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Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866-1934)

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## OBITUARIES

### MYKHAILO HRUSHEVSKY (1866—1934)

A GREAT Ukrainian figure has passed away. Mykhailo Hrushevsky is dead. . . . As historian of Ukraine, his immense activity has written a new page in the history of his people. After a long interval of a hundred and fifty years it was he who renewed the tradition of the sovereigns of Ukraine, those Hetmans whose life and work he had studied with such energy and talent.

Hrushevsky was the first President of the democratic republic of Ukraine on its proclamation in 1917, more than that—he was its founder, the chief inspirer of the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainian autonomy had received a mortal blow after the defeat of Mazepa and his ally Charles XII in the Battle of Poltava. The repression of Peter the Great had a terrible effect on Ukraine. At the time of Catherine II the country was deprived of all its liberties and became no more than a simple province of Russia. It was thought to be completely subjected and crushed, but its revival soon declared itself in the appearance of a real genius, a poet who at the same time was the prophet of his country, Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861). The movement continued to develop, and it was Dragomanov (1841–1895) who rationalised it, modernised it, and gave it a political programme; but his time was a heavy one for Ukraine, and he himself was no more than an *émigré*.

It was only in the 20th century that the Ukrainian movement assumed a clearer form, penetrated into the mass of the people, and became a great political factor. The field of national activity was considerably widened. This was the period of Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who for a long time became the real head of the Ukrainian nation. In 1917, at the outset of the revolution in Ukraine, his popularity was fabulous. He was quite naturally elected president of the central Rada, the constituent assembly of an Ukraine that was being born again. His experience of the political life of Western Europe, his profound knowledge both of Ukraine and of Russia, his daring and his political temperament contributed much to the organisation and working of the government apparatus of the Ukrainian republic. But the political part played by Hrushevsky ended too rapidly at the beginning of 1918. It was the coup *d'état* of Skoropadsky that overthrew him. Later, after the re-establishment of democracy in Ukraine under the Directory, and throughout a long and bitter war against Red Moscow, Hrushevsky was no longer prominent. The

daring struggle which Ukraine had to conduct called for simple formulas, demanded a line of action comprehensible for the whole people. Hrushevsky was too complex for that, and at the same time not firm enough to stand for a sole and single political conception, to become a man of a single idea. It is impossible in this short notice to make clear all the moral and political tragedy of Hrushevsky. Here we can only state the final result. Simon Petlyura took his place as the spiritual leader of the Ukrainian people.

Hrushevsky finished his political career at the point which finishes the great awakening of the Ukrainian people, when a nation already conscious of itself is beginning to seek for practical ways of accomplishing its ideal. Hrushevsky remained above all a great "awakener," one of the great precursors of the resurrection of Ukraine, whom we do not hesitate to put beside Shevchenko and Dragomanov.

Historian and statesman, Hrushevsky served only a single cause, and all his activity was directed towards the awakening of his people, the liberation of Ukraine. Among peoples who are awakening from a long sleep the study of history always plays an enormous part, and nowhere else are historians held in such honour as a Palacki with the Czechs or a Hrushevsky with the Ukrainians. The past speaks, and becomes a living call to action. By his history of Ukraine, Hrushevsky aroused others to work; but certainly and before all, it is the past that summoned Hrushevsky himself to play his proper historical part. It was in the history of his country that he sought a lesson for the present and for the future.

As a historian, Hrushevsky must be regarded as one of the greatest of his time, a scholar with a complete mastery of the modern methods of historical research. He is the greatest historian of Ukraine, though this country had already had such remarkable scholars and talented historians as Kostomarov and Hrushevsky's own great teacher, Vladimir Antonovich, from whom Hrushevsky inherited all his critical ability, his perfect knowledge of sources, his profound ideas on the past of the Ukrainian people. Under the scholarly direction of Antonovich, as later under that of Hrushevsky, a great number of documents have appeared on the history of Ukraine. Hrushevsky himself wrote a large number of books and pamphlets and articles; bibliography has reckoned them as numbering 1,700; but apart from some special studies of great value, we have his *History of Ukraine*,<sup>1</sup> in nine large volumes, which is his fundamental work. He begins with the study of prehistoric times

<sup>1</sup> M. Hrushevsky, *Istoria Ukrainy-Rusi*.

in Ukraine, and his last volume is devoted to the period of Hetman Bogdan Hmelnitsky. Thus his work remains unfinished. For all who wish to study the past of Ukraine it is of capital importance. As Hrushevsky wanted to leave a complete study, he could not rest content with an analysis of monographs devoted to such and such an epoch or problem of Ukrainian history; there were still too many gaps in the knowledge of our past. Hrushevsky, then, relied directly on the original documents, which he examined with care, and of which he gave a masterly criticism both in his fundamental history and in his special studies.

His work not only gives a detailed account of all the political history of Ukraine. Whole volumes are devoted to the cultural development of the country, its social, economic and juridical problems.

It is also Hrushevsky who has scientifically established the setting of the history of his people. He is opposed to those who treat Ukraine as a sort of annexe to the history of Russia. The Russian historians, from Karamzin onwards, have studied Russian history as beginning with that of the principality of Kiev in the 10th and 13th centuries, and have thus followed the tradition of the old Muscovite annalists, who regarded history from the viewpoint of the dynastic principle, for they simply followed out the story of the dynasty of Ruric, with his descendants in Kiev, Novgorod, Vladimir and Moscow. Just like these chroniclers of the 16th century, Russian historians commence their narrative with the history of the Grand Duchy of Kiev, and then explain how the centre of Russian history was transferred to Vladimir, to Moscow, and finally to St. Petersburg. The history of Ukraine appears only in episodes in their account, when they speak of the Lithuano-Ukrainian State, of Hetman Bogdan Hmelnitsky, of Mazeppa, etc. Thus the history of Ukraine, as Hrushevsky put it, became simply a series of "membra disjecta." Hrushevsky insists on the propriety of treating separately the history of two peoples, the Muscovite and the Ukrainian, as also he would give separate treatment to White Russia. According to him, Muscovite history will itself gain by this; for in seeking the direct connection between the Kiev period and that of Vladimir, Russian historians too often failed to study seriously enough the historical past of the Muscovite people in its own territory.

As to Ukraine, according to Hrushevsky it is to it that belongs the period of the Grand Duchy of Kiev. Life itself does not stop in Ukraine—neither during the decline of Kiev, nor during the existence of the feudal Lithuano-Ukrainian State, nor during the

Polish domination, nor, finally, under the Cossack republic. These are perhaps very different historical processes; but they are originally linked together by the principal actor in this tragedy in several acts, the Ukrainian people, and also by that territory which is the stage of the whole story. But apart from this, each of these periods has naturally influenced the one which succeeded it; and without this chronological study, which goes back to the root of an event in each preceding period, the history of the Ukrainian people would never be scientifically grounded.<sup>2</sup>

Among the works of Hrushevsky one cannot fail to place by the side of his masterly *History of Ukraine* the five volumes of his *History of Ukrainian Literature*, in which he develops in an even more fascinating way the ideas which are scattered over the nine volumes of his *History*. He finds much room for folklore, popular songs and anything which expresses the spirit and beliefs of the Ukrainian people.

Hrushevsky has written several popular historical works in Ukrainian, Russian and French. His illustrated *History of Ukraine* in one volume is very highly appreciated in that country. There is also a single volume of Hrushevsky's *History* translated into French.<sup>3</sup> In making this rapid sketch of Hrushevsky's work, one must not omit his course of sociology, "Pogatky Hromadinstva,"<sup>4</sup> which shows the full scope of his scientific work.

To the portrait of Hrushevsky as statesman and historian must needs be added that of Hrushevsky as a great organiser of the scientific and cultural life of the Ukrainian people. Educated at the University of Kiev, it is there that he began his academic career. On the recommendation of his master, Vladimir Antonovich, he became in 1894 Professor at the University of Lwów, where during the Austrian domination he was able to lecture in Ukrainian. He was at once elected president of the Learned Society of Shevchenko at Lwów, and there soon proved that he possessed exceptional energy and an organising talent of quite the first order. In a few years he succeeded in founding a whole school of his pupils, and he well knew how to utilise all those around him for the cause which he

<sup>2</sup> See a study of Hrushevsky on his scheme of the history of the Eastern Slavs in the *Zbornik statey po slavyanovedenii*, ed. Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, 1904. The same subject has recently been very well treated by Professor Doroshenko, "Was ist osteuropäische Geschichte." Zur Abgrenzung der ukrainischen und russischen Geschichte. *Zeitschrift für die Osteuropäische Geschichte*.

<sup>3</sup> M. Hrushevsky. *Histoire de L'Ukraine*. Paris, 1920.

<sup>4</sup> Vienna, 1928.

served. Here is a simple list of his work of twenty years at the head of this Society :—

The Annals of the Society (*Zapysky*) which, instead of appearing as heretofore, only once a year, came out very much more frequently. The number of volumes issued during this period reached a hundred.

Fifteen volumes of collections (*Zbirnyk*) of the historical and philological section.

Twenty-five volumes of the *Library of History*.

Seven volumes of the *Ukrainian Archives*.

Twenty volumes devoted to jurisprudence.

Several volumes devoted to economic and social problems. (*Studii z pola suspilnykh nauk i statystyky*).

Collected volumes devoted to philological studies, to natural sciences, and to mathematics.

Special commissions of the Society also published numbers of volumes under the indefatigable direction of Hrushevsky. Thus this great scholar transformed the Learned Society of Shevchenko into a real Academy of Ukrainian sciences.

As soon as it was possible to organise a learned society in Kiev (1908), it was he who became its president and the organiser of its work. He was also organiser and chief editor for twenty years of the best Ukrainian literary review, *Literaturno-naukovy Vistnyk* (1898), which played a part of the first importance in the intellectual life of Ukraine.<sup>5</sup>

Such are the principal stages in this astonishing life. During the Great War he was arbitrarily arrested by the Tsarist Government and deported from Ukraine to the centre of Russia. The Revolution of 1917, as we have mentioned at the outset of this article, brought him to the climax of his life. But the Revolution also ruined him completely. From 1919 to 1923 he was an emigrant and lived successively in Paris, Geneva, Vienna and Prague. He believed he could reconcile himself with the Soviet Government, for which he was bitterly criticised by some of his compatriots, and returned to Ukraine, where he became a member of the Academy of Sciences of Kiev. In spite of the great difficulties of life under the Soviet régime, he gave fresh proofs of his energy, which remained as youthful as ever. He again published a historical review, *Ukraine*, and a number of studies devoted to special questions in Ukrainian history or that of its different regions. Here he wrote the ninth volume of his history of Ukraine. It was precisely the appearance of this

<sup>5</sup> See Professor A. Lotocki's book, *Notes et Souvenirs* (2 parts). Warsaw, 1933. Published by the Ukrainian Scientific Institute.

volume that launched against him a vehement campaign in the Soviet press. As before, under Tsarism, he was deported to Moscow and St. Petersburg. But that was his real decline; he lost his strength and vigour and he became blind. He lived in great misery, maintained by his wife and his daughter Catherine who, like him, was a remarkable student of sociology. When he was at the end of his strength, the Soviet Government allowed him to go to Kislovodsk, and it is in that Caucasian watering place, which he loved and where he had lived with his father in childhood, that his life came to an end. The Soviet Government, with a sort of irony, now allowed his remains to be carried back to Kiev.

Thus ended this extraordinary life, so full, so abundant. Wherever he passed, life sprang up. He was an inspiration. Those who had the pleasure of knowing him and of being near him will always retain their memory of the sparkling intelligence, the admirable spirit of Hrushevsky, so kindly and so full of that humour which is characteristic of the people that gave Nicholas Gogol to the world. A great historian, a great Ukrainian, has now in his turn passed into history. It is history that will have to judge his actions and his life, so full of devotion in the service of his country, Ukraine.

A. SHULGIN.

### V. V. KUIBYSHEV

THE Communist Party in the USSR have lost one of their ablest leaders in V. V. Kuibyshev, President of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), who died on 25 January, 1935, at the age of forty-six from sclerosis of the heart.

Kuibyshev joined the Russian Social-Democratic Movement at the age of sixteen, and from that time worked incessantly with the Left wing of the Party. He took an active part in the Revolution of 1905, and during the years of reaction (1906-1908) was engaged in Party work in Siberia (Omsk, Petropavlovsk and Tomsk). In 1908 he was arrested at St. Petersburg and sent to Siberia for five years. In 1915 he was again arrested and sent for three years, this time to Irkutsk; but he managed to escape from there to Samara. Here he was arrested for a third time, and was sent to the remote Turukhansky Kray for five years.

The Revolution of 1917 opened for Kuibyshev vast possibilities for the utilisation of his tremendous energy and his capacity for organisation. During the Civil War he was actively engaged in fighting the insurrection of Dutov at Orenburg and Uralsk. He took