ukraine and have no interest in it. What use is it? In general, anyone who is interested in Ukrainian history even now incurs the suspicion of officials and even of graduate students of history.

Against the background of this spiritual impoverishment it has become possible to introduce into school curricula and textbooks a note about the beneficent influence of Russian culture on Ukrainian culture after the "reunification" [of 1654][26] and make it into a cornerstone of the dogma of the provincial and imitative nature of Ukrainian culture. All this has happened in spite of the fact that in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* or in other earlier publications it is possible to read of Ukrainian intellectuals being carted off to Russia, not only artists and poets but teachers, too, and how Peter I cut open the window to Europe while at the same time shutting the door which led from Europe through Poland and Ukraine. And this is in spite of the fact that in any library one can read Lenin's theses, which H. Petrovs'kyi[27] used at the fourth session of the State Duma on May 20, 1913:

"The 1652 account by archdeakon Paul of Aleppo about literacy in Ukraine testifies that almost every man and woman could read. Censuses for the years 1740 and 1748 show that in the area governed by seven regiments of the Hetman State and in the provinces of Poltava and Chernihiv there were 866 schools in which Ukrainian was taught in 1094 villages. One school for 746 souls. In 1804 a decree was issued forbidding instruction in Ukrainian. The results of the national oppression very soon became evident. The census for 1867 showed that Ukrainians were the most illiterate people in Russia; they were on the lowest level . . . At the same time Ukraine paid three and a half million rubles in 9 years in taxes while receiving in return only 1,760.000." (H. Petrovs'kyi, *Z revoliutsiinoho mynuloho* [From the Revolutionary Past], 1958, p. 79).

In any bookstore one can buy at a cut-rate price a book by Herzen,[28] in which he writes: "The wild, militant but republican and democratic independence of Ukraine lasted for centuries, up to Peter I. Ukrainians, constantly oppressed by the Poles, Turks, and Russians, drawn into an endless war against the Crimean Tatars, never gave up. Little Russia had voluntarily joined Great Russia and secured for herself considerable rights. Tsar Aleksei pledged himself to respect them. Peter I, using Mazepa's treason as an excuse, left a mere shadow of these privileges and [the tsarinas] Elizabeth and Catherine introduced serfdom into Ukraine. The poor country protested but how could it resist the fatal avalanche which rolled from the north to the

Black Sea covering everything Russian in its way with a shroud of icy enslavement. . . . Yet a century of serf-like dependence was unable to erase everything independent and poetical that that brave nation possessed. Its development is more individual, its coloring more local than ours. Our national life is always clothed in a drab uniform. Our people do not know their history, while every village in Ukraine has a legend of its own. All that Russians remember is Pugachov[29] and 1812." (From the article "Literatura i obshchestvennaia mysl' posle dekabria 1825 g." [Literature and Social Thought after December 1825].)

That is all in vain. "New facts" are being manufactured in our country and hired blind men are ready to swear that they saw them with their own eyes. Just now a campaign is being conducted to compile a history of Ukrainian cities and villages—in the familiar official manner.

What does writing popular history involve? First of all it means swearing the most solemn oath to observe truth and objectivity, to depict accurately all the important events and people (without throwing out one word of a song), to write down everything preserved in the people's memory—through the famine of 1933, the plague of 1937, the fire of 1941-45.

Very little has remained of those years in our memory. Few historical books have survived and even fewer of those people who both valued and collected books. Monuments of the recent past are few, except for churches and cathedrals—those that have survived—which have enshrined in them the spirit of our forefathers and their secret relay message to posterity. A great deal has flowed down the river without leaving even a song. In this country, plundered for centuries, how many talents, works, old manuscripts have been destroyed without trace, how many libraries have been burned in Kiev? Perhaps only the cathedrals have survived the ordeal by fire? They, after all, preserved books, icons, and other cultural treasures. It is not by chance that some schoolboys, during the destruction of an old church, in Honchar's novel *Cathedral* "find among the rubbish dried fragments of birch bark covered with enigmatic writing. . . . It remained undeciphered, what was written there by old scribes or even by the builders themselves, who knew how to build without a single nail . . ."

The latest historiography started with the blow of an axe against these undeciphered scriptures.

One of my friends was asked to write a history of his village. People told him that Shevchenko used to visit their village, which was also famous for its craftsmen, minstrels, and old beekeepers. He wrote it, brought it, and was told: "All this is good but unnecessary; write a history of the village after

1953." He did not protest, collected documents and papers, and created a new history. He submitted it in 1964 and received a final directive: "All this is not very important. You must pay attention first to the revolution, and then concentrate on the history of the village after 1963, because this is what matters." Of course, that's what matters. . . .

It sometimes happens that some small "Nestor" [chronicler] may be noticed for writing a history of a collective farm, telling when the cowshed and the pigsty were built, when and what kind of plan was overfulfilled, when it was mentioned in the press–all history. The methodology of this kind of historiography is debatable. If it allots space to cows then why does it not mention individual cows, especially those winning prizes, and, in addition, name their milkmaids and cowherds?

Writing collective farm history is a slippery task. . . . A cow only produces milk, a pig only bacon fat. . . . The highlight of this type of history is often some phrase of the collective farm brigade leader [about taking a cow to an exhibition in Moscow]. . . .

Today each of us may again freely decide when history began. Does it begin with the earliest date preserved in one's memory? With the revolution? Or with the most significant event in one's life? Or with one's birthday? Or with the moment when one started to climb the ladder of a career? The answer will depend on the extent to which one can regard oneself as part of the national whole.

Once again we are turning our faces to our history. [. . .] Slowly we discover some great names, some monuments and events–"this is what we hunger for." But whether we are turning "correctly" we will be told by the official pedagogues. "For some time now," writes the freshly baked academician O. Mazurkevych, "individual and industrious 'zealots for antiquity' have created a vogue for overpraising their 'own native history'." (*Radians'ka os'vita,* May 18, 1968.) The fact that Mazurkevych puts these words in quotation marks is significant. All our well-instructed teachers will at once sense that this is the new line–to put the industrious "zealots for antiquity" and "one's own, native history," for the moment, in quotation marks.

In all this the honorable academician looks for support to Pavlo Hrabovs'kyi.[30] Out of quotations [from the latter's works] he tries to stick together an extremely modern concept–that of downgrading and belittling Cossack history, instead of showing how Hrabovs'kyi not only did not criticize what is "one's own" but actually desired to awaken it in order "to preserve our nationality within the framework of universal progress." And this theory is spun by the "pedagogue" around a sick and nostalgic apostle

who in his dreams and thoughts was longing to "create a Ukrainian national consciousness." It was he who, overstepping all contemporary and future Mazurkevyches, declared that "nationalism is a necessary stage of universal progress; the demise of a nation is as tragic for that nation as it is for the whole of mankind."

Attacking Honchar's *Cathedral*, the academician bravely builds a verbal scaffolding over the "Christian Cossack republic" which "Marx's pen (why not Marx himself?) has attested to," and hints in scholarly fashion that "works used by Marx are obsolete in certain respects and contain a number of factual errors . . ."

It is not difficult to guess that [in the academician's opinion] Marx himself has become obsolete in view of the incontrovertible verities proclaimed by our modern academicians and would today be dismissed by Loboda in the phrase "That is all we find in the 'chronological notes' by Marx. . . ."

In fact, one does not have to be an academician to know that this is not all that "Marx's pen has attested to" on this subject. . . . It is clear that Marx, despite his "erroneous" sources, recognized the truth more readily than Loboda, since he had a natural instinct for the truth.

What, then, must we do about all this on which Mazurkevych casts such a doubtful eye, assuring us that [in Marx's opinion] "there is no idealization of the Cossack republic"? Maybe there is no idealization, comrade Mazurkevych, but was there then no Cossack republic? It is you who have raised the problem of idealization so that you can make a scholarly connection, but all we are concerned with here is either confirmation or denial of the fact that, surrounded by the dark and cruel regime of the Turkish Sultan and by haughty, gentry Poland there existed a "Christian Cossack republic." It existed without tsars or kings, with an elected Hetman and *koshovyi*[31], valiantly fighting the mightiest states of the time in defense of liberty.

Simply as its descendants, we can be proud of it and as human beings can give an objective account of our history. To praise it would demonstrate an inferiority complex just as to damn it shows one's own meanness. M. Shamota in heartfelt tones warns us against "enthusiasm for the past" (*Radians'ka Ukraina*, May 16, 1968). He writes: "apart from songs, campaigns and victories Ukraine heard the weeping of captive girls and saw the tears of widows and orphans." Yes, it heard! Indeed it heard! Not only in the past, but during the last war, after the "victory over the past."

There appear to be two sides of the coin not only in the Cossack past, for which, we are warned, we must not show enthusiasm, but in our recent

past, too—the revolution, the civil war, the second world war, which are usually depicted only as heroic and victorious. [. . .] Is it worth it for Shamota to get so excited over those "invalids" who "do not see in the past all the grief, the tears and the misfortune of millions"? To satisfy him we can even add that the past knew the bloody stake for impaling, and the gallows, and the hooks for hanging by the ribs, and the brass bulls for roasting alive, as well as bloody battles from which half the men did not return—but still they went again and again, in the name of their freedom, for the faith of their ancestors. Those were real men! They cannot be dismissed merely as losses, misfortunes, and tears, for they created something sacred in the national spirit and willingly sacrificed their lives so that a new cathedral might be built.

"The baggy red trousers of the Zaporozhian knights were covered with a mourning veil. . . . You have cunningly taken our trenches, banners, and military seals, but we shall build a cathedral and there our spirit will soar for ever."

Today, the important thing is not to set a price on the stones in the cathedral, but to arouse filial emotions for that church! It is important to speak out loudly and honestly in the name of history.

Where lies the fault in the "incontrovertible truth" fabricated by the collectives of our doctors and academicians? First of all, in its indigestibility. Obviously in its preparation our scholars were unmindful not only of the modest, relative, human truth but of the reader too. [. . .] The obedient reader cannot digest it and remembers it only briefly under the pressure of an examination. As soon as he receives a mark it is discarded as irrelevant; it is neither cold nor hot. . . . The pedagogical sciences are keeping out of it. They have performed their master's function. [. . .] It is the organs of state security that see to it that people without any real understanding of history, literature, or culture swallow everything indiscriminately. Let these organs just try to cure people who lack the right ideals [. . .] and those who show an "unhealthy interest" in old books and clandestine literature!

Today the fabricators of the "incontrovertible verities" have turned a whole generation away from everything that is its own and towards foreign literature. Our young people generally do not know the history, culture, even the language of their own people and often refuse to believe that it is possible to find anything worthwhile in Ukrainian in the flood of grey prose and cheap humor.

Idealization of the past, the first reaction against its negation, was experienced in our country a century ago. Today what we need is knowledge of our past. . . . But just like a century ago, we suffer from a lack of

consciousness, self-respect, and an elementary awareness of national dignity. Armed with an arsenal of distilled book production we face the problem of how to instill a sense of heritage once more in our young people and how to re-awaken spiritual life on their native soil.

Our learned pedagogues cannot explain how it came about that "an ancient Hutsul church was broken up for firewood by pupils of the higher grades while their teacher—their appointed teacher—supervised the work . . ." This disgraceful, criminal act ought, perhaps, to be passed over in silence because of its moral and pedagogical implications. But this would not mean that it did not actually happen. It would not avert the corruption of the minds of those pupils who did it. . . . And what are this teacher and his supervisors doing now? Perhaps "we at this moment are sowing indifference, breeding cruelty, bringing forth the destroyer!" Or do you think he has learned anything in spite of the creation of societies for the preservation of antiquities?

As for idealization of the past and present it is, for the most part, motivated by a childish romanticism (which can be cured by knowledge) or by hardened indifference (for which there is no cure). When someone gushes forth superlatives about his beautiful, great, free, happy and prosperous nation one is reminded of Hrebinka's[32] cautious and sober ox [. . .] or of Oles'[33] stanza:

> True! My people are ridiculous . . .
> They are blind, hunchbacked and odd,
> Like old minstrels they wander
> Without knowing who they are
> A people without a memory!

I believe that, from all the heroic epos of its history, our people have managed to preserve only soulful songs and enigmatic legends. During the last half-century, while the world population has reached 4 billions, our nation has shrunk in numbers. It rose feebly after 1914-21, then, half-dead, after 1933 and again, wounded and injured, after 1945. Today it is exhausted and its natural increase is in doubt. . . . It is racked by alcoholism. . . . It smiles at itself and talks to a glass saying, "home brew, home brew, who doesn't make you now?"

For centuries it valiantly defended and cultivated its language and it does so even today. But one shudders when a minister of education triumphantly announces that "Ukraine, one of the first of the republics, has

completed the plan of eight years of universal education, and a young Ukrainian in the Red Army writes an illiterate letter to Ielka.[34] [. . .]

It sums up his language, consciousness, culture, and all his ideology. If today a work should happen to be written which would truly recreate the unvarnished language of different Ukrainian classes, the reader's hair would turn grey.

It is very sad that in today's "Ukrainian" cities the young Ukrainian intelligentsia has to spend most of its energies on preserving its own national identity instead of competing with others in the intricate ways of modern living. Man has no time to comprehend facts and events, life is not long enough to master even one discipline! This is one of the reasons why the Ukrainian professional intelligentsia, deprived of a good national education, does not realize today that it is the brain of the Ukrainian nation. Mykola Bahlai's "vocabulary of national unity" would pose "too difficult a test" for it.

Ukrainian history, along with the history of the world, has not been translated into algorithms for these young men. They cannot even comprehend their own image. [. . .] The foundation of their logic is the most common "naive realism," which takes the ordinary and the apparent for the real and does not open the wide spiritual world for our technocrats.

It would be pointless to blame them for a lack of effort and character, for not being able to rise to the exercise of free will in a deterministic world. Hypnotized by the new terminology, they are ready to accept information as truth and have forgotten that the new terminology has not changed the old adage: "I don't want to be involved."

Here is what a real contemporary scholar said, using the old terminology: "We have freedom of choice. Or it might be better to say not 'we have' but '*we may have*' it. We may have it when choice becomes inevitable. At such a moment man fulfills his human duty" (Academician N. Konrad[35]).

An ancient song, in the eternally young voice of Ielka, reminds us of old riddles:

> What grows without a root?
> What rises without a seed?
> What plays and has a voice?
> What cries without tears?
> . . . if you guess I'll be thine; if not–I'll leave you . . .

A stone grows without a root . . .
The sun rises without a seed . . .
A violin plays, it has a voice . . .
A heart cries but has no tears . . .

Yes, only a stone can grow without a root. But the sun still rises—without a seed. . . .

Mykola Bahlai

If not we, then who?

The student Mykola Bahlai is by no means an exemplary positive hero. The novel *Cathedral* required a hero who would express the spiritual awakening among contemporary young people, their desire to think independently and independently to search for spiritual values in their native soil. Bahlai is an average student who is decent enough not to get too close to Loboda, who speaks a different language. He is wise enough to see with his own eyes the beauty of the cathedral and fathom its historical significance. He is courageous enough to dare to think, not only to criticize but to affirm what he believes against pressure from Loboda.

One of his comrades objects to the thin diet dished out by the cultural propagandists: "You want me to discover dumplings where in fact there are none. You want me to be merely decorative while I hate it. [. . .] No thank you for gifts like that. Thank you very much and I bow low to you right to the ground. When I listen to these 'bowings' on the radio it makes me sick, do you understand?"

This is the typical spiritual hunger of our youth, fed on substitutes. . . . But Mykola Bahlai goes further than the disenchanted technocrats who are disoriented by a stream of biased information and who are totally ignorant of their national culture and history. He takes an almost revolutionary step by tearing himself away from the sleepy indifference to and derision of everything Ukrainian as something smelling of provincial dumplings, obsolete, and by turning towards the people: "Not only the formulae of endemic servitude existed; we are descended from something else as well. . . . From

our mothers we inherited not conceit, arrogance and greed but a feeling of dignity, honor and freedom."

Bahlai is not a captive of ethnographic patriotism and empty phraseology; [. . .] *he seeks his heritage*, aware that "if not we–then who?" Like all those who search he dreams, loves, hates, and stumbles in the snowdrifts of past ages. That is why he has suffered enough to discover for himself the cathedral and the last Zaporozhian wizard Iavornyts'kyi[36] who "brought to light the true spirit of the Cossack republic drowned by ignoramuses and vulgarizers. . . ."

Deep in his heart Bahlai realizes that we have lost more than the secret of fast dyes and folk medicine. . . . All his efforts are concentrated on preserving himself, withstanding all profanations and Potemkin-like displays, opposing the hopelessly sober sceptic Orlianchenko[37] and the uneducated though diploma-holding lady teachers whose only claim to civilization "lies in their fingernails." He stands firmly enough on his feet to declare: "No, comrade poacher,[38] now it isn't as simple as that. The need for a cathedral, for beauty, as well as a hatred of destructiveness, glowed in the hearts of those who built it, but up to now it has glowed unnoticed, somewhere deep down, banked up. . . . Whenever a shadow falls or a threat is at hand one begins to realize that there are things without which the heart would be deprived. Today the people have noticed their cathedral, which is a triumph for faith and love. It is impossible to understand the complex soul of a nation without this great love."

The people created a splendid heritage, but they also begot its destroyers.

> There had been wars and military feuds;
> Halahans, Kysil's and Kochubei-Nahais;
> There has been plenty of that stuff.
>
> (Shevchenko)

This is what led to "human worms"–the Halahans,[39] who became renegades and forsook their heritage. Hence also the poacher and the crawling careerist. One must rise above them to see, over their heads, the sleepy giant, the "builder by vocation," and believe in him.

Mykola Bahlai has a strong constitution, natural common sense, and a spirit inextinguishable even by the tutors in his university studies. One of them, a *kandidat*[40] in philology, N. Fed', criticizes in *Izvestiia* (No. 136, 1968) the novel *Cathedral*: "In order to wade through it one has to undertake a joyless task . . . there are tedious characters and there is almost no action."

It is small wonder that after such a joyless reading it seems to him that Oles' Honchar simply juxtaposes the drab present against the colorful past, as the Romantics did in the early nineteenth century.

This young man with a degree in philology does not consider the dialectical relationship between the past and the present—that is up to the graduates in philosophy. But a *kandidat* in philosophy, I. Moroz (in charge of the chair of Marxism at the Engineering-Building Institute in Dniprope-trovske), put an end to the separation of the past from the present in the newspaper *Zoria* and declared that "our revolutions are higher than cathedrals." [. . .]

In the meantime N. Fed', after praising the novel's "beautiful descriptions of the southern landscape," gave a resume of M. Shamota's article and dealt a devastating blow to the student Bahlai by pointing out the latter's esthetic belief that "art in our time attracts the noblest (the select few from among the upper elite?—asks Fed')." The word "noble" was probably not included in N. Fed' 's curriculum. That is why he gave it a pre-revolutionary connotation. The meaning of this word is not given in any of our dictionaries. It must be deduced from our notions of spiritual purity and the enlightenment of man who squeezes out drop by drop everything slavish and cultivates respect for other men regardless of their origin or creed, their social or material well-being. This kind of nobility means a moral revolution in human emotion and thought. It means regarding life as everyone's responsibility, except for those who, like Sancho Panza, prefer the safety of an island. Human nobility is the single quality that can make us believe in man's high calling.

This idea, as conceived by Kant or Schelling, possibly appealed to Bahlai. Or perhaps he simply wanted to say that those who possess this nobility are attracted to art, while those who lack it prefer the pig trough. It might perhaps be pointed out to him that even those devoid of nobility are attracted to art if art is transformed into a trough.

In any case Fed' transparently considers Honchar's hero's esthetic views to be an "escape from life," the old "ivory tower philosophy, which serves as a refuge for aristocrats of the spirit."

If this were really so, then neither *Izvestiia* nor Fed' nor Moroz would take any interest in *Cathedral* or in its hero. . . . Since they are interested, we may be sure that Mykola Bahlai is no longer merely a student but, along with the passportless Ielka, is seeking work. It is a pity that it fell to his lot to demonstrate so little action. But if there is no action, there is perspective.

Perhaps, after all, it serves him right? Why does he not do something useful or watch sports events or simply collect new impressions? Why did he

not mind his own business? Instead he had to become interested in the Cathedral? Serves him right! He should have tried to complete his studies, perhaps even become a *kandidat* himself. That is a path, perhaps not for the noble, but still.... The point is that Bahlai is unable to fit into the mould from which ordinary cogs are made. His own Mephistopheles, Orlianchenko, warned him that "history teaches us that the firm strap comes before the laurels." But here we have only the strap, the ever-increasing duties and the trials while the laurels are relegated to an exotic never-never land: today they are dried and pressed in cellophane packages!

If the bright paths and meadows are not clear, it is undoubtedly best to choose the hardest, which is also the noblest. People travelling along it are always united in their concern about national affairs and in their enthusiasm for the spiritual renewal of Man and in their ethical separation from the Philistines and careerists. This path unites the people who help to ferment public opinion. May our unfinished student have the strength to travel along this path.

Loboda

"I think that for a negative type
somebody more intelligent than Volod'ka Loboda
could have been found."

(M. Shamota)

If the negative type Loboda is not intelligent enough, he may just as well be regarded as positive.... Why, in all the articles directed against *Cathedral*, is Volod'ka Loboda called a "half-wit," "clown," "ignorant careerist," "small-minded," "petty," "an insignificant worker without any authority," "stupid," and "base"? [...] There is no justification for this in the novel itself, where Loboda is not a stereotyped negative character. On the contrary, he is depicted in full color, with sociopsychological depth, and he deserves to be studied seriously.

He is the son of a famous metallurgical worker and has started to work well in the factory ... "Robust in health, always gay and cocky; ideas stick to him like burrs. When the tricentenary of the council of Pereiaslav[41] was

celebrated and old monuments were to be repaired, though there were no funds for the restoration of the cathedral, Volod'ka had a brain-wave: 'There is a way out. Let's just put up scaffolding around the cathedral.' He was told he was a genius."

Who is to blame? Volod'ka, or those who failed to provide funds while demanding restoration, or those who said he was a genius? There were enough funds for the scaffolding and Volod'ka [. . .] won the battle for "culture."

After that he "neither shunned nor scorned his friends . . . did not disappear behind mountains of paper work." There are not many managerial types like him today, liberal-minded, understanding that "nowadays the old dogmas are little use. One has to use one's brains, search for new solutions." Is he not a genius in comparison with those above and below, who cling to worn-out dogmas and even force others to follow them?[42] True, instead of dogmas Volod'ka relies on practical sense and coarse utilitarianism. . . . Yet it would be nice to call all his bosses together and ask them if they dare to cast a stone against him.

Volod'ka senses today's intensified interest in the national problem and favors "national form." He says, "Let us consider what is one's own, what is ours, what is our national heritage. As if I were against tradition! . . . Things could be designed in the Cossack style. A Zaporozhian carrying a spear could watch over the entrance to a cafe . . ."

We can see that what is one's own he does not put in quotation marks as did the academician in *Radians'ka os'vita*, but that he takes it, in his own way, seriously even if formalistically. In fact, his suggestion of a Cossack style cafe is in no way inferior to the project of the monument on Khortytsia[43] created, at considerable expense, by the chief architect of Zaporozhe, Vasylevs'kyi . . . [. . .]

In Zachiplianka Loboda is regarded as an oddball who does not always think straight, but never as a simpleton. How could he be a simpleton? Did he ever react improperly? Did he not always toe the line? That is why he is held in high esteem at his place of work. He has, after all, thought of all those harmless "national decorations" in the form of Cossack style cafes and shopwindows. [. . .] We still use these notions today to fill the gaps in our national or rather anti-national upbringing. It is he who sacrificed all his energy in putting scaffolding round the cathedral. Should he merely be in charge of culture in a district? For ideas like these he deserves to be made an academician! [. . .]

As far as Volod'ka's postulate of a healthy career is concerned, then, comrade critics, place your hands on your hearts, look into each other's eyes and ask yourselves: are you against Volod'ka's postulate? Do not tell me how heartwarming his sacred words are: "Besides, who in our life has an open path

to a career? The one who works better, who is more talented, shows greater initiative, who has done more for society . . . Work harder, climb higher. That is the law of life. If, though, some wrong person happens to occupy a position, then the very nature of our social system guarantees his dismissal." (The last sentence, forgive me, is added from Shamota's article.)

What if Mykola Bahlai refers to Volod'ka as "a man who sold his father"? After all who is Mykola Bahlai? His head is full of "readymade labels," "incorrect generalizations," and he is literally sick with the idea of his country and antiquity; he suffers, as our political diagnosticians say, from an *idée fixe* . . . Volod'ka called his former teacher [. . .] "an open nationalist" who was jailed for defending the cathedral and the "Zaporozhian knights." Volod'ka warned him "to stick to his arithmetic and keep quiet if he did not want to see the tundra again." [. . .] Thus Volod'ka, a worker promoted to administrative duties, has all the qualifications to join the ranks of positive heroes. One might imagine the following critical appraisal of him in our press:

"The novel depicts Loboda, a communist, free from dogmatism, creative, inventive, dedicated to the ideas of the Party and the people. While listening carefully to the demands of the toilers, he effectively guides their energies to erect a cafe for young people in the national style in place of the dilapidated old cathedral that no one needs, and thus uproots religious superstition in the workers' settlement. . . . A tireless worker and modest man, he neglects his own personal happiness but, to obtain a domestic haven, he is willing to marry Ielka, a simple, uneducated girl. He also cares about his father, who lives in the hostel for metallurgical workers, beautifully situated on the banks of the Dnieper . . . On meeting people Loboda always has a friendly word, holding fast to his principles while avoiding favoritism," etc.

Why, then, is this image so transformed by Honchar that it becomes a contemporary descendent of Iudushka Golovlev?[44] The secret is that Honchar looked at it from the point of view of the people. If two of Honchar's characters, Virun'ka and Shpachykha, were to face the positive heroes created by O. Korniichuk[45] or L. Dmyterko[46] they would immediately point out facts which remain obscure to our critics: that these positive heroes are cold, unattractive, closed in on themselves, alien, and that they show a paternalistic attitude to the people. They would at once spot the falsehood hidden by the uniform and would ask whether the positive hero is a good man and whether he is ready to renounce his own interests for the sake of other people and higher principles. Does he think like the people, or is he simply trying to "reeducate" them according to his own model? Is he nourished by love and respect for people or is he attentively controlling them from the "correct" point of view? Does he stop at people or doesn't he stop at anything?

This type of analysis has not been lost even if it is not used by critics and writers who are too busy creating an ideal hero. It is used and cultivated all the time by the people.

If the author has characterized his positive hero as "a pygmy," "a glutton," and "a poacher," it means that he has left the "position of principle" and gone over to the people in the village of Zachiplianka, borrowing their diagnosis of human types. . . .

We do not have to know the author's intention. He obviously favors Mykola Bahlai, although all the critics of the *Cathedral* have concluded that Bahlai "is obsessed by antiquity" and that his language is "a little strange . . ." So the author's attitude is unimportant. Loboda became a scapegoat because he got into the novel and was *exposed by public opinion.* If the spotlight is turned on to Loboda he is a negative type because that is how the people see him.

It is not for nothing that they dislike him: he is cheating them all the time. He sits on culture like a dog on a pile of hay. He wants to destroy their cathedral while promising them pie in the sky. In the middle of the night he steals the protective plaque from the cathedral and then smilingly asserts that there never was one. He arranges for the scaffolding to be built at their expense, although he has no intention of restoring the cathedral. He pretends that he is working zealously. [. . .]

The builders grow anxious: while these Potemkin-like scaffoldings are being set up, and paper and verbal substitutes for cultural realities, values, and national traditions are being invented, life goes on and cathedrals disappear around us and within us. . . . In their subconscious they are afraid that instead of the old realities, spiritual values, and beliefs that are binding, Volod'ka has invented (essentially for himself) formal substitutes *which bind nobody.*

Is Loboda conscious of this? An understanding of living needs and of the existence of values to which men remain faithful and which they are prepared to defend with their own lives—these are the foundations of human culture. That is why it is so sad that Loboda does not realize this at all. He is such a relativist that he has no sense of values or truth. For him, to understand is to improvise. As he himself says, he "sits on culture" and manipulates ideals, without realizing that life consists of struggling for an ideal by cultivating higher needs, moral habits, and the criteria of decency. After all, the construction of a cafe can be left to the economists. Loboda is not in touch with the world of spiritual values and he is quite sincerely puzzled as to why the students need history or the cathedral. They have enough to eat, enough clothes to wear—what else do they want?

Loboda represents a strikingly new esthetic discovery in our literature. In him the author reveals a functional man who is not yet a robot, but who is devoid of permanent human values and criteria. This functional man has the terrifying power to destroy human values with a mere touch, a word. Where, in the mouth of a great poet or philosopher things become uplifting, meaningful, luminous, and vital, in Loboda everything disintegrates, dwindles, and fades.

And so the mighty Cossack cathedral becomes a historical exhibit; the Cossack relics, tatters from the past; a heroic scholar, the "decrepit" Iavornyts'kyi; the cultural awakening of the village, "sitting on culture"; the protective plaque of the cathedral, a piece of metal; the national and cultural heritage, a piece of decoration in the "national style"; filial emotions, cheap sentiment.

Loboda carries within him some undirected tendency towards decomposing, vulgarizing, and coarsening everything with a spiritual meaning and clear individuality. He stops at nothing–what is there to stop at if everything can be vulgarized and nullified by deceiving words? His religion is "to carry out the directive correctly." It is a religion that holds nothing sacred, for what room is there for anything sacred in his relativist outlook? National traditions and festivals? [. . .] He will give you a whole list ending with a "Day to Stay Sober." He will also plan all kinds of fun and games for you and introduce new customs. [. . .]

Why is it so easy for him to do all this? Because there is nothing sacred to him. Volod'ka's heart is not attached to anything. From his father he inherited a "small tuft of hair, a distant descendant of the Cossack *oseledets'*."[47] But he does not understand his father's warning not to forsake the ancestral traditions or else "your life will become sterile."

His life has become sterile. . . . His activities are as divorced from reality as are Khlestakov's[48] in his position as inspector general. He does not in fact believe either in his ideas or in himself. "You know what kind of life this is: you can please them a hundred times, but miss once, and all your efforts are forgotten. They will send for you and give you a reprimand. If you stand up to them, they will sack you. How can you prove that you are not a camel?" It was enough for Volod'ka to meet a real person, Bahlai senior, who dismissed his words as soap bubbles, to realize that "you can die and not a single dog will bark for you." [. . .]

Yet Volod'ka recovers and grows aware of the "seat of power" in his office. [. . .] All his energies go toward adjusting to this seat of power and he has no time to think for himself or of what others think of him. All the meetings and talks with the villagers are as nothing in comparison with his

preoccupation with the problems of the budget or the anger of the "comrade executive" [. . .] or his fear of being "called on the carpet." Perhaps they will say "What kind of activist are you if you have helped to *preserve* this old rubbish and have not thought of anything more contemporary for this city of iron and steel"? [. . .] Loboda does not belong to the generation of dogmatists, which is dying out. He grew up without any faith, but he remembers that he ought "to search for the new." Yet he does not feel any inner urge to search. He might become a scientist who spouts scientific phraseology, a *littérateur* who invents what is required, a sociologist who demonstrates the existence of sociology, in a word a formal imitator. After all, not all work ennobles man.

Loboda does not search for firm ground on which it is possible to build not just for today, but for ever. All his energy is dissipated in busily trying to conform. He lacks that inner spiritual strength which alone can be creative, surmounting all internal and external difficulties and concentrating everything on a single goal. To him a matter of principle depends on his own temper rather than his fortitude. He is selfish and eager to please. One teacher had merely to touch on some unsettled official business to make Loboda respond like a Stalinist: "I see that your rehabilitation came too soon."

In his office his face is normally "full of gloom and responsibility." He is careful not to use a familiar tone with Bahlai and people like him. "What have you, a youngster from a working class milieu, found in that decrepit Iavornyts'kyi?" [. . .] Instead of openly attacking the "tatters of history," he diplomatically tells him this: "To put it mildly, it's a strange thought. I'm not trying to analyze and interpret the distant Cossack past, I can only point out that it was a complicated history, not always very cheerful, either."

It was, of course, no more complicated than the monarchist concept of the old "Cossack bastion of freedom" (contrary to the "Christian Cossack republic") spontaneously developed by the journalists Marchuk and Lebedenko (see *Radians'ka Ukraina*, April 26, 1968). If we unravel the cocoon of this "bastion of freedom" (so similar to Makhno's movement during the civil war), then we may understand the saying of Peter I, who destroyed this bastion: "All the Little Russian Hetmans were traitors." Now we can understand why in the whole of Kiev there are no plaques commemorating these Hetmans, while there is one in honor of Peter I.

Everything, of course, depends upon the point of view. For a cruel despot who acknowledged only his own will and saw in its blind fulfillment the meaning of the nation's existence, the very word Cossack, which means a "free man," smacked of treachery. For the people as a whole the tsar, with his boundless license and his infringement upon other people's rights and

freedoms, was satan, a terrible enemy. And yet some strange force puts Loboda on the tsar's side.

On the other hand, the young and inexperienced Bahlai, instead of berating these "traitors" and repeating, after Peter I, the story of the unmasking of the Cossack officers in front of the rank-and-file Cossacks (whose protector the tsar pretended to be), instead of meditating on the wisdom of history which placed Odessa University on the street of Peter the Great (Peter I was not good enough), Bahlai shows an "indiscriminate enthusiasm for this bastion of freedom." Isn't he strange, this "uncontemporary" young hero?

What invisible force pulls him to the side of the people? The very force of human nature. Whatever smoke-screens and dust filters are placed in its way, a drop of water will eventually flow back to the sea. The young are as thirsty for truth as they are for pure air and spring water. They will unfailingly rediscover the old, true path to Man. It is a path marked by the Word, steady and true, like the division between life and death. Man's spiritual strength is crystallized in the Word, which is the essence of its being. It grew from blood and sweat, it could restore like magic herbs, it struck like thunder and burned like fire, it meant the highest commitment and offered the safest guarantee.

Christian civilization had a knightly code of honor, safeguarded by the highest price—life. A man could play with life but never with his word of honor. Duels were fought over a word of honor. The one who broke it usually committed suicide and his dishonor, unatoned by blood, was passed on to his descendants.

Loboda deceives both the present and the past, he discredits the highest ideals and efforts but leaves one final piece of advice: it is impossible to achieve good ends by dishonest, bad means, since the ends are born out of the means as the plant is born out of the seed. It is no wonder that Shevchenko writes so often about sowing and asks the question "what will it bear?" He is, in fact, thinking about us, since the harvest can last whole centuries. The sowing of Loboda occurred long before the revolution and no revolution can uproot it. This weed[49] ruins the soil in which, with difficulty, there grew a good seed to guard humanity—the Word. As soon as he touches words, they are transformed into meaningless phrases about "culture," "national heritage," "national traditions." Everything turns to chaff and repels the living.

"Listen to him, he is always trying to seem to do things better. . . . He, the destroyer, always has a ready explanation and what an explanation! . . . But he always begins with uprooting." And thus the old metallurgical worker

Izot, whose words have an honorable weight and who is not impressed by verbosity, rejects his son Volod'ka as a humbug, a man without real humanity.

Towards a Genesis of Poaching[50]

"Life is like a sea, full of rocks and whirlpools which man avoids with great care although he knows that even if with great ingenuity he succeeds in avoiding them, at every step he is brought closer to the most terrible and unavoidable catastrophe, whither all the same he is ceaselessly rowing—towards death. It is the final goal of a painful voyage, more terrible than all rocks avoided."

This is Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy of voluntarism. It was found earlier in Ecclesiastes. . . .

This truth cannot be avoided. The only thing that men of our civilization have created to stand against it are beautiful legends, which nourish and lift our spirits above this abyss. Legends of the transmigration of the soul, theories about the immortality of the soul, legends about the endlessness of the human race, about the immortality of nations.

This last we believe to be the highest reality. We contribute of our best to the treasury of the immortal people and we take from it whatever we can. Like drops we flow into that sea, which, we believe, is eternal.

Therefore any loss of the past is as serious as a loss of the present and the future. It is a loss of part of ourselves, a step closer to our annihilation. He who puts himself outside the past, outside the sources of the national sea, is almost divorced from humanity. He who hides behind phrases about "love of the people" (there is no need to "love" one's nation, one must simply be a faithful part of it, be a blood cell resistant to any threat to the organism)—he is only superficially imitating life and truly cares only about his own physical self-preservation.

For a person endowed with consciousness, the spiritual life is the only real life, sustaining it on the level of creative evolution and moral progress above the cares of an animal existence. At the brink of death man has created with admirable effort an "eternal" reality—culture, religious beliefs, art, philosophy, ethics, and law—and has taken his legends, deeply rooted in life,

so seriously that they have become his social nature, stronger than the fear of death.

But we are talking about the legend of the eternal nation and the human race. These concepts lie in the area of faith, not of fact, which everybody must accept. This legend was created and elevated into truth by the greatest people, by those who cared least about their physical self-preservation. Against them, especially among us Ukrainians, there were active hired men or simply selfish degenerates who did not believe in the people, in the legend, and did not want to listen to any talk of the spiritual life as a higher reality.

A poacher is a man without a legend. He is a grey realist who believes only in what he can see, touch, or taste. He has no memory of the past, none of the dignity of his ancestors, no notion about the future. He eagerly consumes all the tidbits and aromas around him. He is tortured by thirst and uncertainty and is stifled by a force that makes him small and petty; and as he struggles against it, he muddies the water in order to catch fish.

Impoverished in spirit, indiscriminately they step over each other's heads in their zeal to get to the trough, to gorge themselves, and to get drunk. Slaves of their own senses, they know no other nourishment. Like savages, they want to be glutted, first with food and then with power, license, tyranny. . . . Poaching is the psychology of a man without a past and without a future. [. . .] Modern psychology and sociology ought to find the line where man ends and anti-man begins in the depraved soul. It has been amply documented that a man can easily return to the animal state (a child becomes an animal if left among animals for several years). But a young animal does not become human among men. . . .

Immense effort and sacrifice went into the making of the human being. How much did it cost our ancestors to instil into their children humane ideals, beliefs, a selfless love for truth and respect for God. And yet how easy it is to neutralize all this—it takes only one generation to sink to the lowest level. For man to forget his native language it is enough to stop cultivating it and let it loose on cold city streets. [. . .] For man to disintegrate it is enough to make him adopt the motto "All you need is food and drink. . . . Don't begrudge yourself," and lead him to the conclusion that "it's every man for himself."

A man of our time has gone through a whole revolution of alienations. The peasants have not yet recovered from the chain effect of the decay of the old forms of life and the almost Biblical tribulations in our recent history. Alienation from the land. Alienation from the products of their labor. Alienation from religion, customs, and beliefs. Alienation from language,

which in the press, radio, and the universities has come to mean something else—some kind of parallel reality to everyday life. Alienation from conscience, which is now the responsibility of government, whose directives become duties (the Hutsuls would not of their own free will destroy their church). Finally, alienation from oneself. A man who managed his own affairs in the past is today merely a function of a great economic mechanism—a driver, a tractor driver, a brigade leader, a milkmaid, a chairman, a team leader. . . .

Today these functions occasionally replace the very name of the person. A human being is, as it were, split in two and the better half is lost in daily cares. We cannot take comfort in the fashionable explanation that analogical developments are occurring throughout the contemporary world, because the gigantic socialist experiment was meant to save us from the crisis that threatened the world. It is well known that Marx considered alienation to be the greatest curse inflicted by private property and saw a solution in "human communism" (carefully distinguishing it from "despotic" or "coarse" communism, which represents "an expression of the evils of private property, which wants to be confirmed as positive collectivism"). Faced by hard facts we must try to comprehend anew Marx's "communism as a *positive removal* of private property, that source of self-alienation of man, and, as a result, the *true acquisition of human existence* by man and for man, thus obviously concurring with the *preservation* of all that has been achieved so far—a return of man to himself as both collective and human man." Faced by the same hard facts, our scholars ought to study contemporary forms of alienation in order to explore the new graftings to the deep roots of humanity and prevent them from drying up and growing wild. . . .

It appears that our village has had enough to eat and to drink. It does not know what to do next. It seems as if the young people fleeing the countryside are fleeing from themselves, from self-satisfied surfeit, in the hope of finding somewhere a different, a loftier, and a better world. They are driven by a longing to reach what they find in books—spirituality, beauty, honor, decency, art, and people who assume duties and responsibilities for matters that are of concern to the nation and to humanity. In vain do some characters in Honchar's novel try to explain Ielka's flight from Vovchuhy as motivated by personal reasons. Perhaps she fled from the homebrew equivalent of the alienated and morally corrupt. . . .

To those utterly impoverished young men and women from the village it appears that they will become a part of this world if they take over the "city language.". . . That is when they may become completely severed from those roots which alone guarantee organic growth. Perhaps they

spontaneously forsake what is after all a neglected and backward area. Who talks about this today in our country? Who can give advice in these complicated matters? There is not one word in our press about these terrible, demoralizing facts: they would let these "progressive processes," we may assume, take their normal course. . . .

History will inevitably put this question to our intelligentsia: What have you created for your people instead of the insistent propaganda against religious beliefs and customs, old traditions and festivals—in a word, everything that at one time made a foreigner respect a nation.

And yet how much energy and beauty there is in the human kernel, which tries to survive even with purely occasional nourishment! This firm human kernel begins to sink, grows inferior, floats up and down, full of nostalgia, discontent and tears, but cannot stabilize itself and develop a firm foundation. Even in fallen man there is a longing for what has been lost, for beauty and truth, for infinity. Left to himself, he longs for spiritual leaders who should lead him along the path of love to the great human legend. He feels unconsciously that love and concord create a living illusion of this infinity, since love distils an extract from the spiritual force created by generations of the strong and noble. With its help they build temples, compose songs and legends, sacrificing their lives, creating history and handing on a torch from the past to the future.

Hatred, on the other hand, is the strength of the weak; it leads to revenge and punishment, but never to the fresh breath of creativeness. Poaching is the strategy and tactics of the embittered. For whom should one care? Why preserve? With the ritual phrase about "faith in a beautiful tomorrow," a poacher combines the conviction that everybody else is a poacher—each lives only for himself. He will be replaced by the same kind of greedy, indifferent person—so who is there to stand on guard?

The cathedral is defenseless, Ielka does not belong anywhere, the natural resources "belong to everybody"—then why not seize the moment, "but look out for underwater rocks and whirlpools," and make yourself a warm, soft pillow out of the most sacred words? [. . .]

Loboda's entire energy is consumed in internal infighting. "I have quite a few enemies," he says, "secret ones, in offices." The struggle against them underlies all his efforts to avoid "underwater rocks and whirlpools." And you expect him to think of the eternity of the sea or the inevitable end, in the face of which, as at the last confession or with his children and neighbors, he should leave a good name?

The cathedrals of the past cannot be universal "philosophers' stones" for our young people. But they have been and will be their spiritual cradles. Like nests without which not a single bird can exist.

"One's own nationality, one's own country is the most important thing in life. Everything dies when one's country dies. Ask the people about it; they feel it inwardly and will tell you that it is so. Science, history, and all the knowledge collected by men will confirm it. These two mighty voices are always in unison. Two voices? No, two realities: what is and what has been. Both stand in contrast to empty abstractions."

The great French historian Michelet, a student of world history, wrote these words when he was afraid that his generation might decline spiritually.

We like to disguise the question of our national dignity with conversations on the topic "Who has the better mother?" One advanced member of the *Komsomol* (with traces of a Ukrainian last name) once asked: "So you think the Ukrainian nation is the best?" I was struck by this, and thought to myself that our nation was not what the Komsomol member imagined but what we make of it. It will be judged by its greatest representatives. I looked into his glassy eyes and thought "How low can you sink!"

"God forbid that a boor should become a master." I remember this proverb from my childhood. It did not mean "God forbid that a pauper should become rich." It referred specifically to a boor [*kham*], a self-satisfied, ill-bred man, burdened by the slavish complex of contempt for the weak and dependent, bereft of all moral feelings. God forbid that a person like that should be placed in a position of power and authority.

This boor complex is social in origin. Why is it so common among the nationally castrated and spiritually degraded Ukrainians? I cannot explain it otherwise than by the fact that, deprived of national dignity and responsibility for the national spiritual heritage, they are also bereft of the feeling of human dignity. They have left what is their own and have not reached what is not theirs. They are neither cats nor dogs. They have dishonored their own country and they cannot therefore honor any other. They are like a cloak, cheap, convenient and above all ready-made. If need be, even with a national label.

Under this cloak there are people of different intelligence, education, and a different degree of separation from the living, refreshing national spring. It appears that whenever they no longer feel the need for it they feel a strong urge to justify their new model in order to feel secure on the path they have chosen. We can well understand what Lenin meant when he wrote: "It is well known that russified foreigners always appear more Russian than the Russians themselves." But it is also well known that they go to extremes in other ways too, since they lack any firm foundation and, having rejected a taboo, they try to legalize this rejection.

In Chernihiv, the city council decided in 1963 to erect a public lavatory on the site of the demolished belfry of the Piatnyts'ka church. . . . This is very interesting from the point of view of clinical psychology, which studies the dynamics of subconscious complexes. Although the decision was not carried out and the case ended with the demolition of the belfry, the Chernihiv "workers' deputies" will probably never make a more characteristic and historic decision.

It is easy today to study the psychology of poaching—it is all on the surface. Thirty-five percent of all the cultural and historical monuments in Ukraine have been deprived of protection. The law protecting monuments was interpreted by some wrong-headed virtuosi as a directive for the removal of all those monuments not counted in the republican or all-union categories. Local authorities were given the power either to remove, to rebuild, or to re-use them.

Why do the words "local authorities" have a negative ring even in our newspapers? They are met by torrents of complaints from the workers and they often represent provincial "princelings" who are frequently identified with the "extreme rightists." Every attempt at liberalization and democratization from above is regarded by these local authorities as merely a change of phraseology, and they are so firmly seated in their saddles that some old dogmatists [. . .] even dream of restoring [Stalin] busts.

But this vantage point, a colossal burden on the legs of progress, is actually based on inertia. Until the provinces (regional or capital) are awakened to the spiritual life and until the grass-roots level is raised by honest, candid enthusiasts, all appeals will fall on deaf ears, everything will be smothered in highflown reports. The entire progress of the socialist social order will be measured by the volume of consumption of meat per capita and of the absolutely limitless consumption of alcohol, because this at any rate is never in doubt.

An atmosphere devoid of spiritual and creative intensity cannot sustain man on the human level. In this atmosphere it is even difficult to delineate the boundary between poaching and the higher, indestructible values. How can the latter be preserved in the world if consumption and utility become accepted norms? It would be possible for orders to be given that cathedrals, as historico-cultural monuments, should not be destroyed. But the point in question is not the monument itself, but we ourselves—the atmosphere that cultivates a spirit of creativeness and conservation. Above all, atmosphere determines the style of life, the creative spirit of our contemporary ideals, criteria, and motives as they are expressed in relation to people and to the great, eternal issues. It determines whether contemporary man wants to

broaden his horizon in order to examine world problems or whether he will try stupidly to narrow everything down to his own horizon.

We face the problem of educating our children in the atmosphere we have created. Wherever they are studying, or playing, will they plant trees and flowers, or will they scatter rubbish? Will they build, putting their hearts into it, or will they merely put up scaffolding for the sake of appearances? Will they bring youthful energy to the work of their elders, or will they demand comfort from them? The point is whether our children will become inured to the consumer approach, the style of the boor, in relation to nature, their fellow men, their parents, their country and to the spiritual and material culture, or whether, guided by our help and example, they will be immune to that most terrible disease–spiritual degeneration and degradation. The type of person we develop will determine the creative spirit of society and its chances of succeeding in the modern world.

Whether you fly or crawl, meditated a snake in one of Gorkii's works, the end is the same: we shall all come to dust. For a snake this was a fine piece of wisdom. But for man, who gives the better part of himself to building cathedrals, death is merely the tragic backdrop against which can be seen all the more clearly the lofty meaning of cathedrals not only as architectural masterpieces, but as sanctuaries where each generation must be spiritually reborn to feel human again. Then no one can address them in Gorkii's words of contempt:

> You will live on this earth like blind worms
> No fables will be told about you
> No songs will ever be sung.

The Ostrich Syndrome

"Those who do not see good more than bad and bright more than dark should be called poachers and soul-destroyers too," pleads Shamota. But why are his pleas not taken seriously? And why is "seeing good" elevated to such a high level?

Regarded soberly, it becomes a purely personal matter. If a man sees everything–people, things, life–in their dark aspects, so much the worse for him. He carries a dungeon within him and could be pitied for not seeing the

bright aspects of life which pass him by. Yet the decisive thing is what he does about it, and not his [pessimism or] optimism *per se*.

In the novel *Cathedral* we see both young and older people who no longer have any memories of life before the revolution. Moreover, they cannot remember an easier life than they have today, since never before have they eaten and drunk as well or been more interested in things material. And this is a generation fed on information about the positive aspects of life and brought up in a spirit of optimism! Why, then, do we see pessimism and the paradoxical effects of an entire educational system?

For decades we have been given soporific formulae, like bromides, about "vestiges of the past" and "exceptional cases." Today they convince no one and the time has come not to plead, but to consider seriously and explore why we hear this complaining tone of voice from our young people.

To blame a writer for having too many negative characters in his novel, to put a limit on them, and to accuse him of "blackening" facts is the same as smashing a thermometer for showing too great a degree of cold. To say that our literature produces characters who do not see "the victory of the good over the bad" is a piece of the most subjective idealism, diametrically opposed to the principle that "being determines consciousness."

Literature that purposely attempts to falsify reality is not dangerous because it will be rejected by the common sense of any reader who looks to the book for an imaginatively generalized truth about life. As for "political innuendoes," you can, comrade Shamota, transfer Engels' bitter comment about bourgeois writers who try to "make up for their lack of talent with political innuendoes in order to attract the reading public," to the epoch of the building of communism?

What, then, is your opinion of our reading public? And do you really think that Oles' Honchar was guided not by social considerations, the voice of conscience and public duty traditional for Ukrainian writers, but rather indulged a weakness "to attract the public" even at the expense of "poaching and soul-destroying"?

What, then, do you think of this esteemed writer as a man? . . . Can he be trusted after these speculations about "political innuendoes" and "attracting the public"? Why do you regard this man so negatively and suspect him of the worst? Why do you distrust his words, concepts and motives? Surely every reader knows that the point of the *Cathedral* lies not in the "political innuendoes," but in raising important social problems that every citizen should be thinking about. Before any "positive work" can be undertaken these problems have to be posed, comprehended, and weighed. If we succeed in awakening and interesting our young people, that would mean

a great advance in our social education, the arousing of those indifferent to higher aims.

Who can take pleasure in "political innuendoes" today, when the life of our nation, the education of our children and the preservation of our culture are at stake? What are we—foreigners in our own land who are glad to besmirch our own selves? That, surely, is not so.

Honchar's novel is a literary attempt to restore justice, openness, and public opinion, and it will certainly remain one of the most humane works of socialist literature. The sharp tone of the novel is the result of the creative atmosphere here, which still allows problems to be raised only in the guise of innuendoes, quickly and hurriedly, in a whisper.... But there can be no doubt that these urgent problems in our life are felt with deep conscience and aroused public concern. Had they been posed ten years earlier our society would have been the winner. These problems cannot be bypassed. They are like a neglected disease; they will not go away and solve themselves. Examples? There are dozens of them.

Just recently we sang praises to the "artificial sea," carefully repressing what should have been openly discussed before other "seas" were created.

Not one of the *Cathedral*'s critics reacted to any of the problems the novel most acutely raises: to flood or to drain? And yet this is a real issue, capable of a financial interpretation. The problem is the purpose of the "artificial seas" and power stations, which were and are being built in the "cheapest" way—by flooding fertile lands instead of building dams. "It will be like the Kakhovka sea," comments old Nechuiviter,[51] "where half of Ukraine was sent to the bottom. They intended to create a sea, but instead they made a sea of mud. The marsh flourishes and stinks throughout Ukraine!" One can, of course, dismiss it as the exaggeration of an old pensioner. Even the figure is incorrect: "half of Ukraine."

But in the article "How Much We Lose" (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, No. 14, 1968), signed by deputies of the Supreme Soviet, scientists, writers and artists, the problem is formulated as follows: "Now the scientists again had to consider the task of draining that section of the Kakhovka reservoir which could be turned into fertile land. Plans are being discussed for reclaiming from the sea some territory on the Sula River as well as in other areas of the flooded land. So this is how we first destroy and then restore." In the meantime, "forests are being cut down in the Kaniv region for a hydro-electric project and meadowland is scheduled for inundation.... In the Mohyliv-Podils'kyi regional hydro-electric project 78 villages have been put under water." Etc.

This is merely a weak echo of the discussion held in February 1968 in the House of Writers in Kiev with the scientists and builders of the power stations, who, armed with facts and figures, all agreed on the terrible ravages and even more terrible prospects resulting from the new power stations that are being erected on the Dnieper. It was said on that occasion that no one would take responsibility for it.

There are signatures under the project sent down from Moscow. . . . As for the others: if you want to work you must sign. The authors of the project were not here. But they would have said that the project was financially feasible. If you object to the signatures and want to criticize, you won't get very far. Further, the director of the state committee in charge of conservation explains: "We demanded that dams be built for the protection of the riverbanks. But our demands were not met. Because the cheaper the project the greater the bonus for those who designed it."

So here is your highly qualified specialist in a nutshell. He had a choice. It was a moment when man should have fulfilled his duty as a man. . . .

But how can one fulfill this duty, which requires the sacrifice of our peace, professional privileges, comfort, reputation, work—in fact, everything, even life—but not of our conscience? Perhaps out of love and respect for people? Out of our esteem for the national resources which we did not create and thus have no right to destroy? Out of ability to grasp the destructive results of irresponsibility? Out of self-esteem and feeling part of a nation with all its spiritual complexity? Out of a deeply felt organic restraint from trampling down what is sacred to others?

At that critical moment our little man listened to his own god: material interest. He reckoned, of course, that his job would not suffer. On the contrary, he would be praised for carrying out his "sacred duty" to the state, etc. Not until much later would it turn out that people had to pay dearly for this and that the state was deceived. Why is it not until later that these things come to light? If we had not been afraid of weighing all the pros and cons in honest discussion, then, when the first hydro-electric station was erected, we would have brought into the open several questions requiring public debate instead of the formal approval of empty phrases. These questions should have been debated in the press with rational arguments, not with timid innuendoes and cautious references. Yet the dialectics of development through which we in our practical way pass into the sphere of cultural life are controlled at every step by figures.

The state needs people who carry out orders obediently, but this obedience can lead to carelessness and second guessing from above when specialists are accused, too late, of failure to warn and disclose the possible

effects. So it turns out that the state needs, in fact, honorable men with good common sense, strong principles, and the courage to say "no."

Although the state needs support in all its endeavors, it needs the support of responsible people who morally accept these endeavors as their own, more than it does the support of the masses who are ready to ridicule those same efforts tomorrow.

The state needs the support of science but not the kind of science represented by Loboda, which degenerates, to put it mildly, into cheap advertisement. Ultimately, the state needs a science that develops freely according to its own laws, that conscientiously works out problems and therefore can offer competent independent advice in practical matters. Every state finds it easiest to deal with small men. But this is so only at first glance. True, they are pliable and offer no resistance, but neither do they offer any real support. In fact, the state needs an independent public opinion to criticize and control its actions, supporting it in the main and directing it onto the right path.

Who has the energy and ability to think about important problems if not the public? Everyone, from top to bottom, is up to his neck in his own affairs and in the duties of his profession . . . Everyone wants to avoid responsibility for anything bigger, which develops without any controls, as if propelled by several forces. Only public opinion can fulfill this task, give early warning signals, discuss important matters in time—in a word, be the highest regulator of the complex social organism.

Public opinion rests on honest, upright citizens who use human rights and duties in order to accept the higher duty of defending, within the law, the rights to be fully exercised by all. These rights mean nothing to an obsequious slave who is unable to think about them but instead cagily begs favors from his boss, thus creating unwritten laws that abrogate the real ones. First of all, it is necessary for everyone to learn to feel like a master and a citizen, because anyone who is afraid to demand his own higher rights inevitably absolves himself from his higher duties.

As a generation we are luckier than our parents. We are present at the birth of a public opinion that dares to differ from the official one. It is growing and spreading (earlier it was limited to separate individuals and expired at the first cry of danger). Today it exists and is fed not only by *samvydav*[52] but also by those articles and literary works that are let through by the censors because they also admit them to their minds instead of filtering and stopping them.

There is every reason to rejoice. Our society is undergoing a process of democratization, according to its own laws, from below. Public opinion is

always and everywhere the highest authority. Everybody must pay attention to public opinion. All governments always used to change in accordance with the pressure of public opinion. And when a society is so unfortunate as to have a large gap between public and official opinion, when "words and actions go their different ways," it is the official opinion that must draw closer to public opinion and not vice versa.

In the last analysis this is what has in fact happened in our country. When was public opinion at fault? And when official opinion? Let us recall some well-known instances. Criticism of Stalin's crimes was not a personal whim of Khrushchev but was a result of the inevitable expression of the people, of the concealed yet lively public opinion about the anti-constitutional activities of the man who, in the official version, was a genius. There was no need to agitate. People at once accepted the criticism of the "cult," believing it to be the beginning of the cleansing of various ills in our social life.

Similarly, Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was not published by accident. It was fated to fulfill the mission of telling the truth about the concentration camps in the USSR, which were a burning issue in people's consciousness. Why was this unknown author recognized at once as a great writer and nominated for a Lenin prize? Not because of the press reports, which, on the whole, did not favor him. It was public opinion that elevated him and that even today holds him in high esteem as an uncompromisingly honest writer who deserves that position. Just as suddenly, many new names, highly esteemed in public opinion, appeared in the literatures of the various republics. The public gave advances to many talented writers and they should work honestly for these for the rest of their lives.

In the history of mankind public opinion becomes dominant sooner or later. Today Honchar's novel *Cathedral* has become the target of the official critics, but this is so temporary that many of them do not dare to sign their names under their articles. . . .

Loboda is a negative character in public opinion as well as in official opinion. It means that today public opinion must be reckoned with. All that remains to be done is to translate the criteria of public opinion into life. These criteria are of a moral and ethical character.

In our country the chief difference between people must be measured by a moral and ethical, not a political, yardstick. At the table we all agree, open our hearts, understand everything, recognize the existence of unsolved problems, and uphold honesty and decency. But when the time comes to act, the decent are left alone with their consciences, the petty seek "material

interests" and a bonus, the Philistines, smiling cunningly, take the path of least resistance, while the careerists stop at nothing, plot intrigues, write denunciations, take to slippery paths and in the holiest places prepare their trampolines for further leaps.

In the meantime "laboratories merely notice the violation of sanitary rules," journalists merely drop hints that they understand the problems, social scientists only take note of specific shortcomings, while assuring us that they are only minimal against the background of achievements, and the militia only looks after the violators of law and order. . . . Under these circumstances courage and readiness to sacrifice are needed to find an exit from this vicious circle.

The type of man who accepts responsibility and blame for our condition, who thinks of the cause rather than of his job, like the hero of the film "Nash suchasnyk" (Our Contemporary), is a true positive hero of our time. Today, however, his victory can only be a moral one. . . .

The human being is becoming a narrow specialist, growing small and indifferent in today's atmosphere of alienation while transferring responsibility to the ruler. In the meantime, he is faced with growing problems which at one time did not exist:

The problem of pure water, not in the Sahara, but here, in connection with industrial development.

The problem of fighting air and land pollution caused by the constant increase in industrial waste.

The problem of the conservation of nature, forests, plants, and animals that are dying out, in order to preserve the balance of nature.

The problem of protecting the soil from erosion and acidity, so that the "granaries" are adequate to feed us.

The problem of the health of the younger generation, which shows increasing numbers of cripples and all sorts of diseases caused by the alcoholism of their parents.

The problem of education in our most conservative schools, to keep pace with the scientific and technological revolution and the need for a radical review of teaching methods.

The problem of developing the elementary civic virtues, ideals, and beliefs, and the re-education of our spiritually neglected youth, since mere information cannot re-educate and perfect.

The problem of the removal from responsible positions of dogmatists who stifle and formalize the finest expressions of living human energy.

In one word—the problem of a new man, capable of sober and scientific comprehension of the new knowledge and of selflessly finding a way out from what is now "only noted in the laboratories."

But let us admit openly: for a cautious man, trained and conditioned to the discipline of "correct reactions," for the man up to now cultivated in our society, these problems are dead—he is even afraid to think about them. And our list of problems is only the beginning of a longer one that the academy of social sciences should work out with the help of the press.

"To see the beautiful in the contemporary or at least the preponderance of the beautiful over the ugly" is a very quiet occupation that can be refreshing. But, unfortunately, although physiologically beneficial, it does not lead anywhere and easily degenerates into the beautiful soulfulness of a Manilov,[53] into a pensioner's worry about yesterday or tomorrow, into a lazy hopefulness that everything will turn out all right, into the timid habit of not seeing anything wrong until someone above points it out.

What is needed here is not only to see these ugly realities, but to do something about them, to tackle them like a disease that must be cured.

While we were looking at the world through rosy spectacles, so many old problems remained unresolved that our young people who were faced by them and who were not trained to lead an independent public life became lost and helpless. They began to laugh at themselves apathetically, too weak to unravel the knot of life's contradictions. Deprived of the possibility of solving them actively, they fly around them like moths around a candle, pouncing with bitter words until, devoid of any talent for fearlessness and resolution, they each seek [to escape into] a "blossoming" personal life. And today you want to cheer them up by saying that the beautiful has the upper hand. They greet this with cynical and indifferent smiles.

Young people must be treated seriously, with respect and hope. Social problems should be put before them openly and vehemently so that they can respond by voluntarily assuming the burden. Young people must know that these problems are their own and that they alone can solve them. They must face up to them, not smirk and go on creating for themselves a simplistic model world built on comfort and minimal effort.

A whole new epoch in the life of our country has passed since the last war, which left many unresolved problems, more than in the entire 18th and 19th centuries. All the great problems were overlaid with new ones and they are festering like fresh wounds.

The greatest technical revolution in history has occurred, which has transformed transportation, manufacturing, and particularly the armed forces, changing the strategy and policies of the world powers, who can no longer believe in the results of war while still maintaining their military preparedness. Great changes have occurred in international relations and in the evolution of national self-consciousness. In our imaginations, in our

libraries, in the portraits on our walls, in our newspapers and in our consciousnesses there have occurred in the last twenty years such upheavals that not to recognize them one would have to be like Galsworthy's old Forsyte, who did not notice the first World War.

Traditionally, we are used to hiding from ourselves any truth that requires serious thought. The last war may be seen as a terrible analogy to this ostrich-like position, with the head tucked under a wing.

Up to now we have not understood this parable, so dearly paid for in our history, and up to now we have been afraid of the truth. Oleksandr Dovzhenko[54] wrote about its bloody trail in *Ukraina v ohni* (Ukraine in Flames), where he also touched on the problem of the neglected human being, who was always told about the plan but never about honor, the problem of discord arising out of the dogmas of class hatred and the problem of the guilt of those who left the country under the occupation in relation to those who stayed during the occupation. He wrote this and, like the genius that he was, showed it to Stalin. Stalin was not interested in this truth; he was enraged, for he had stepped over greater truths than this one. . . .

Today we know that this is only half the truth, but we are still too afraid to print it.

Even fascism could not dream of such a disregard of problems and facts, such a flight from common sense, such an ostrich-like attitude with the head under the wing. . . .

When the war broke out, Ukraine was the first to fall into the flames and so suffered the bloodiest sacrifices. But, following the example of Ivan the Terrible, God has punished it because it bowed in defeat. Virun'ka[55] assuaged this god with her own father—"so, fully-dressed, they were thrown into the Dnieper; the lieutenants led them there at night." As soldiers or as scapegoats? Even facing the gunbarrels of the enemy, the dogma of hatred demanded a search for sacrifices among one's own people.

Today the experience of discord, enmity, hatred, suspicion, and denunciation has been utterly discredited. Today hatred and distrust are the greatest curse of mankind.

We must understand that a new period of history has begun, which requires from us the immediate mobilization of all the human values, all our efforts of reason, all our spiritual forces, all our talents, and all the lessons of history for arriving at a sober, severe and honest view of ourselves, in order to be reborn, if we want to find a way out before the catastrophe. We, the people of a booby-trapped planet, can either rise to the occasion and control the situation or fall victim to technical, beautifully programmed mechanisms.

Now we can see the true worth of all the international conflicts which consumed the energies, nerves and brains of people after the war and for the sake of which the most urgent problems, requiring all the spiritual and moral forces of society, were shelved. China, Korea, Cuba, the United Arab Republic, Vietnam. . . .

Does not all this conclusively prove that the only firm foundation and hope of a state is its people? Its internal problems are the chief ones and within it are decided the international situation, the confrontation of two systems, and the authority of the land.

The senseless and hopeless war in Vietnam plunged into misery one of the richest countries in the world and has placed it in a most precarious position in the world, revealing its inner disease. . . . The epidemic of dictatorship in Greece covered with infamy the most famous cradle of world culture. . . . The democratic awakening among the Czechs and the Slovaks made them the world's darlings.[5 6]

How can we, sleepy and contented, save ourselves in our country, when the annual increase in the population of China equals the entire population of Ukraine? Nature, it seems, is filling up the empty spaces.

With bombs? Today's bombs can destroy everything but they can save nothing.

The spiritual unity of mankind, towards which we are, after all, progressing becomes willy-nilly and, however slowly, an obvious necessity. But in order to achieve this unity we must elevate our language, raise our human criteria, safeguard our undeniable moral authority. [. . .]

In the meantime we do not know where neighboring countries begin, since new boundaries are created and new enemies appear, and on every side people who spat against the wind are swearing and wiping their faces.

Who are we? Do we, as a social association, strive for a high, noble ideal? Or are we an association held together by the presence of a common enemy, and do we keep reacting to him instead of attending to our own affairs?

We must learn once more to call things by their right names in order to be understood in the world and to find new friends there. In the modern world one must unite with others, revealing in oneself all the better qualities, which will shine on the market of world values. We have been submerged for so long that there lies ahead of us a long path, which our neighbors may envy, for on this path we will show those great energies that have been lulled to sleep.

We must change so as to respect ourselves, learn to respect others, and thus earn the respect of others. What else can an international association of

people of good will, regardless of creed, conviction, race or nationality mean? It means that the concept of good will is a common denominator of human morality–of people who are united in their desire to create order and peace in their own house.

If someone wants to ask here the famous question: "Who is to benefit from it?" then we must answer to the point.

If we stop smiling at each other and start taking ourselves and our affairs seriously, naming things by their proper names, then who is to benefit from it? If we deal with our problems ourselves instead of waiting for someone else to do it, who is to benefit? Why, then, think of benefits? Why then talk about water under the bridge, when it is the river itself we are discussing, so that the source will not dry up?

All the efforts of the human mind and heart for centuries have been concentrated on the hope of a better tomorrow. After the last terrible war no one could believe in anything great. No great poet had any golden visions like those of the 19th century. In the 1950's we sobered down after a heavy hangover and began feverishly to look for the thread of the lost truth. We began [. . .] to rediscover values highly thought of in Europe.

Even if a miracle happened and this late rehabilitation were to bring us all that we lost, it would only fill a gap in the past and not open a path to the future.

Today our planet is living through a crisis. There are atom, hydrogen, cobalt, and other bombs and missiles. Military bases on land and in the air. On top of all, there is the superbomb–the population explosion.

Some may think that our approach to our spiritual, national, and social problems is a distant cry from a doomed *Titanic*. Yet no one really thinks so. Unless we realize what these problems are we cannot cope with them. World conflagration must be extinguished not globally, but in each tiny fire. We only help to solve world problems to the degree we solve our own. Each republic must solve its own problems; only then will they be solved in the Soviet Union. Each person must solve his own problems, which simultaneously will be solved worldwide. The key lies in the human being. And the human being is chained by circumstances. Yet these circumstances are to a large degree created by man. We must grow, and with our spiritual growth and moral authority we must gain prestige and defend our place under the sun. Lashed by wind and rain and covered with the dust of ages, our ancient cathedral stands in its cobwebby scaffolding like a living memory of the past. Under it, as Shevchenko wrote,

everything lives and dies,
something blossoms
and something wilts
forever . . .

Perhaps the wind of time will not fill the cathedral with the yellow leaves of what had once blossomed.

It stands majestically under the stars of eternity and it signifies the highest limit of our striving toward the sky.

But what does the scaffolding prophesy? A bright renovation or a deceitful trick? A new hymn to the sun, or a Biblical Sodom? A high hosannah on the lofty waves, or moneychangers in the temple, degraded to a covered marketplace?

> "The spiritual heritage must be saved or the genius of the nation will wilt. The nation must be saved or its heritage will be lost. For the good of my country I will have to act, every moment, towards that goal with all the power of my love."
>
> (Saint-Exupéry)

Footnotes

1. Oles' Honchar (b. 1918) published his novel in 1968. The novel itself centers on the controversy as to whether the cathedral should be preserved. Loboda's devious efforts to condemn the church are counterbalanced by the deep feelings for it expressed by Mykola Bahlai, Ielka, and other villagers. In a flashback, it is revealed that even the famous anarchist leader, Nestor Makhno, had spared the church during the civil war. In the end those who threaten the safety of the church (communists and vandals alike) are defeated and the cathedral rises as a symbol of Ukrainian national history and human freedom, both invincible.
2. A stronghold of the Zaporozhian Cossacks on the Dnieper.
3. Taras Shevchenko (1814-61), national poet of Ukraine.
4. Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709), Hetman of Ukraine (1687-1709).
5. Kost' Hordienko (died 1733), Mazepa's ally.

6. Peter I (1672-1725), tsar of Russia.
7. Ivan Franko (1856-1916), a Ukrainian writer.
8. Lesia Ukrainka (1871-1913), a Ukrainian poet.
9. The village of Zachiplianka is the setting of Honchar's novel. Volod'ka Loboda and Mykola Bahlai are its chief protagonists.
10. A minor character in Honchar's novel.
11. Izot Ivanovych Loboda, the father of Volod'ka.
12. Ivan Bahlai, the elder brother of Mykola.
13. Boris Slutskii (b. 1919), a Soviet Russian poet.
14. *Short Course of the History of the Communist Party*, attributed to Stalin.
15. "Having grown used to bearing a yoke, in the end nations themselves seek it and lose all their independence and vitality. Then they become empty shadows, passive automatons without will, resistance or force. Then man must seek the sources of his energy elsewhere. Because of the growing indifference and helplessness of the citizens, the role of government must constantly increase. Governments willy-nilly must take the initiative and inspire resourcefulness and leadership because private individuals are incapable of it. The state has to organize, direct and inspire everything and so in the end becomes almighty providence. And yet experience shows that government by gods such as these is neither very lasting nor very strong." These memorable words were written by Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931, French psychologist) at the end of the last century so that those now living may put them to the test and learn from them. [Author's footnote.]
16. A reference to Loboda's action in the novel to turn the cathedral into a storage place for fodder.
17. The period of internal strife in Ukraine in the second half of the 17th century, following the death of Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi.
18. Three chronicles of the Cossack Ukraine in the 17th-18th centuries.
19. A work by an unknown author, written in the early 19th century.
20. Ukrainian epic poems about the Cossacks.
21. The peasant rebellion in Ukraine in 1768.
22. The official name for Ukraine in tsarist Russia.
23. Hetman Bohdan Khmelnyts'kyi (1648-57).
24. Catherine II, empress of Russia (1762-96). The quotation is from one of Shevchenko's poems.
25. Mykola Kostomarov (1817-85), a Ukrainian historian.
26. Treaty of alliance between Ukraine and Russia signed at Pereiaslav in 1654.

27. Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi (1878-1958), an old Ukrainian Bolshevik.

28. Alexander Herzen (1812-70), a Russian writer.

29. Emelian Pugachov, a rebel peasant leader in 18th century Russia.

30. Pavlo Hrabovs'kyi (1864-1902), a Ukrainian writer.

31. *Koshovyi*, a Cossack military leader.

32. Ievhen Hrebinka (1812-48), a Ukrainian writer, author of fables.

33. Oleksandr Oles' (1878-1944), a Ukrainian poet.

34. The heroine of Honchar's novel. Deprived of an internal passport, she is staying in the village illegally.

35. Nikolai Konrad (b. 1891), a Soviet Russian Orientalist.

36. Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi (1855-1940), a Ukrainian historian specializing in Cossack history.

37. A minor character in Honchar's novel.

38. A reference to an incident in Honchar's novel, in which a protective plaque on the cathedral is stolen at night. It is secretly removed by Volod'ka Loboda, a communist worker promoted to an administrative post, who is bent on preventing the restoration of the ancient Cossack church. His action arouses the defenders of the cathedral, who brand him a poacher. Later in the essay Sverstiuk analyses the phenomenon of "poaching."

39. A well-known Cossack family. In this poem Shevchenko deplores the Cossack feuds but trusts in a final reconciliation.

40. In the Soviet Union, a holder of the first graduate degree.

41. See footnote 26.

42. One of these dogmas was postulated by Shamota, who wrote that the demand to preserve "the cathedral in your souls," as the symbol of reconciliation, goodness [. . .] and class harmony was not dictated by good intentions and was not relevant to modern needs. [. . .] If we follow this argument dialectically, it would appear that an anti-cathedral should be cultivated as a symbol of hatred and the class struggle. [. . .] Thus, when you say that it is important to "tame the elemental forces," are you not stirring them up by your "worn-out dogmas!" [Author's footnote.]

43. An island on the Dnieper on which the Zaporozhian Cossacks had their stronghold.

44. A character in Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel *The Golovlev Family* (1872-76). According to D. S. Mirsky, "the most remarkable single figure in the novel is Porfiry Golovlev, nicknamed Iudushka (little Judas), the empty and mechanical hypocrite who cannot stop talking unctuous and meaningless humbug. . . . It is one of the most terrible visions of ultimately dehumanized humanity ever conceived by an imaginative writer." (*A History of Russian Literature*, New York: A. Knopf, p. 281).

45. Oleksandr Korniichuk (1905-72), a Soviet Ukrainian writer.

46. Liubomyr Dmyterko (b. 1911), a Soviet Ukrainian writer.
47. A tuft of hair which the Cossacks left on their shaved heads.
48. The hero of Gogol's *The Inspector General*.
49. In Ukrainian *loboda* means pigweed.
50. See footnote 38.
51. In the novel, the old Cossack nickname of Izot Loboda.
52. Ukrainian for *samizdat*.
53. A character in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.
54. Oleksandr Dovzhenko (1894-1956), a Soviet Ukrainian film director and writer.
55. A minor character in Honchar's novel.
56. A reference to the "Prague Spring" of 1968.

IVAN KOTLIAREVS'KYI IS LAUGHING

In the much travelled desert of our history, suddenly Kotliarevs'kyi's[1] laughter rings out. Just when it seemed as if there was nothing to laugh about.... But laughter is infectious–it echoed deep among the people. P. Kulish[2] was inclined to see in it "signs of a profound loss of national consciousness and self-esteem." One can understand this enthusiast of our cultural renaissance. He wanted to see our national tragedy revealed in literature by a Ukrainian *Iliad.* But the deep crux of the matter is that it revealed itself in a truly Zaporozhian style, in a gay prologue–as laughter.

No logic can explain our rebirths after our downfalls, or even the very fact of our national existence. We are alive in the elementally irrational, in the depths and in the very roots which always sprout new shoots and rarely blossom normally. Our strength is freely born in these deep sources, although on the surface it has no visible, steady form of existence. Our victories were like a night banquet in the ruins of a foreign castle. Our defeats, on the other hand, seem final every time–we have been decimated and routed, [our enemies] forgetting in the bloody heat of battle that our roots are beyond their reach, that in our soil the seeds, sown in struggle, sprout again.

In the morning a new sun rose, fresh dew fell onto the bosom of the earth and a new, smiling generation appeared which claimed space because it was alive. Work, struggle, torment–all aroused in our mighty bodies a healthy, boisterous, free laughter. We laughed again, and this was always a good beginning....

The Hetman Ukraine,[3] bled white and demoralized by defeat in the unequal struggle for national liberation in the 18th century, was losing the last vestiges of independence and along with it, it seemed, the last hope. As Pushkin wrote in his "Poltava":

> Ukraine stirred secretly,
> It glowed with old embers.
> The descendants of her bloody antiquity
> Were waiting for a national uprising,
> Murmuring that now the time had come
> To make war on hated Moscow.

This was at the beginning of the century. At the end of that century everything was lost. The battle of Poltava[4] had undermined Ukraine's spiritual might, had destroyed and scattered her best forces, and had turned her face to her cruel and brutish enemy–the tsar, who inevitably pretended to be a good father and friend. He embodied the principle of brute force–a new law that replaced the Cossack laws and liberties. Like a dark herd without a shepherd, the people waded out to receive slavery, growing accustomed in time to the image of the tsar as a good father, with only the landlords as the exploiters. The Cossack elders had remembered well the bloody tsarist lessons–Baturyn, Lebedyn, Romen. As Shevchenko wrote in the "Velykyi liokh" (The Great Vault):

> Sula was blocked at Romen
> By the bodies of Cossack elders . . .
> Ordinary Cossacks' corpses were
> Scattered throughout Finland,
> The swamps were filled with them . . .

No wonder, therefore, that the least fit had survived and that their descendants, staying within the current, turned away from the imploring eyes of their own people and tied their hopes to St. Petersburg, which sought "loyal and trusted servants," not scorning the scoundrels or the toadies. On the contrary, treason became a highly paid occupation. Bribes, terror, and demoralization were the chief instruments of the "people's re-education" and of the uprooting of "attitudes of earlier times" (Catherine II).

Then the weakened national organism began to show the worst sores–betrayal "for the sake of ill-fated covetousness" and "ambition to achieve rank and rewards." Monarchism became the new *Zeitgeist* and all roads not leading to St. Petersburg were overgrown with weeds. Over the Empire there arose an eager cry: "slaves," and it seemed as if no free voice would be raised against it.

But fresh winds blew from the West and the shoots of revival began to sprout. This was the great epoch of the French Enlightenment and of revolutionaries and German philosophers and poets. An epoch of great social change in the minds and consciences of men, an epoch of liberated reason which scattered the remnants of medieval chains and tattered dogmas. The wind blew and pollinated all the tree tops. . . .

In the meantime a despotic hand was introducing a new order into the country of disarray and decay. Europe had its revolutions, Russia its "reforms." Here the wheel of history spun backwards in spite of the voice of

almighty reason, which proclaimed a new era to mankind. The Russian tsarina smiled seductively at this voice and lured it into her boudoir, so that it might not be heard anywhere. It was at a time when France was freed that Ukraine was finally defeated and placed in servitude. When one after another new universities and academies were being founded in Germany, in Ukraine her last lights of education and culture were extinguished. Following the general line of "introducing uniformity," Count Rumiantsev[5] thought about us when he told Catherine "although here in Kiev there are schools and a so-called Academy, yet they are not at all formed on principles which, according to Your Imperial Highness, should underlie the improvement of people's minds."

Other nations were freed, the Ukrainians were told to "improve." The former Cossack republic, transformed into a giant Potemkin village, was plunged into a dark night, suffocating people's minds and feelings. Rumiantsev was only annoyed by a "small handful of men" who were proud of "their own nationality" and "despite all their schooling and travels abroad remained Cossacks." [. . .] At its innermost core all Ukraine was behind this "small handful." Externally its name was officially changed to Little Russia (just as in Poland it was called Little Poland). "Hidden anger and dissembling humility" were shown during that darkest hour not so much by a "small handful" as by the entire nation, which in different ways protested against the new order and received every act of "state wisdom" as a new punishment. The round autocratic cap would not in any way fit the uncombed head of hair.

Hryhorii Skovoroda[6] wandered across Ukraine along good, beaten paths, bypassing official landmarks, but not avoiding the way of European thought. He planted in human hearts the wisdom of love and self-knowledge, the joy of simplicity and sincerity, the satisfaction in truth, goodness, work and "conscience–as clear as crystal." True, he was the son of a country tired in its national struggle, exhausted and subjugated but he bore in his chest the heart of a "universal citizen." (To reach for the sky and stars, like M. Petrenko,[7] for Christian mysticism like Gogol,[8] for the cosmos like Kybalchych,[9] Kondratiuk,[10] Korolov[11]–became an old Ukrainian variant of the search for liberty in its widest sense.) But Skovoroda's moral teaching was an expression of such national stubbornness and dignity that it itself showed how far removed it was from subjugation to the "improvement" of the people. The blind minstrels (*kobzars*) stubbornly sang their songs and the entire nation was living on its own inner resources.

One is reminded here about the law of the indestructibility of spiritual energy: it is impossible to bury, without a trace, the force that had erupted

volcano-like for centuries in Ukraine, that had brought bloody sacrifices, visible in the countless burial mounds, and that would then rise again like a storm, wiping out the palaces of the new lords, covering the foreign voices with Ukrainian songs.

The Cossack chronicles of Velychko,[12] Hrabianka,[13] and Samovydets'[14] rose from these ancient mounds, were copied and sheltered until later times. Some strange talent composed, out of the bloody and painful past, the *Istoriia Rusov* (History of the Rus'ians)[15]—an incredibly weighty and terrible tale about the historical tragedy of Ukraine. Hidden behind the name of Archbishop Konys'kyi, the disinterested author of this book discovered, like a man possessed, the spring that nourished the entire Ukrainian cultural renaissance. He cast such a spell that everyone drinking from it was infected with a Ukrainian pain—the idea of autonomy and Cossack republicanism, or at least, to which he turned wherever he went. Ryleev,[16] Maksymovych,[17] Hrebinka, Shevchenko, Kostomarov, Kulish, Sreznevs'kyi[18] and even Pushkin—all of them fell under the ideological or, even more, the aesthetic influence of this highly artistic truth and fiction about Ukraine. Handwritten copies of it were passed from hand to hand until in 1846 (under Nicholas I) it was finally published. This occurred because of its dichotomy: at its core the book is thoroughly patriotic (as our doctors and professors of history would say today—nationalist) and thus dissenting; the outward aspect remains quite loyal, with an ostensibly pro-Moscow political orientation.

A similar dichotomy marked the consciousness of all Ukrainian patriots of the Ukrainian renaissance before Shevchenko and even later. Neither Ukraine nor Poland had any real political power (this was understood by the emissaries of revolutionary France and by Napoleon, who, after Charles XII, sought to locate the Ukrainian volcano). Hence political orientation could only be pro-Moscow. The organic orientation, the deep subconscious substratum, remained purely Ukrainian, however. For a writer the political orientation was formal and secondary, even if that writer were also a state official.

This dichotomy could be overcome by the wandering Skovoroda whom "the world was catching but did not catch," and who gained the reputation of "God's fool." From Kotliarevs'kyi on, this dichotomy continued through all the biographies of Ukrainian writers who lived under their real names but who wrote under pseudonyms: Georgii Konys'kyi,[19] Ieremiia Halka,[20] Amvrosii Mohyla,[21] Osnovianenko,[22] Darmohrai,[23] Irodchuk,[24] Myrnyi,[25] Nechui,[26] Hrab,[27] Ukrainka,[28] Vartovyi,[29] etc. A writer's inner being lies in the subconscious—hence he needs a pseudonym. The more formal his attitude to his social-political position, the easier it was for him to nurture in

his soul an elemental integrity. Gogol, after sporadic, bright flashes of national consciousness ("There, there—to our ancient Kiev, it's ours, not theirs . . .") made a grim effort to suppress his own identity by force, at the expense of nature and logic ("The guidepost for the Russians, Czechs, Ukrainians, and Serbians should be the sacred language of Pushkin as the Bible is the guidepost for all Christians.") This act of force cost him his tragic breakdown and the loss of creative energy. Shevchenko was the first one to overcome this dichotomy, openly declaring himself on the side of patriotism and opposition, and this cost him his freedom and his life. He was a poet without the benefit of the critics (with the exception of the fortunate accident of the first *Kobzar*[30] and some separate poems) and was officially simply an artist. Other writers clung to Ukrainian literature like travellers clutching the highbush cranberry on the brink of a ravine, eagerly licking a drop of honey. . . .

And yet some force, some invisible spiritual energy, drew people to Ukrainian culture, including some foreigners. What attraction was there in the songs of a neglected and enslaved people, in comparison to the splendor and beauty of St. Petersburg, with its enticing glitter of cold Western European sunshine? Yet they attracted Prince Tsertelev[31] and Sreznevs'kyi, Professors Maksymovych and Metlyns'kyi (who, at first, tried to stifle his own self and mocked Kostomarov's attempts to write in Ukrainian, but later became a pseudonym himself—Mohyla). It was nothing less than the force of mutilated life itself, the weight of a historical heritage, which awakened these people to creative efforts and guided their endeavors. Only ignorance could save people from an enthusiasm that led them further and further.

Kotliarevs'kyi was the first captive of Ukrainian folk culture. With a youthful zeal he gaily plunged into it, clearly not intending to go very deep at first. This was before the Romantic vogue for Ukrainian folklore, and his richly endowed talent found in it a source of creative inspiration. "Kotliarevs'kyi himself did not realize what he was creating. . . . He humbled himself before the unconscious prodding of the spirit of the people, he was only an instrument of the Ukrainian view of life." These words of P. Kulish were later criticized by those literary scholars who failed to see in them the deep truth of this observation, which holds for the beginning of all creativity in general. To voice his people's spirit and to become an instrument of the Ukrainian view of life is no small matter, and it is possible only when there exists neither a suitable atmosphere nor even a model. This, in fact, meant going against the current that carried the native intelligentsia to the capital, it meant silent opposition. When Kotliarevs'kyi started to study the Ukrainian language and customs not in order to embalm for posterity "the remnants of

the disappearing dialect once heard on the banks of the Dnieper," but in order to write in living Ukrainian, he committed an act of insolence that was received enthusiastically by his countrymen but was regarded by the Russians, including the Emperor himself, as a "clever joke."

Critics like Kulish showed little sense in questioning the methods that allowed Kotliarevs'kyi to occupy a comfortable position in society. This is so especially if we take into account all the contemporary evidence of his honesty and probity. In all social relationships Kotliarevs'kyi kept his dignity, and his good name upheld, by and large, the authority of his unusual literary creation. He had a gift for living with people, including some in high positions whom he was particularly fortunate in attracting. Is it not important in Russia to have the reputation of being most loyal? Even Shevchenko, because of his personal charm, had found support and protection among the Repnins,[32] with [Charles] Briullov[33] and later in the family of Count [Fiodor] Tolstoi[34]; he did not conceal his work much and the police immediately discovered his sharpest political poems.

In our country they still try to write Kotliarevs'kyi's biography in the unctuous style in which the authors used to write their official autobiographies. They stress all the official-patriotic aspects and smooth over, weaken, and justify the most characteristic episodes of the inner life, depict the "positive" features of the personality—that is, its suitability for government service. Here, of course, our literary scholars elastically separate the person of the tsar (who is to be regarded as an enemy) and his political activity (which should be supported under its modern pseudonym "love for a united fatherland").

The irony of it all is that we are not interested in Kotliarevs'kyi's government service but rather in explaining the enigma of how he could withstand the official current, ignore the "progressive" wheel of history and decide to write in Ukrainian for the Ukrainian people, a people who remained alive only unofficially! From the biography which we read in our textbooks, the author of the first three books of *Eneida* (The Aeneid) would [logically] end by writing an "Oda Kurakinu" (Ode to Kurakin) and quietly serve the fatherland until reaching the rank of colonel. . . .

In a large, secluded house near the church, separated from a ravine by a wooden fence (according to a painting by Shevchenko)—that is where in 1769 the boy Ivan, descended from near-gentry, was born into the family of a clerk. As a youngster he felt the soil of his native Poltava with his bare feet. Although it was still a regimental town, Poltava in those days looked more like a large village.

We do not know and never will know how news flew over this high wooden fence from the grim world in which the Hetman Ukraine was in its death throes. On the right bank of the Dnieper the fresh wounds of the crushed Koliivshchyna[35] rebels still bled and new burial mounds dotted the land. Tragedy shone in the eyes of the victims. Bad news about "the bomb which flew from the Muscovite field and fell in the middle of the Sich" spread in groans and sorrowful songs throughout Ukraine. Songs about the Russian army destroying and looting the Zaporozhian Sich worse than infidels; how the last, unconquered Zaporozhians went into exile in Turkey; how Cossack relics and standards were carted off to St. Petersburg as booty, and how the eighty-year-old Sich *otaman* Kalnyshevs'kyi, who diplomatically avoided conflict with the authorities but had to be punished since in his soul, in his being a Zaporozhian, he was an enemy of the "new fatherland," was taken to the Solovky Islands. Distant rumors were heard about the rebellion of Pugachov, who was imprisoned by Suvorov[36] himself. . . .

It was then that Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi received his first education from a deacon and only later could he fathom, as a consequence of these events, the depressing atmosphere of hopelessness echoed in sad songs. From the beginning his father saw to it that Ivan would fare better in this uncertain world and at the age of ten registered him as a clerk in the New-Russian chancellery. At the age of twelve Kotliarevs'kyi had the rank of copying clerk and at the age of fifteen he became a registry clerk of a *gubernii*a. It was a time when one had to have papers to prove one's human worth. We know nothing about the nature of the office work of the future poet. Most likely he did serve, and periodically kept returning to the life of the office, where the image of the state employee impressed him as something most vile and loathsome, as a cog, a "literate fool" who turns his back on his home, language, and song and is afraid to acknowledge his own mother. Such is the service to the "fatherland," which kills and depraves human nature. There is no stronger condemnation of it than the one by [Kotliarevs'kyi's character] Voznyi [the bailiff][37] in his confession: "from birth I was inclined to good deeds, but because of my official position I never did any."[38]

It is quite clear that Kotliarevs'kyi was not at all touched by the spirit of the time, but firmly held on to the traditional morality, historical associations, and the language and songs of his people. Before his eyes everything was being muddied and mixed and reformed in the direction of denigrating and belittling the old Ukrainian ways of life, the simple customs, and the Ukrainian national soul in general, the soul that was now being broken down into "serf souls." Yet Kotliarevs'kyi always clearly and openly stood in active opposition to this fashionable disease, and he always remained

himself. The newly founded seminary in Poltava, where he was a pupil for nine years after 1780, gave him a good knowledge of Latin, French, and, of course, Russian, but it failed to instill in him the new official outlook. Pavlo Hrabovs'kyi studied in the Kharkiv seminary almost a hundred years later and even then the Ukrainian language was dominant; and as soon as lessons were over, the students reverted to it and to Ukrainian folklore. No wonder, therefore, that during his seminary days Kotliarevs'kyi was an expert "rhymester" and most likely knew Ukrainian oral literature best of all. Steblin-Kamins'kyi's[39] testimony that Kotliarevs'kyi, as one of the five best seminarians, was to have been sent to the Alexander Nevskii seminary in St. Petersburg and that he "could not be found in town" is not at all surprising. It is clear why Kotliarevs'kyi was not there and could not be found by anybody. . . . This is but an instance of how some Ukrainians refused high honors. It is especially characteristic of Kotliarevs'kyi. A little later, his talented countryman, Kostiantyn Puzyna,[40] could not resist the temptation; they found him and he wasted his energies and was extinguished in a monk's cell. Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi never exchanged Poltava for anything. All his life he managed to remain true to himself and leave at the crossroads the unexplained silences that now remain open to various interpretations. But at the same time one should also notice the fine features of his exceptionally intelligent face, full of thought and dignity. His first step was the unfinished seminary. He grew bored with it because it could not offer him anything except a useless diploma. His attitude to the official literature in the seminary was cheerful and gay, almost the same as that of Mykhailo Chuprun[41] to the songs of the soldier-sorcerer. The latter asks Chuprun:

> "—So sing to me, you Ukrainian, at least one Russian song . . .
> —Yours? Which one? Perhaps the one about the falcon
> or the cuckoo? Or about the darling and the gossip?
> Or about the glove, or the girth? You can stuff yourself
> with your songs. There isn't one I would like to borrow . . ."

And so "Mr. Ivan" went as a private tutor in the province of Poltava. There he also studied and copied folksongs, and did not fail to join with other young people on social occasions. The rude hospitality of his hosts did not embarrass him.

"He tuned the violin, plucked the string pizzicató with his finger and sang . . . I shall never forget it. . . . It was as if the heart itself was weeping with tears, weeping and singing:

It seems I am not sad or sorrowful
Only when I go out past the gate I bend with the wind . . .

The old man listening to this could not contain himself, looked twice at the woman with the keys, blinked and cried like a baby. [. . . Then he told Kotliarevs'kyi that he would not let him go.] He hired him as tutor to his orphan boys and paid him thirty coppers a month."

Yet this patriarchal, sentimental atmosphere among the gentry, encouraged by official charters and Imperial *ukazes*, was unsafe. They started to enjoy their power, were spoilt by it, and [as Kotliarevs'kyi later wrote] "they gave no freedom to the people and treated them like cattle."

To be on the safe side, "Mr. Ivan" obtained his gentry certificate and renewed his service registration. Soon he joined the army to show that his new certificate was not merely paper . . . He was attracted to the Sivers'kyi rifle regiment because it was stationed in the province of Poltava and at one time had been a Cossack regiment. Now it had been modernized, had new Russian words of command, and perhaps the new officer felt a little sad and ridiculous in that company. . . .

Kotliarevs'kyi began writing his *Eneida* while he was still tutoring. It was an outburst of youthful, creative energy and a real orgy of words. One senses in it the first intoxication with a free, witty, brilliant vocabulary, the poetry of customs and mores, when every sound and image sparkles. One senses that the poet was bathing in the elements of the blessed Poltava region and like a bee in spring scattered his golden pollen all around. The actual, dreary world was left far behind and was heard only in a distant, sorrowful song or sad, quiet conversations. In *Eneida* action buzzed like a sunny hive. In this holy act of creation Kotliarevs'kyi was indeed "an instrument of the people's view of life" and spontaneously filled the large and unwieldy framework of Vergil's *Aeneid* with this nectar. The honeycombs were completely full.

The author was so much tied to the Ukrainian tradition of manuscript literature that he never thought of trying to publish his work. It circulated with the speed of lightning among all strata of the Ukrainian public and was liked both by those who wanted to enjoy its humor and by those who heard in it at last a real human word in their defense:

The peasants' truth is prickly
While the landlords' bends in all directions.

It seems as though *Eneida* had a miraculous power to unite the alienated and divided countrymen with a sincere human smile and forced them to look in each other's eyes and discover their own selves under a foreign official uniform. A Ukrainian landowner, Parpura, could not restrain himself from printing *Eneida* at his own expense and so this fortunate date, the year 1798, opened a new chapter in the history of Ukrainian culture.

Apart from the national spirit in general, *Eneida* contained, consciously or subconsciously, a Zaporozhian history, which can be decoded from the very first lines. People had learned to keep silent about it and now, in this book, every reader could silently understand its subdued voice, a native warmth chanted in an old Zaporozhian melody. . . . In any case when captain Kotliarevs'kyi crossed the Danube on a military errand, he did not bypass the opportunity to meet with some refugee descendants of the Zaporozhians who, having learned that he composed *Eneida*, immediately recognized him as one of themselves and even invited him to be their elder. Soon afterwards, in 1807, Kotliarevs'kyi was dismissed from his post as adjutant to the Commander of the corps and was suddenly transferred far beyond the boundaries of Ukraine, to the Pskov regiment in Lithuania. He promptly resigned his commission. Of course, it was not in his interest to give the true reasons.

Our biographers constantly attribute to Kotliarevs'kyi "patriotic enthusiasm" in 1812 and one memoirist even reports an official dream of him "addressing the Cossacks in simple Little Russian words and rousing them to exemplary feats of bravery." It was in an evil and uncertain hour that the Russian Emperor suddenly showed respect for the "Little Russian" national traditions and the justice which had been trampled and began to democratize and reorganize the Cossack regiments, forgetting that they had been liquidated once and for all.

The reserve staff captain did not, however, demonstrate the enthusiasm that our masters of pure biography require of him. He insistently reminded Lobanov-Rostovskii[42] in a note: "I trust, Your Excellency, that I shall only be asked to form a regiment and not to serve in it." He puts forward a dozen reasons [for not serving]. . . . Deliberately passing over this incident in silence, our [biographical] masters gladly quote further from Kotliarevs'kyi's report to the governor general: "For the most part the Cossacks are joining willingly and gladly and without the slightest lassitude," and report this as patriotic enthusiasm! Yet Kotliarevs'kyi does not utter a single false word about the official patriotism. Instead, his account [of the Cossack recruits] speaks for itself: "Many of them came without the required shirts, shoes, grey trousers, wearing old, worn-out coats, without scarves, bringing saddles

without linings, broken saddle trees, even bridles with hempen reins; most of the Cossacks were badly equipped, without sabres." In a word "like tattered vagabonds," they were a marvelous complement to *Eneida* but full of illusions that at best they would escape serfdom and full of hope that the old Cossack regiments would again be reinstated.

Throughout their entire history Ukrainians have waited for decisive changes. Who knows whether secretly they did not hope that Napoleon would smother tsarism, destroy that dungeon of peoples–the Empire–and liquidate serfdom. Certainly, all Poland was hoping to be liberated by France. One must not forget that loyal submission in Ukraine had only just begun to take root. And even that was superficial, while imagination, tradition, and the "old habits of thought" remained ancient, closer to the Polish model. In the meantime tsarism brought nothing to Ukraine but ruin, coarse licentiousness, uninterrupted executions and knout beatings, oppression, serfdom, and the poll tax. The "Little Russians" could be bought only by promises to restore Cossack liberties. The files of the Imperial office were full of declarations and petitions by the "little Russian gentry" to that effect.

True, the simple "Little Russian word" was cheap and always popular, judging from the appearance in 1807 of a booklet entitled "The Russian spirit or the heart-felt feelings of the Siberian ship-captain Userdov and the Zaporozhian Cossack (sic!) Tverdovs'kyi, depicting in verse the victory over Bonaparte on December 14, 1806." This was followed by a flood of "patriotic" odes, all supposedly written by the lower and working classes– "The Cossack song about Bonaparte," "The ode of the Little Russian common man on the occasion of military events following the French invasion." All in the same vein, as if they were meant to be read before a microphone.

This came to be known as sleazy "Kotliarevism," which like a grey shadow soiled the great name of the poet. All such fawning incompetence and coarse imitations of *Eneida* in fact parodied its folk humor and reduced its simplicity to primitive Little Russian babble.

Staff captain Kotliarevs'kyi, however, did not respond with a single word to "patriotic demands." It was a strange thing–patriotic "Russian spirit" in the mouth of a Little Russian. It was replete with toadyism of the worst kind, of obsequiousness to the Moscovite and his power, of the servility which on every side flatters the Russians and scoffs at the French as if half-consciously remembering vengefulness for an earlier sympathy with the Swede. P. Danylevs'kyi in his "Ode of the Little Russian Common Man" naively argues with the French Emperor that "you won't fool the Russians." He recalls his stubborn ancestors [who supposedly told Mazepa that they

preferred the tsar]. From all their moralizing he saved his own naiveté and the simple belief that open breast-beating could soften the punishment:

It is better to bow to the Russians
And forget to go on fighting.
Drop all your schemes,
Bow to the tsar of Russia
And let him capture you.

This "Little Russian" in an official-militant tone confesses, by the way, that in supporting Moscow, he stands aloof and only taunts Bonaparte in these words:

Better come to visit us
And taste our Cossack pie.

In the consciousness of Ukrainians of that period the autonomist image of the Hetman state was still so vivid that even the most loyal of them did not yet believe the new directives about the indivisible unity between Ukraine and Russia. During the Napoleonic wars they were aroused from their deep, provincial slumber and babbled drowsily:

Brothers, how did this happen?
The Frenchman has come to us?
What is the fool up to?
. . . Away with you, rascal!
These are no Germans, but Russians . . .

Such, in fact, were "the thoughts of the Ukrainian population about the French invasion."

In the capital, Pushkin was still allowed to write Romantic ambiguities in honor of Napoleon (there the Western European vogues were still in force), but later, in appropriate "state language," he attacked Europeans as "slanderers of Russia." But from the lackey-rooms only jingoist patriotism with a cur-like smell was allowed in the guise of a folk-image.

On the other hand, Ukrainian peasants [stirred in opposition to the officials in Moscow]. Their attitude was best expressed by Kostiantyn Puzyna (mentioned earlier) in his ode "Malorossiiskii krestianin" (The Little Russian Peasant).

What is all this?
We are scorned and treated like dirt
Why has it come about that a brother laughs
At a brother,
That he who is the stronger hits the weaker,
That we jabber so fast in French
And prattle in Russian . . .

This was the real voice of the people, under the yoke of serfdom, torn by the class struggle which was engineered by the senators in order to set at loggerheads mutually hostile camps of the Cossack nation–Ukrainian landlords, Ukrainian peasant-Cossacks and Ukrainian serfs–everything under the strict supervision and direction of the Russian bullies. Here the author does not appeal to the tsar, only to human conscience:

Are we inhuman? Are we beasts?
Don't we have God inside us?

This voice is relevant even today. When our compilers of shoddy textbooks ignore it and only listen to the voice of opportunism, they take refuge behind the contemporary slogan of "friendship of two fraternal peoples." They make no effort to imagine even the "friendship" between two horses harnessed together, one of them, already experienced, is allowed to bite, and the other only appears to be nice and cannot accept the position of the double lash. It is necessary to think about terms like "yoke," "destruction," "rebellion," "liquidation," "colonization," "serfdom"–words which are used by the learned authors themselves, to realize the full tragedy of this second inexperienced horse. During every military campaign he sensed the promise of freedom and dreamt of escaping from harness to freedom, for only there are friendship and comradeship possible. . . . During the war with Turkey in 1806 an "Ust-Danube Budzhak army" was suddenly formed and whole villages rose in rebellion at the vision of freedom. After the campaign was over this unhappy Sich had to be destroyed, the rebellion subdued, and "disturbances, rebelliousness and the exodus to Moldavia" extinguished.

God only knows Kotliarevs'kyi's thoughts in those anxious days. He kept explaining to the authorities that he could not leave Poltava and his old mother. . . . After all not so long ago his fellow patriot [Vasyl' Kapnist[43]] had travelled to the Prussian King, Friedrich II, to persuade him to make war on Russia and count on an uprising in Ukraine. . . . It was the same Kapnist who is well known even today as a Russian satirist, the author of *Iabeda*

(Chicane) and "Oda na rabstvo" (Ode on Serfdom). He founded a "home for the education of the impoverished gentry" in Poltava, where Kotliarevs'kyi continued his work in its enlightened atmosphere, from time to time carrying out military errands for the governor.

There were many changes in the mentality of society as a whole and in the poet's outlook. The Russian army returned from Europe spiritually conquered and disarmed, ideologically decomposed and infected by republican ideas. The need for social and national reforms to make the regime more democratic was in the air. For the enlightened section of the Ukrainian public the time had come in this new atmosphere for the liberation of its secret hopes, which had been chained in silence and repressed into the unconscious. Ukraine became the cradle of secret societies and associations, which ultimately led to the uprising on Senate Square.[44] In 1807 a Ukrainian nobleman, Vasyl' Lukashevych, was taken to St. Petersburg to confess and be punished for a toast drunk in honor of either the French Republic or of Napoleon. This was not because there were so few supporters of Napoleon in Russia, but because in Ukrainian conditions it smacked of Mazepism and Lukashevych was accused of separatism. . . . In time there formed around Lukashevych a "Little Russian Association," closely linked with the "Polish Patriotic Society" and the "Northern Society," consisting of Russian and Ukrainian gentry.

All these men, in spite of their different convictions and views, were united in their concepts of honor, liberty, and dignity, both personal and national. It is difficult to divine their attitude to Ukrainian national and social liberty from the testimony they gave to the police in the 1826 trial. But there can be no doubt about the views on this matter of the Russian Decembrist poet Ryleev, who glorified the tragic figure of Mazepa's follower in his poem "Voinarovskii." Mikhail Novikov, the chief clerk of the Little Russian governor Prince Repnin, who was the chief inspector of the secret societies, was at least quite sympathetic to this idea.

Finally, Prince Repnin himself (a former viceroy of Saxony), a brother of the Decembrist Volkonskii and a relative of the last Hetman Rozumovs'kyi, was suspected of Ukrainian separatism, not without reason. It was he who commissioned Bantysh-Kamens'kyi to write *Istoriia Maloi Rossii* (A History of Little Russia), which he published in 1822 at his own expense. The history, if one is to believe our historians, is full of "small-landowner, nationalist tendencies." Repnin took Kotliarevs'kyi under his wing, appointed him director of the theatre, and ordered plays for him. Later he embraced as his own son the young author of "Son" (The Dream) [i.e., Taras Shevchenko]. . . . Of course, it is difficult to suspect this highly cultured

Russian aristocrat and at the same time a democrat of harboring anti-Russian tendencies. He simply had his own concept of liberty at his own level of culture and decency, knew and respected the history and customs of the Ukrainian people, and even dared to say to tsar Nicholas that "Little Russian peasants are exploited by the tsar's deputies and Little Russian officials who have sacrificed the welfare of their country for their own comfort." This is why Repnin was inclined towards autonomism, federalism, and separatism, certainly not towards centralism and despotism. This is also the reason why he was deprived of all favors from the tsar.

The name of Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi appears on the police list of members of the "Little Russian Association." True, the police did not have enough evidence to press charges in court. This creates the greatest difficulties for our biographers of Kotliarevs'kyi. On the one hand, it is impossible to exclude his name from the list. On the other hand, it is, after all, necessary to contrast him with Lukashevych, in order to show pupils how to learn Russian patriotism from Kotliarevs'kyi. . . .

In order to remedy this misfortune we should remember how Kostomarov, defending himself against charges of separatism, maintained quite rightly that this was a matter of police terminology. It was necessary to the Russian imperialists, who had so hopefully buried the articles of the Pereiaslav treaty, that the Ukrainian people should not be recognized as a separate nation, or the Ukrainian language as a separate language, and so Russian patriotism was considered obligatory for all Ukrainians. They were consistent: to recognize a nation would have meant to recognize its right to liberty and independence from any other nation, even from Russia. Hence they intimidated people with charges of separatism, although a writer like Shevchenko was satisfied in his works to use the concept of love of one's country since he did not face the practical decision to determine the fate of his own people. Kostomarov was quite right to reject this terminology so unsuited to cultural leaders, but the gendarmes held to it consistently.

Why should one persist in discussing this question in a country where the Ukrainian nation is officially recognized as sovereign, which even has the constitutional right to secede—that is, whose separatism is legal? Why should one now "defend" Kotliarevs'kyi and even Shevchenko from this perfectly legal idea? Unless it is because of the most modern ism—servilism!

Kotliarevs'kyi's spontaneous feeling of Ukrainian patriotism became more and more conscious and clear. And so in the course [of writing] the *Eneida*, elegiac and heroic notes appear and the band of Trojans becomes more and more transformed into the Zaporozhian Host. Yet Kotliarevs'kyi was not only "unfortunately no master," he was no master of declarations.

His innermost feelings remained deeply hidden in his breast and added color and spirit to his poetic images. His humor and his satire occur on that thin borderline between concealed teasing and serious social allegory. His plot situations are sometimes very sharp but with his broad gamut of humor he still manages to cling to that slippery borderline. Only great writers have this feeling for measure and tact. In the author of *Eneida* there is always present the author of *Natalka Poltavka*, forever young and light-heartedly carefree, but always noble at heart.

As far as social allegory is concerned, *Eneida* is as full of it as other contemporary fantasies. Kotliarevs'kyi was never accused of satirizing the autocratic Olympus, but it is difficult to believe that the following passages are not darkly hinting at it:

> When Jupiter askance
> Looked at us from Olympus. . . .

or:

> At that time the Gods had gathered in Paradise
> To attend luncheon with Zeus.
> They drank, ate, and made merry
> Forgetting our human troubles.

The plight of the common people appears here quite undisguised. The reader imagines that, banned from the path of European progress, he finds himself on an enchanted island where the queen is "an evil witch, very angry with her people." Her only gift is to turn people into beasts. All peoples, in the prison atmosphere of this island, lose their human appearance and become dogs or foxes or goats or vice versa. The hardest lot, as usual, befalls the Ukrainians:

> They were lost like a grey dog on the market square,
> Make their necks ready for the yoke.
> According to old Ukrainian custom
> You will become neither goat nor ram
> But, an ox for sure . . .

All this is said with humor in the national style of a sad smile at one's own foibles–"encountering ill luck, they met misfortune jokingly." Is not father Anchises' prophesy taken from the lessons of Ukrainian history? When

he wishes Aneas to "breed a great and brave people" he *warns* that the Trojans' good fortune will only last until "they kiss someone's boots."

If all this was written subconsciously, then Kotliarevs'kyi's subconsciousness must have been disloyal.

In some of the great stanzas of the poem one can filter through elegiac images of deeper significance, such as the figure of a woman:

> No one loved her,
> No one wanted to marry her
> Or to joke with her.
> How many muses like this there are in this world!
> In every city, in every district!
> They would cover Parnassus from top to bottom!

or:

> In that kingdom, where Jupiter
> Was rooted in truth like an oak.

The extraordinarily simple, light *Eneida* is at the same time ever problematical. The young Shevchenko accepted it entirely and yet before he went into exile he said that "it is but an anecdote in the Muscovite vein." The burlesque form has repelled all our maximalists.

The blackest shadow on Kotliarevs'kyi was cast by his followers. Throughout the 19th century Kotliarevs'kyi was treated with reserve because he was seen through the prism of Kotliarevism—that widely spread imitation based on coarse language, gruff humor, and cheap literary cliches—all designed to make fun of the Ukrainian language, acting the fool who amuses not even the king, but the mob of city folk. Tastelessness, graphomania, philistine primitivism and sneering found firm refuge and hopeful sustenance in this Little Russianism. Little Russianism of the worst kind was never obstructed by the government; on the contrary, the most diplomatic chauvinists willingly allowed the Little Russian sneerers to kill the fledgling Ukrainian literature.

That is why throughout the entire second half of the 19th century the best Ukrainian poets, playwrights, and artists uphold the idea of unceasing struggle against the profanation of Ukrainian culture, against its representation by people of little culture whose only spiritual resource was "three bags of laughter." Everything young, alive, and healthy kept aloof from them and during the punitive conditions of the development of Ukrainian culture

turned away from everything Ukrainian before recognizing in that culture manifestations of highest value and unique national grandeur.

Today this struggle seems to have abated. Not because Little Russianism no longer exists. On the contrary, Little Russianism and "Kotliarevism" have multiplied in many genres and have flourished beautifully in the musty atmosphere under the low ceiling. Especially in the 1930-1950's. This tendency can be seen in the intellectual entropy of the humor of Ostap Vyshnia[45] and in the evolution of the censorship-controlled satire of the periodical *Perets'* (Pepper). It may be seen in the contemporary character of Tarapunka, who entertains the stubborn Shtepsel, and in the flood of writing whose national style is full of petty, primitive laughter, devoid of any real humor or wit.

The fact that an article in *Perets'* has great appeal to certain social strata does not justify it. Centuries of enslavement and national deprivation have created a type of Ukrainian conformist who calls himself pejoratively *khokhol*,[46] as if he were saying "call me a pot, but just don't put me into the oven." But he bears some relationship to those ancestors who braved fire to defend the honor of their names. He has his own ethics and morality, his own humor, his own sayings and songs. All of the petty, cheap, low-grade part of our folklore is his product and belongs to him–the *khokhol*, who only wants to enjoy good food and drink, who becomes a sated and self-satisfied boor, avoiding thought of honor and duty and thus unable to stand anything Ukrainian. But after dinner he is drawn to the burlesque, to a coarse laughter at everything (except the government), to a path where everything is trodden down and where he can easily assert himself.

It is clear that modern "Kotliarevism" is self-sown by the winds of time and that it does not stem from the root of Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi. For us the *Eneida* is a living work, but it is largely of historical and literary significance. Today, in richly illustrated editions, it has an appeal to a wide market and this is both pleasant and rather sad. The modern "re-edited and supplemented" textbooks cannot explain in their pedestrian language to our pupils the merit of this burlesque travesty and why it marks the beginning of modern Ukrainian literature. Perhaps *Eneida* must be discovered by each one of us individually, according to our own taste and education, culture, self-consciousness and knowledge of classical sources. Today it is easy to understand Kulish's bitter comments on this many-layered work, which is now greeted with a suspicious-looking bouquet that at once applauds Kotliarevs'kyi and denigrates his name. Yet this view contains a positive immunity against burlesque and sentimentalism, qualities that flourish in our literature when it is unable to hold on to its high road of development.

Now we want to catch the sound of this name and confirm that it has a fine timbre and noble resonance. Kotliarevs'kyi's face shines with joyous humor, hiding a deep feeling for human dignity. While praising his three works we talk inevitably of the poet's talent. Yet talent itself was not enough for a man who started modern Ukrainian literature. He must have had a Ukrainian spine—a spine which, after every catastrophe and misfortune, stiffens up again and again and confirms the free human right—*to be oneself.*

Kotliarevs'kyi's influence on his contemporaries and on Ukrainian society was great, but not only because of the poet's great talent. In *Eneida*, and especially *Natalka Poltavka* and *Moskal'-charivnyk* (The Soldier-Sorcerer), he confirmed this *deep feeling of human dignity*, both human and national, without which it is impossible to think of the rebirth of a subjugated, colonized country.

This well-developed feeling became the spine of the new Ukrainian literature which always, more or less sharply and openly, defended the reputation and good name of Ukraine. It defended them before the autocratic bureaucracy, which set the boorish tone and official attitude of regarding the Ukrainian people as hewers of wood and drawers of water, manure and yeast for the Russian Empire. This tone was so confident that the officials did not take Kotliarevs'kyi's works seriously, as the beginning of some new "conspiracy." The author needed all the greater strength of spirit to work quietly on breaking a new road, as if not noticing anything. To the eternally petty protestations of the conformist citizenry, "This is all double Dutch, why print it if no one understands it?" Kvitka Osnovianenko[47] answered: "Wait a moment, gentlemen. There are still in this world some orthodox people who know and value our language. Not everything is for the Russians." Judging by the nuances in his works, Kotliarevs'kyi would have given them a sterner answer. He, as it were, was not in opposition to the regime—he kept quiet about it. However, he lived so organically in the national spirit that new forms of life and official ideas touched him only on the surface and did not influence his works. This was the only opposition possible at that time—stubborn and elemental, in the spirit of Skovoroda. And this was why everything that was alive and even half alive listened to Kotliarevs'kyi's words, words which had been long-awaited. Ivan Franko pointed out that "Kotliarevs'kyi's works, because of their deep national spirit, simplicity and universal accessibility, could not but influence the rebirth of the Ukrainian national spirit not only in Ukraine but also in Galicia."

[Kotliarevs'kyi's] words were full of the living blood of slaves, a living force which knows no mortal chains. We are not attempting here to prove at

any cost Kotliarevs'kyi's high national and political consciousness, since this does not affect his place in Ukrainian literature. We know of examples where national subconsciousness or even a national and political indifference, say in the person of Goethe, produced one of the strongest exponents of the German spirit. Despite the darkness of the historical moment, despite changing conditions and events, Kotliarevs'kyi reached that living stream in which there pulsed the spiritual life of the people, and he gaily laughed. And so we can say about the echo of his words "with the easy hand of Kotliarevs'kyi . . ." He was a generous father, who gave his child his best efforts and preserved his life and who yet could not know what the child would become and whether he would survive in this uncertain world.

With his Zaporozhian vagabonds he flew on his own into the busy world of Olympian masquerades and his laughter resounded far and wide. Yet it was short of breath. Long years of silence passed and only in a period of hope and searching was Kotliarevs'kyi, as it were, born again. In his second breath he wrote *Natalka Poltavka* and *Moskal'-charivnyk* and completed the *Eneida.* It was in these post-war years of illusory spring and loosening of spiritual bonds that he began to feel solid ground under his feet and he himself created a spiritual atmosphere around him.

This great flash of his was extinguished in the foul air as all around signs of awakening were also quenched (people even hid membership badges of the Bible Society). Kotliarevs'kyi did not withdraw from his position, but wilted painfully. . . .

The content of the *Enedia*, *Natalka Poltavka*, and *Moskal'-charivnyk* was not enough to create a renaissance of Ukrainian culture. Yet these works contained something deeper than the sum total of their ideas and images; they reactivated the national elemental current, the national spiritual continuity that can never be exhausted and that fertilizes new beginnings. When, as Mykola Voronyi[48] wrote, "Ukraine's fate hung in the balance," these works confirmed our right to live and express ourselves *in the Ukrainian vernacular*, which shone with such unique beauty that its substantiality was self-evident. It is with the popular language that a new chapter in history was begun and the main source of our cultural growth was opened, which has remained inexhaustible to the present day.

The *Eneida* marked one of the most typical arteries of our literature–the ambivalent humor that further rises to satirical comprehension and a spiritual victory over the coarse and powerful forces that stand over and against the Ukrainian people. A strong and healthy branch of this artery flows into Shevchenko's social satire–the laughter of an uncompromising struggle. The weak branch shows itself in the course of time "as a serf-actor in the

theater of the landlords who tells funny jokes, tries to laugh and by bowing low blunts the landlords' anger" (L. Ukrainka).

The second artery through which Kotliarevs'kyi's influence flowed into Ukrainian literature was ethnographic realism. On the one hand, it produced a luxuriant branch of unique national coloring. But this branch was not burdened with fruit and in provincial backwardness slowly reverted to the wild. [. . .] Under the care of a good gardener it can still be used in the grafting of the most modern branches.

The basic artery of Kotliarevs'kyi's plays entered Ukrainian literature as the good tradition of *narodnist'* [national spirit], which developed into an organic system of views about the physical, spiritual, and moral potentialities of the people as a remarkably healthy and hopeful force, deserving of love and honor and counteracting the negative rotting and deadening forces serving the regime. This faith in the people became the main source of inspiration, even a moral yardstick for a Ukrainian writer, who was, so to speak, forbidden to show any of the vacillations of an intellectual. He regarded all concepts of "sympathy for the people" with suspicion and rejected as alien Belinskii's[49] attitude (apart from his slander against Shevchenko and Kulish, whose surname Belinskii described as "swinish") towards the "coarse peasant mind" and the statement that the peasant's only calling was to turn a palace into a pigsty.

Our literature idealizes the *narod* [the people] in its own way, and from a distance, not superficially, but in its very substance. It raises pearls from the bottom of their souls, it selects from the masses those endowed with spiritual beauty and strength, elevates them, and traces their fate through the dreary, quotidian reality of Ukrainian life. Kotliarevs'kyi's work cannot be analyzed scholastically, in black and white. Each character, like Terpylykha,[50] bears with him what life has given him. Even Voznyi has suppressed his natural inclination to goodness and has preserved his common human sense, however tortuously modernized, as in Skovoroda's song about the world "where everyone is tempted by the devil to be affluent." The soldier, too, grown brazen through service in the tsarist army, is not devoid of a human sense of justice and honesty. Yet, it is noteworthy that Kotliarevs'kyi did not even think of creating moral arbiters, like Pravdin,[51] from among the educated classes of the gentry. His heroine Natalka, who stands on a pinnacle, is of simple, and honest origin.

Blinded by the game of priorities, even today we like to brag about the fact that Ukrainian literature in the persons of Kotliarevs'kyi and Kvitka had discovered, long before the Russian, that under the peasant coat there beats a warm human heart. What naive pride! If the Russian writers had to discover

that truth and break through thick layers to reach it, Ukrainian writers merely testified that they had not forgotten it. Was not the Cossack revolution of the 17th century nurtured by the firm peasant conviction that only the common people have good hearts and a living conscience while the landlords are alien, dour, and soulless—in a word, "dog's blood"? It was this morality, deeply rooted in folklore, that led to modern Ukrainian literature, which rose from the bottom to European heights. On the other hand, Russian literature suffered for a long time from the burden of "dominating foreign fashion" and it was with the help of the Ukrainian ferment (Gogol in literature, Shchepkin[52] in theater) that it succeeded in approaching the simple, open word. It is not by accident that that period of Russian literature is called "Gogolian."

The Ukrainian upper gentry class "conquered itself," destroyed itself at the time of the so-called "Ruin," and was denationalized during the period of colonization, leaving no [literary] products of its own. All that remained alive among them took over the popular morality and outlook, and only in this way was the level of Lesia Ukrainka reached.

To what extent was Kotliarevs'kyi an exponent of the originality of the Ukrainian spirit and how much of the seed of regeneration that fell into the ground comes from him? Indeed, if Ukrainian literature had followed the principle of imitating Russian literature, it would have been doomed forever to vegetate as a side branch from a foreign root and to be relegated to the "domestic use" of those who had not yet learned Russian. Yet there was never any doubt that Kotliarevs'kyi was organically Ukrainian and sprang from the rich popular-poetic root, one which has no equal in the Slavic world. Hohol' [Gogol], Kapnist, Hnidych [Gnedich],[53] Ruban,[54] Hrebinka [Grebenka], Narizhnyi [Narezhnii],[55] Pohorils'kyi [Pogorelskii],[56] and a whole pleiad of artists—all of them were branches that, in the Russian cultural field, were nourished by sap from a Ukrainian root. Kotliarevs'kyi's entire library consisted of the works of some of these countrymen as well as of some French and Latin books. There is no doubt that he was born of the elemental Cossack spirit—independent, self-sufficient, and boundless. That is why even as a young man he naturally turned to depictions of the Zaporozhians.

Today one can only feel sorry that so much paper has been wasted on describing Kotliarevs'kyi's relation to Osipov.[57] In fact, this was only a small detail in the little-known psychology of his creativity. Why disturb the dead over whose graves on the platform of good intentions there shines only one cross—reflecting Kotliarevs'kyi's glory?

Yet little attention has been paid to the fact that near the cradle of the new Ukrainian literature were the ever-fresh sources–the Roman classics, which were known and studied in the original and often "turned-inside-out" into Ukrainian parodies by students and seminarians. It was but one step from these travesties to artistic translations. And yet, despite the efforts of various writers, this tradition of holding on to classical sources died, and a century and a half later the Neo-Classicists[58] had to brush them up for their contemporaries to follow the same path. There is no doubt that Kotliarevs'kyi's taste and sense of balance were formed by these [classical] sources. . . . *Eneida* is not yet a work of the highest artistry . . . "To stand upon a Swedish mound" and to write "as the old people used to talk" is not the highest level, but it is unquestionably the first and *one's own* level. This feeling of "one's own" is quietly confirmed throughout, sometimes with special emphasis. Foreign influences, mostly carried by Russian soldiers, came into Ukraine and Kotliarevs'kyi did not miss the opportunity to comment on them. His Trojans sing

> Beautiful Cossack and Zaporozhian songs,
> But those who knew improvised hideous Russian ones . . .

The autonomy of the national spirit was elementally strong in Kotliarevs'kyi and he defended it without even stopping at the problematic proverb: "You can know a Russian, but keep a stone at the ready." Mykhailo Chuprun was full of these proverbs, and his loyalty was expressed in his half-boast that there were many of our folk [Ukrainians] in the Senate and various ministries, and they were there primarily to snub a few upstart underlings.

Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi was always consistent in defending national dignity, cultural independence, and pride and, despite his intellectual delicacy, at times even quite vehement. In the gay current of our national self-mockery, intertwined with self-glorification and vagrant entertainment, notes like these in the *Eneida* ring out suddenly, like the voice of a Sich sentry above the carousing Cossacks.

Kotliarevs'kyi's "solitary nest in the guelder rose" produced a somewhat infantile but healthy organism with a definite character. Burdened by many layers of different styles, steeped up to the neck in the riches of his own uncultivated soil and deprived of a creative atmosphere around him, he yet threw into the soil the sound kernel of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance.

Under the difficult circumstances the poet was thoughtful and sad about his homeland. "When shall we get a historical description of Ukraine

worthy of it?" he asked Sreznevs'kyi. "It is impossible now," replied Sreznevs'kyi. This was probably Kotliarevs'kyi's own answer. "It is impossible now," we repeat on the occasion of the bicentenary of Kotliarevs'kyi's death, marked as it has been with vain garlands of Kotliarevism.

In the meantime "many years have passed and much water has flowed." Kotliarevs'kyi's works have been published in full for some time and some memoirs about him have for some reason been printed in an abridged version. For a long time now he has been beset by the flies of Kotliarevism, has been blamed, belittled, justified and praised as the father and founder of the new Ukrainian literature, the first swallow of a Ukrainian national rebirth. A monument was erected to him as the first Ukrainian poet and his jubilee was celebrated.

In spite of all this, his name has always radiated quiet warmth and unusual sympathy and his three works, which were worth more than thirty, diffused a life-giving force. The author of the gay *Eneida* always appeared contemplative and sad, inviting us to talk with him about

> The eternal memories
> Of our Hetman-state of yore . . .

A wide peasant sea flowed over Ukraine, of which the immortal soul was commemorated by her son and sung by her poet. His songs became known in peasant cottages and manor houses, always inspired with the spirit of words, which flew out as envoys from the unrecognized and subjugated people to the human race. They rose against the surrounding darkness and bravely stormed the distant heights and climbed the icy rocks. Sometimes, as in the long "Osinnia kazka" (Autumn Fable),[59] the loud voices [. . .] died down and reconciled themselves to life's realities, exhaustedly whispering that this "enthusiasm was sacred but in vain." Only a select few managed to plant their banners on the mountain crest.

And yet what a miracle! Beside the long rows of dramatically sad biographies of heroes there were always fervent young enthusiasts who believed in conquering new peaks. Even when the peaks were declared to be an invention and even when at the foothills guards were posted to stop them. Everybody who was alive followed the echo of the living song. . . .

The wide peasant sea grew stormy, muddy and then clear again evaporating into the official sky. Sometimes its fruit rose "like a rainless cloud over the native land." It was dotted with lifeless little islands in the most polluted areas. Today it is not as rich in ethnographic material as it was in Kotliarevs'kyi's day. Although there are many teachers, they cannot

muddy the waters or control the weather. It lives on its own last resources, without their modern, scholastic wisdom. The bailiffs have gone to get better jobs in the cities [. . .] and they little know what nation they belong to. If, however, a Makohonenko[60] in his simplicity comes up against a Russian or a Ukrainian renegade who does not honor his country and its customs, [he does not want to talk about it]. They have all become stereotypes and automatically try to cut themselves off from "old-fashioned traditions"; they are all petty, fickle and simply unfortunate dandies.

The "soldier-sorcerers" have settled down after their service in the tsarist army. But even today Mykhailo Chuprun teases them, when he screws up his courage: "You Russians have a wooden language. Although you have lived a long time among us you can't even now pronounce the word 'varenyky'." Tetiana,[61] who is a little wiser, tries to smooth the rough edges and our learned scholars write books about "Kotliarevs'kyi's correct portrayal of her."

Old Terpylykha still ekes out an existence and the energetic and witty Natalka comes into her unfenced garden like a blossoming sunflower. She is dreaming of another life in the city and does not heed her mother's advice. Petro,[62] on the other hand, has gone downhill because of his drinking and wandering. In his dreams of the easy life he does not even believe Kotliarevs'kyi–that, as an orphan vagabond he remained faithful for years to the girl he loved and in the end sacrificed everything for his first love. Voz'nyi still sings the same song:

> Whose wheels aren't greased creak badly;
> He who does not act cunningly sits at the back.

"That's how things are in this world," people say without any rancor. They even praise Voz'nyi for his frankness.

It is terrible to think of this wide [peasant] sea today. It has grown shallow, splashing towards fruitless deserts, and is losing its aroma and its ancient qualities. It still dreams hopefully its ageless, provincial dream, sustained by Petro's reports of theater performances in Kharkiv and Mykola's boring songs about the last war.

The wide peasant sea spreads far across the land, and looking at its sleepy surface, covered with the weeds of the commonplace, often we do not see the refreshing springs and limitless depths which playfully throw up strange pearls. Stifled by the factory dust of dailiness we sometimes forget to look into the mysterious, centuries-old depths. Across the density of centuries a poet looks into these depths. He was a child of Zaporozhian

laughter, able, despite all misfortune, to build a will to life on the ruins of our Troy. The sea rises and takes wing. It hides the inexhaustible forces of life. Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi is laughing.

Footnotes

1. Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi (1769-1838), the founder of modern Ukrainian literature.
2. Panteleimon Kulish (1819-97), a Ukrainian writer and historian.
3. The Hetman state in Ukraine lasted from 1648 to 1764.
4. Fought in 1709, ended in the victory of Peter I over Charles XII of Sweden. The Ukrainian Hetman Mazepa supported the Swedish king.
5. Petr Rumiantsev (1725-96), Russian governor-general of Ukraine.
6. Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722-94), a Ukrainian philosopher and poet.
7. Mykhailo Petrenko (1817-?), a Ukrainian poet.
8. Nikolai Gogol (Mykola Hohol') (1809-52), a Russian writer of Ukrainian descent.
9. Mykola Kybalchych (1853-81), a Ukrainian populist and revolutionary. Showed interest in space travel.
10. Iurii Kondratiuk (1900-42), a Soviet Ukrainian rocket pioneer.
11. Serhii Korolov (1906-66), Soviet Ukrainian space expert, the "father" of Sputnik. He spent some time in a concentration camp.
12. Samiilo Velychko (1670-1728), a Ukrainian historian.
13. Hryhorii Hrabianka (b. 1737), a Ukrainian historian.
14. Samovydets' (in Ukrainian "an eyewitness"), a pseudonym of the Cossack chronicler in the 17th century.
15. An anonymous history of Ukraine, dating from the early 19th century.
16. Kondratii Ryleev (1795-1826), a Russian poet, member of the Decembrist movement.
17. Mykhailo Maksymovych (1804-73), a Ukrainian ethnographer and historian.
18. Izmail Sreznevs'kyi (1812-80), a Ukrainian philologist and ethnographer.
19. Konys'kyi was at one time considered to be the author of *Istoriia Rusov.*

20. Pseudonym of Mykola Kostomarov (1817-85).
21. Pseudonym of Amvrosii Metlyns'kyi (1814-70).
22. Pseudonym of Hryhorii Kvitka (1778-1843).
23. Pseudonym of Taras Shevchenko.
24. Pseudonym of Panteleimon Kulish.
25. Pseudonym of Panas Rudchenko (1849-1920).
26. Pseudonym of Ivan Levyts'kyi (1838-1918).
27. Pseudonym of Pavlo Hrabovs'kyi (1864-1902).
28. Pseudonym of Larysa Kosach (1871-1913).
29. Pseudonym of Borys Hrinchenko (1863-1910).
30. Shevchenko's first collection of poems, *Kobzar* (The Minstrel), appeared in 1840.
31. Nikolai Tsertelev (1790-1869), a Russian ethnographer, the first to publish Ukrainian folksongs.
32. Count Nikolai Repnin (1778-1845), Russian governor of Ukraine, whose daughter, Barbara, was Shevchenko's friend.
33. Karl Briullov (1799-1852), a Russian painter, Shevchenko's teacher.
34. Count Fiodor Tolstoi (1783-1873), a Russian artist, Shevchenko's friend.
35. The 1768 peasant rebellion in Ukraine.
36. Alexander Suvorov (1730-1800), a Russian general.
37. A character in Kotliarevs'kyi's play *Natalka Poltavka.*
38. Today our well-intentioned countrymen postpone their good deeds until the time they rise to higher position and rank. [Author's footnote.]
39. Stepan Steblin-Kamins'kyi (1814-85), the first biographer of Kotliarevs'kyi.
40. Kostiantyn Puzyna (1790-1850), a minor Ukrainian poet.
41. A character in Kotliarevs'kyi's play *Moskal'-charivnyk.*
42. Prince Lobanov-Rostovskii (1760-1831), Russian governor-general of the Left-Bank Ukraine.
43. Vasilii Kapnist (1756-1823), a Russian poet of Ukrainian descent.
44. Reference to the Decembrist revolt of 1825.
45. Ostap Vyshnia (1889-1956), a Soviet Ukrainian writer.
46. A derogatory name for a Ukrainian.
47. Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko (1778-1843), a Ukrainian writer.
48. Mykola Voronyi (1871-1942), a Ukrainian poet.
49. Vissarion Belinskii (1811-48), a Russian literary critic.
50. A character in Kotliarevs'kyi's play *Natalka Poltavka.*
51. A character in Fonvizin's play *Nedorosl'* (The Minor).

52. Mykhailo Shchepkin (1788-1863), a Russian actor of Ukrainian descent.

53. Nikolai Gnedich (1784-1833), a Russian writer of Ukrainian origin.

54. Vasilii Ruban (1742-95), a Russian writer of Ukrainian origin.

55. Vasilii Narezhnyi (1780-1825), a Russian writer of Ukrainian origin.

56. Antonii Pogorelskii (1787-1836), a Russian writer of Ukrainian origin.

57. Nikolai Osipov (1751-99), a Russian writer, author of a Russian travesty of the *Aeneid.*

58. A group of Ukrainian poets in the 1920's consisting of Mykola Zerov, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, Pavlo Fylypovych, Maksym Ryl's'kyi, and Osvald Burkhard.

59. A play by Lesia Ukrainka.

60. A character in Kotliarevs'kyi's play *Natalka Poltavka.*

61. In Kotliarevs'kyi's *Moskal'-charivnyk*, Tetiana is Chuprun's wife.

62. In *Natalka Poltavka*, Petro is in love with Natalka.

FINAL PLEA BEFORE THE COURT
(Late March 1973)

At this turning point of my life I now look back on my past and see there no great achievements in comparison with my expectations and no great failures or violations of the law.

I have lived the greater part of my life in constant striving for the heights of true creativity in the hope that these heights were close, but the ironic words of a poet already come to mind as a fitting early summary:

> I threshed a whole sheaf of cares
> To get just two handfuls of rye.

These two handfuls of rye consist of my ten or so scholarly articles in psychology and literary criticism and of my years of work as a lecturer and publicist at a respectable and conscientious level. The irony of all this in my case is that I have missed all those paths that would have taken me to a university appointment—and now I face a different kind of appointment.

To be sure, the prosecution was not interested in all these complex matters; it was only interested in those deviations and excesses that might be construed as crimes against the state. For more than a year the investigators explored my secret and hostile activity and, finding none, decided to regard my literary activity as hostile and to cast upon it the shadow of criminality.

I shall not speak about those things with which I have occasionally been labelled, such as the tragicomic project "the program of the communists" and the gluey testimonies of "political diagnosticians." All this will be washed from memory by the clear water of life, and right now I cannot believe that anyone can take such things seriously—the purely technical supports with which the previous investigators strengthened their case against that evil, ignorant, and downright imbecilic creature, who systematically tried to undermine governmental and social structure in order to introduce capitalism.

I prefer to pass this bogey in silence and go to the core of the accusations. I do not think I was ever in danger of being two-faced or of

wearing a mask. On the contrary, as far as I understand it, I have been criticized precisely for my frank openness, the sharp and critical tone of my literary addresses, for their dissonance with the current political line and for their exploitation by enemy propaganda.

All these are facts—real and dramatic. These facts are the consequence of my dramatic position in contemporary literary developments. I remain a minor but still a living member of this development, although my name has been dropped by the press as if it had been mysteriously cursed. This name is cleverly seized upon by the bourgeois propaganda of the West. I am caught in the crossfire and instead of working to the fullest extent for the spiritual development of our society I am becoming the helpless victim of a hazardous ideological struggle.

I cannot find a way out of this situation. I can see only one honorable way out—to descend silently from the frothy surface into the depths—to do positive work, even if anonymously. But this way out is closed to me . . .

It is difficult for me to assess my own guilt in this. There are things, internal laws of development, that are stronger than ourselves. They carry a man along in the stream of time and if he does not want to go to the bottom he must swim toward the unknown . . . But he does not want to drown: the forces of the creative vocation are as unconquerable and unfettered as the forces of growth in all living things.

It happened to be my bitter fortune to associate and work with people of rare talent and nobility of character—people I had only read about in books before. It is the greatest of good fortune to be able to live for high cultural and social aims and to disregard one's own. It is good to recognize the weight and importance of such great words as truth, honor, duty—words that form the moral and ethical basis and the very essence of my outlook. Honor, which is defended with blood; dignity, which is a precondition of life; truth, which is sought with the fearlessness of an explorer—without any guarantee of a safe return. I grew up on these concepts and I wanted to realize them, escaping from the closed circle of empty words . . .

To oppose the tide of denigration of these ethical values and to uphold these principles and the luxury of self-respect, I am willing to pay with everything life has endowed me. If this is not enough I will pay more.

When, at the beginning of the 1960's, enthusiastically and with youthful directness, we supported the slogans of personal responsibility for everything that is being done, the slogans of daring and activism in literary and social life, I never thought that ten years later I should have to talk about it before a court. To be frank, even now I cannot believe in the seriousness of the criminal charges relating to my literary articles and I did not feel that the

year-long investigation was at all serious. The incriminating formulae "an enemy aim," "with the purpose of undermining the Soviet government" were always used with some shame and uncertainty in relation to such articles [of mine] as "Cathedral in Scaffolding," "The Last Tear," "On Mother's Day," and "Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi Is Laughing."

True, it is difficult to talk about literature and criminal investigation in the same breath. Creative artists are always interested in the maximum freedom, in unhampered, daring and vigorous growth, while the security organs are always interested in keeping everything quiet. I think these are two eternally parallel paths that ought not to cross each other.

I cannot accept the artificial interpretation of some of my articles as slanderous. If they were so I would voluntarily repudiate them and I would lose any moral justification for writing.

I cannot understand criminal charges that are based on a misunderstanding of my text or on an obvious unwillingness to understand it correctly. In the meantime I have yet to receive a critical appraisal of my articles, however severe, but on a level of scholarly responsibility and logic. I cannot accept criminal charges for basic literary contacts—that I had shown my articles to someone either before or after I had sent them to the editor of the journal. How could I know that this or that article would in four or five years be classed as anti-Soviet? I wrote it in the spirit of contemporary journalism and relied on my right to have it printed in a journal or to receive a competent review. Neither the first nor the second happened. I lost interest in the article and my control over it; its fate became independent of me.

Before us lies a difficult road of progress—not only technical progress, but social, moral and ethical too. Compared to the gigantic and inescapable problems that await our minds and hands, the question of my criminal case is episodic and trivial. According to one's desires it can be branded a "violation of the law" or interpreted as the use of one's rights and duties within the law and even in the interests of strengthening the authority of the law. The law, in my opinion, gains authority not when people are afraid to come close to its bounds, but when it offers a guarantee for working to the limit of one's capacity.

Previous investigators have charged that I was acting on the brink of the law. Well, what of it? That is my occupational hazard. In literary criticism the "golden mean" is the easiest way and it offers material compensations. But it leads down, not up. And each new generation continually strives to reach new heights along unknown roads. In this striving some fall, some break their necks and lose their strength—but this is the strict logic of life's struggle which is assigned to man.

I do not feel guilty before my conscience or before the law. As to whether I have, even for one moment, risen to the demands of the time and of duty—let first the court of public opinion and then the court of history decide.

HARVARD SERIES IN UKRAINIAN STUDIES

Edited by the Harvard Committee on Ukrainian Studies

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Jacket design by Miloš Janovsky