

Foreword

The Kiev Mohyla Academy in Ukrainian History

1.

Almost forty years ago, in the winter of 1943–44, I gave a lecture at the Ukrainian Research Institute of the University of Berlin entitled “Čym bula is ščo dala ukrajinstvu Kyjivs’ka Mohyljans’ka akademija? [What was the Kiev Mohyla Academy and what did it contribute to the Ukrainian identity?]”¹ In that paper I severely criticized the academy on three grounds:

(1) Although both teachers and students were perfectly aware that only seventy years earlier the Poles had transformed their vernacular into a literary language, they made no comparable effort to forge their Ukrainian language into a literary idiom at the Kiev Mohyla Academy, and thereby wasted an opportunity to provide the foundation for the development of a Ukrainian national culture. Instead, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the academy promoted an Orthodox, pre-secular unity, both religious and political, the visible symbol of which was the Church Slavonic *lingua sacra*.

(2) They failed to acknowledge the true character and importance of the revolution led by Bohdan Xmel’nyč’kyj (1648–1657). The famed *Sinopsis*, published in Kiev in 1674, completely ignored the Ukrainian Cossacks as a force in the history of the Rus’ people; it offered instead an artificial scheme of East European history based on dynastic ties and the “transfer” of the Rus’ capital from Kiev to Vladimir-on-the-Kljaz’ma to Moscow.

(3) The academy produced highly educated young men who became mercenary traders in the religious and cultural “commodities” of the time. They showed no loyalty to their homeland and no understanding of the emerging Ukrainian Cossack polity.

¹ The lecture was to be published in Lviv in the journal *Students’kyj prapor*, which was discontinued during ensuing military and political events. Last year Professor Bohdan Lonchyna (Detroit), once editor of the student journal, sent me the lecture’s typescript, which he had discovered among his private papers.

In the lecture I reached the severe and uncompromising conclusion that the academy's scholasticism delayed the Ukrainian national revival for at least two centuries.

2.

Although taken separately each statement in that lecture of forty years ago retains its validity today, my overall evaluation of the academy's role in Ukrainian history was certainly wrong, because I looked at its development from too narrow a perspective.

Transformation from a pre-secular to a secular worldview has occurred only once in the history of mankind, and that was in West European, Renaissance Catholic civilization. Its precondition was the readiness of Romano-Germanic barbarians to learn and then to absorb Roman intellectual concepts, first in their Christianized version (the Carolingian Renaissance of the ninth century, the scholasticism of the twelfth to the fourteenth century), and then, with the rediscovery of the ancient Greek concept of humanism, in their civic and political form (*civitas, libertas, res publica, consules, patria, senatus, natio*, etc.). The transformation eventually resulted in the replacement of feudal and patrimonial political orders by polities of estates. The Italian Renaissance stimulated intellectual commitment and gave rise to a spirit of limitless discovery; the Reformation, with its concept of man's immediate relation to God, fostered the development of vernaculars. There followed the clear separation of church and state and the birth of secular national cultures based on their respective vernaculars, which through the translation of the Holy Writ acquired the *dignitas* needed to embrace an entire nation.

While these crucial developments were going on in the West, the Rus' state, in the form of the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia, was just suspended between its inherited Orthodoxy and the Latin Catholicism developing in neighboring Hungary and Poland, and then, in 1340, ceased to exist altogether. Since it had remained essentially patrimonial in structure, it disappeared from the political arena with the demise of its dynasty. The only elements of its political past that remained were the Orthodox religion and its tool, the artificial and underdeveloped Church Slavonic language.

The gap between the Catholic progression in the West and the Orthodox standstill in the East was recognized by the Rus'-Ukrainian intellectuals who began to join the new Catholic Polish

polity between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century. Since the patrimonial Rus' state had dissolved before it could become a polity of estates of the Western type, a schizophrenic mentality developed among "progressive" Rus' intellectuals. On the one hand, they sentimentalized their Rus' cultural traditions and thought of them as *gens*. On the other, they regarded Polish Catholic political achievements as constituting a *natio*. In this way it was possible, even acceptable, for an individual to remain at the same time a member of the pre-secular patrimonial *gens* (*gente Ruthenus*) and a member of the Polish Catholic polity of estates or *natio* (*natione Polonus*). The concept of *gente Ruthenus*, *natione Polonus*, fatal for future Ukrainian development, was first formulated by Stanisław Orichovius-Orzechowski (1513–1566), a Roman Catholic canon of Peremyśl' who was himself of Rus' origin.

3.

By the time of the Union of Brest (1596), which, after some 250 years of dormancy, forced the Orthodox Rus' into action, the die had already been cast. The term *gens* in connection with the Orthodox Rus' already meant a people living in a Catholic state, using Church Slavonic rather than their own vernacular as a literary language, without aspiring to statehood or to a secular culture. On the other hand, *natio*, referring to the Polish Catholics, meant a polity of estates having a national secular culture expressed in both Latin and Polish. The Polish *res publica* could readily become *patria* or *ojczyzna* for *gentes* like the Orthodox Rus'.

An aspiring Orthodox activist living in East Central Europe at that time could not afford to belong to any *one* world: he had to be, as Ihor Ševčenko aptly describes Peter Mohyla, a man of many worlds. Mohyla was not an innovator. He was, instead, the most outstanding product of the educational and religious institutions in Eastern Europe of the time. Once in a position of authority, Mohyla simply perfected the system the Orthodox Rus' had developed after reviving Kiev as a cultural center in the wake of the Union of Brest.

Mohyla's main concern was to adopt the latest achievements of Western culture for the purpose of defending Orthodox Rus'. But the fourth and fifth decades of the seventeenth century were no longer a time of Humanism, discovery, and Reformation in the West; they were, instead, a time of Counter-Reformation and the

Baroque. To the universal historian the unusual situation of Rus'—introduced to the Counter-Reformation without having experienced the Reformation, and to the Baroque without having known the Renaissance—is intriguing. It was as if a grand upper story in a modern edifice of culture had been laid out, with no foundation and no floors underneath to hold it up.

Today this is not intended as criticism. Mohyla and his contemporaries did not have the advantage of our three and a half centuries of hindsight. In founding the Mohyla school, they followed the most acclaimed and most modern educational models of their time, in the hope that their efforts would benefit the Orthodox Rus' religious and ethnic communities. In some ways their hopes were realized, as the contributions to this special issue of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* will show.

4.

The fact that in 1979–1980 the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University published a second *Eucharisterion* seemed to commit us to study the milieu that had produced the first—that is, to study the Kiev Mohyla Academy, its founder, its scholars, students, and legacy.

I am grateful to Frank E. Sysyn, associate editor of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, for his initiative in soliciting contributions on all aspects of the historical and cultural acumen of the *Academia Mohyleana*.² This special issue of *HUS* is our modest tribute and expression of gratitude to that extraordinary school on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of its founding. May it be a first step in the scholarly investigation and better understanding of our own institutional roots. For academic, intellectual Ukraine, whatever its achievements and failings, has its origin in Peter Mohyla's creation, the Kiev Mohyla Academy.

OMELJAN PRITSAK

² In Kiev itself only Kiev State University has commemorated the anniversary. In 1981 it republished Zoja Xyžnjak's *Kyjevo-Mohyljans'ka akademija*, in a revised second edition.