

Two Important Studies of Galicia

JOHN-PAUL HIMKA

YAROSLAV HRYTSAK is the director of the Institute for Historical Research at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and visiting associate professor at the Central European University in Budapest. One of Ukraine's most prominent liberal intellectuals, Hrytsak writes historical essays that often enliven the pages of *Krytyka*, Ukraine's equivalent of *The New York Review of Books*.¹ The monograph under review is entitled, in translation, "A Prophet in His Own Fatherland: Franko and His Society (1856–1886)."² This is not Hrytsak's first book about the poet and polymath Ivan Franko, but it is certainly his best, betraying many years of reading and reflecting, thinking, and rethinking. In 2007 Hrytsak's new biography of Franko won the "Best Ukrainian Book" prize in the nonfiction category in the competition sponsored by the weekly *Korespondent*. Very readable, this new biography is full of fresh perspectives. Hrytsak states in his introduction that "in the general hierarchy of scholarly values I place the discovery of new methods of conceptualization of already known facts above the collection of new facts" (20). For his new biography on Franko, Hrytsak chose an interesting illustration for every chapter and then interpreted the illustration in the text. This device is but a characteristic creative moment of Hrytsak's style.

Kai Struve, a somewhat younger scholar, was a research fellow at the Herder-Institut in Marburg from 1998 to 2002; and since that time, he has been a research fellow at the Simon-Dubnow-Institut in Leipzig. Struve has been publishing on Austrian Galicia since the mid-1990s, but *Bauern und Nation in Galizien* is his first monograph.³ Very substantial to start with, Struve's monograph is less essayistic than Hrytsak's and hence does not provide the same amount of pure reading pleasure, but it is more comprehensively researched and has better buttressed arguments. Struve has worked in manuscript and archival collections in Lviv, Warsaw, and Wrocław, but his most important primary sources are Galician periodicals. In addition to reading especially closely the major Polish and Ruthenian periodicals produced for the peasantry, Struve has also read and engaged hundreds of

¹See the excellent collection of his essays, not just from *Krytyka*: Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Strasti za natsionalizm. Istorychni ese* (Kiev, 2004).

²Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni. Franko ta ioho spil'nota, 1856–1886* (Kiev: Krytyka, 2006).

³Kai Struve, *Bauern und Nation in Galizien: Über Zugehörigkeit und soziale Emanzipation im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

secondary works on Galicia, including five by Hrytsak. (Hrytsak also cites Struve, including *Bauern und Nation*.) Struve's current research project is on the history and memory of interethnic relations under Soviet occupation, 1939–1941.

An East Central European *Intelligent*

An obscure branch of learning once flourished in Soviet Ukraine, but now it is down at the heel—*frankoznavstvo*, i.e., the study of the manifold works of Ivan Franko. As one might expect, this was a discipline that bore a close resemblance to hagiography. It studied Franko's life and works assiduously, commenting on almost all that the great man wrote and did. It had an irregular journal of its own, the book-length *Ivan Franko. Statti i materialy*, later incorporated as special issues of *Radians'ke literaturoznavstvo*. Of course, being a Soviet discipline, *frankoznavstvo* played down the nationalist element in Franko's thinking, highlighted his socialism and interest in Marxism, and avoided any topic that might have reflected badly on the person in the Soviet Ukrainian national pantheon second only to the all-Ukrainian national poet, Taras Shevchenko. The early Hrytsak was also an adept, publishing one of his first articles in *Radians'ke literaturoznavstvo. Ivan Franko. Statti i materialy* in 1985.

But *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni* is a far cry from the stuffy, prudish, and fawning productions of the old *frankoznavstvo*. In fact, those who do not know the old discipline will be missing half the fun of reading Hrytsak's biography, which brings to life the dusty bronze bust of Franko and makes the man a human being once more. An example is Hrytsak's treatment of Franko's sex life, not a typical topic for the old *frankoznavstvo*.⁴ Chapter 13 is devoted to "Franko and His Women." Hrytsak is interested in both life and times, so he sketches the relations between the sexes and the norms regulating them in various strata of Galician society.

Franko's youthful espousal of free love clashed with this rigorist environment. Franko was forever falling in love and making hot-headed marriage proposals. He also became involved in an unconventional relationship. His first serious love affair was with a priest's daughter, Olha Roshkevych. When Olha's father refused to allow her to marry the socialist Franko, the two lovers decided that Olha would enter into a fictive marriage with the seminarian Volodymyr Ozarkevych. Olha was to remain Franko's lover, but this was not a problem for the soon-to-be-ordained Volodymyr; he was the lover of a peasant girl whom the social norms of the era prohibited him from marrying. Volodymyr and Olha at first slept in separate rooms, but then when the cold weather set in, they slept in one bed with a mountain of pillows between them. Then as Franko began to grow indifferent to Olha, the pillows between her and Volodymyr also began to disappear (320–22). The chapter is a good reminder that provincial as it may have been, Galicia was also Austria.

One of the most interesting themes that Hrytsak develops in his biography is that Franko very consciously fashioned his self-representation as a son of the people, a peasant boy borne into higher social spheres by the power of his talent. Hrytsak convincingly demonstrates, however, that Franko's real milieu of origin was the petty gentry, not the peasantry. His close

⁴"Among the numerous publications on the theme of his biography and his activities, we cannot find a single one that would discuss Franko's role in propagating new forms of marriage and sexual relations. This theme was and, to a great extent, remains under a taboo" (331).

friend and ideological comrade Mykhailo Pavlyk was the genuine article, a youth of truly humble peasant origins; and Pavlyk always suspected that Franko's more elevated birth made him more susceptible to the attractions of clerical and bourgeois society. Franko was never on the peasant marriage market, for example, and the women he was interested in were teachers, priests' daughters, postal clerks, and petty gentry. Peasants in the 1860s and 1870s, Hrytsak argues, did not value education beyond the most elementary level; they considered education a distraction from useful, physical labor. That Franko was sent to gymnasium and university shows the influence of the petty gentry values on his mother's side of the family (76–77).

Peasants certainly did not consider Franko a peasant, especially once he became educated. When Franko returned to his native village for a while (1881–1883), the peasants who encountered him believed Franko had lost his mind. According to one peasant:

Entire days, they say, he wanders like a crazy man in the woods, so that people are afraid to go into the forest. At night, they say, he walks around the house, talks to himself, smiles—sits at the table, writes something, then again stands and walks. He keeps this up the whole night. And he gave me a good scare. I was walking to Boryslav, and he was walking back from Boryslav on Popeliv Mountain. He was shaggy like an old man, his pants rolled up to his knees, boots on his walking stick, talking to himself and laughing. I went right to the other side of the road and took to my heels" (256).

And, of course, Franko's ability to influence the peasantry was very limited.

Franko supported himself by journalism, not simply in the Ukrainian press, but also in the Polish press of Galicia and the Russian Empire, in the Viennese press, and in the Russian press as well. Hrytsak devotes a chapter (5, "Between the Small and Large Fatherland") to the various cultural possibilities open to Franko. Hrytsak shows that although Galicia had limitations, it could be considered a German land. It was certainly not impossible for a writer from Galicia to earn recognition in German/Austrian literature—witness Franko's older contemporary Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and younger contemporary Joseph Roth. Franko, with his petty-gentry background, could also have easily entered Polish society and become a Polish writer—in fact, he did write fiction as well as journalistic pieces in Polish. For a time after Franko first moved to Lviv, the Russophile orientation among the Ruthenians attracted Franko; and afterwards Russian literature and Ukrainians from the Russian Empire deeply interested him—there was a Russian option too. However, Franko soon understood that the one opportunity he had to make a real mark was in Ukrainian literature. As Hrytsak notes in a later chapter (16, "How Franko Became a Genius"), "when Franko entered the Galician-Ruthenian literary arena, the post of national poet remained vacant" (393). Hrytsak then devotes a brilliant few pages comparing Franko with other contenders for that post, especially the Russophile priest Ioann Naumovych.

Of the many interesting points Hrytsak makes about Franko, I will just mention one more: Franko the socialist-nationalist as modernizer. Hrytsak agrees with an earlier biographer of Franko, Oleksii Dei, that Franko stands out in nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature for his poeticization of technology. Hrytsak quotes Franko's opinion that "the invention of steam engines, telegraphs, phonographs, microphones, electric engines, etc., is introducing in the world, who knows, perhaps even a bigger revolution than the bloody French revolution" (224). Hrytsak also analyses Franko's interest in and borrowings from the great formulator of the religion of progress Auguste Comte. In a particularly risky passage in his book, Hrytsak compares Franko's vision of progress, national liberation, and social equality to the impulses that established the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR. He does this, he says, to show the tremendous mobilizing power of the visions Franko shared (428). "In the conditions of

a post-traditional—and in fact still very traditional—society, every political project required personification. Franko became the symbol of the dynamic modern culture” (439).

Peasants and National Politics

Because of its life-and-times nature, Hrytsak’s biography of Franko also has interesting things to say about peasants and their marriage patterns (66), family and social relationships (70ff), and geographical knowledge (134). I detect, however, a slight tendency to exoticize the peasantry, to depict them and their culture as stranger and more irrational than they in fact were (see, e.g., 138, 140).

Struve is interested less in the anthropology and traditional outlook of the peasantry than he is in peasants as rational political actors. For him, ideas about pre-Christian elements in the peasants’ worldview are of interest only in so far as their articulation by romantic intellectuals indicates that educated people were beginning to regard the folk as the repository of ancient national values (42, 59). He opens his book by tracing the image of the peasantry in Polish high culture in Galicia. The original romantic enthusiasm for the folk was doused in 1846 when the Polish gentry rose in rebellion against the Habsburgs and the peasants turned them in to the Austrian officials or else slaughtered them on the spot. When the Polish insurrection of 1863–1864 was defeated in the Russian partition, national activists undertook “organic work,” i.e., practical measures to build institutions and improve the Polish economy. This program of activity had some rural dimensions. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the Young Poland artistic movement became enchanted with the peasantry, and some of its exponents married peasant women. But relations between the Polish upper class and the peasants were long clouded by the memory of serfdom, which had only been abolished in 1848. When the Polish elites were engaged in the struggle for Galician autonomy in the late 1860s, they found it impossible to gain support from peasants. Explaining why peasant deputies to the Galician diet refused to support autonomy, a Polish peasant deputy told his social betters: “We remember you quite well and we don’t want to have you a second time.” The wounds from the beatings they received under serfdom had only recently healed, he said. Although the deputy could neither read nor write, he wanted his objection sent directly to the emperor himself. “We Polish peasants do not want autonomy, because we are afraid of you” (119).

The Ruthenian national movement had fewer difficulties with the peasantry, since there were very few landlords who were Ruthenians. Some of the clergy and intelligentsia, like Father Naumovych mentioned earlier, were talented propagandists among the peasants. (And in the Polish case, too, the first effective champion and mobilizer of the peasantry was a priest, Father Stanisław Stojalowski.) Because relations between educated Ruthenians and peasants were not as antagonistic as in the Polish case, the Ruthenians placed more emphasis on popular education than the Poles did, at least before the 1880s (149). The Polish Agricultural Circles suffered from rivalry for influence between peasants and gentry. Ruthenian reading clubs also witnessed conflicts between priests and peasants, but perhaps not to the same extent.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, more Poles began to think of the peasantry, rather than the gentry, as the basis of the nation. It was no longer a case of peasants merely identifying *with* the nation, which had been the original intent of the educated classes in recruiting peasants to politics; instead, peasants were beginning to think of themselves *as* the nation (348). Struve notes that this change in the political culture entailed a new kind of nationalism, ethnic nationalism (204). Democratization is not always liberal or, at least, it can exhibit contradictions, as Marxists might put it.

Struve offers a counterintuitive insight about religion and the entry of peasants into national politics. We might think that the nationalization process involved secularization, but if so, this was not the case in the generation that made the transition. He points out that growing political awareness went hand in hand with growing popular piety (214). In fact, Struve includes a fascinating section on how important the religious component was in Polish patriotic events and pilgrimages in which the peasants participated (326–35; see also 346).

However, modernizing processes also facilitated the peasants' integration into politics. Particularly by the twentieth century, the school had become a major instrument of nationalization (304). Migration processes also encouraged processes of national self-identification (321–22). (Curiously, however, and also counterintuitively, reimmigrants from North America did not introduce radical change in their villages; instead, they exhibited the same degree of traditionalist thinking as other peasants [320].)

After his detailed analysis of peasantry and national politics in Galicia, Struve offers an important qualification about the focus of his book on the very last page:

The increasing national structuring of the society did not mean that the entire population identified with nations in a stronger fashion. For many, national identities were not very important, their own national identification was not unequivocal or superior to their religious and social affiliations or even up to World War I also to their attachment to the emperor. But nations more and more occupied the public sphere, and they increasingly determined the structure of the political process (441).

Jews

Because the nationalization processes of the Ruthenians and Poles had an unsettling impact on the Jewish population of Galicia, both books have chapters dedicated to the subject (Hrytsak's chapter 14, "Franko and His Jews"; and Struve's chapter 8, "National Inclusion of the Peasants and Social Exclusion of the Jews: A Historical Connection").

Franko's attitudes toward Jews changed over time and also contained contradictory features. In the mid-1880s, he evaluated the Jewish role in the Galician economy so negatively that he thought it best for the crownland if all the Jews would emigrate. Franko also thought that "Jewish arrogance and provocation" were a major factor in provoking the pogroms in Russian Ukraine in 1881 (352). In the 1890s, however, as anti-Semitism became an even more prominent political force in the empire, Franko repudiated it. Some of his fiction depicts the grasping, heartless Jews of stereotypes, whereas other works are written with great sympathy for Jewish characters. Hrytsak wrestles mightily with Franko's legacy, trying to identify and save what he considers positive in it. Hrytsak concludes that, for all the problems in his writings about Jews, Franko played a pioneering role in reconceptualizing the place of Jews in modern Ukrainian thought and was ultimately one of those who made it possible for Jews to integrate into the Ukrainian national project.⁵

Struve's insightful chapter shows how national activists fanned tensions between peasants and Jews, building their nation against the Jewish "other." The activists railed against Jews for promoting alcohol consumption in the village. The peasants resisted this censure because the ceremonial consumption of vodka seemed so essential to their traditional way of life. Some peasants could not imagine a village mayor who took the oath of abstinence—how,

⁵Hrytsak's thinking on this issue was influenced by Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Reconceptualizing the Alien: Jews in Modern Ukrainian Thought," *Ab Imperio*, 2003, no. 4: 519–80. See also Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representations and Identity* (New Haven, forthcoming 2009).

without drinking, could he do any communal business (409, n. 90)? Although the activists also urged the peasants to find “Christian stores,” many peasants found Christian storekeepers rather unsettling. They were used to the Jews (424). The Christian/national/cooperative stores in this period did not threaten the Jews because the general improvement of the economy meant that all trade, including Jewish trade, flourished. As the memory of serfdom receded and as transportation, trade, and the circulation of money transformed the rural economy, Jews replaced the landlords “as the most important economic rivals of the peasants”⁶ (430). Struve ends his chapter by stating that the inclusion of the peasant into the nation went hand in hand with the exclusion of the Jews. Both books contain anecdotal material showing that peasants traditionally valued the opinion of the Jews, who were understood to have a wider view on the world, and that the nationalist intelligentsia wanted to replace the Jews as the peasants’ trusted advisors (Hrytsak 133; Struve 396).

Along with other important recent contributions,⁷ these books enrich our understanding of an interesting, multiethnic region of old Austria.

JOHN-PAUL HIMKA is professor of history at the University of Alberta.

⁶Struve makes good use of an excellent recent study of Jews as modernizers of the Galician economy: Sławomir Tokarski, *Ethnic Conflict and Economic Development: Jews in Galician Agriculture 1868–1914* (Warsaw, 2003).

⁷These include Harald Binder, *Galizien in Wien: Parteien, Wahlen, Fraktionen und Abgeordnete im Übergang zur Massenpolitik*, *Studien zur Geschichte der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie*, 29 (Vienna, 2005), reviewed in *Austrian History Yearbook* 38 (2007): 251–52; Paul R. Magocsi and Chris Hann, eds., *Galicia: A Multicultural Land* (Toronto, 2005); Andrii Zaiarniuk, *Idiomy emansypatsii. “Vyzvol’ni” proiekty i halyts’ke selo u seredyni XIX stolittia* (Kiev, 2007). I was unable to review the latter two books, since I contributed to one and supervised the dissertation on which the other was based.