

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PYLYP ORLYK\*

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We shall try to characterize Pylyp Orlyk as a person and as a statesman.

Upon close observation, it will become clear that we do not have here a figure with a simple nature, uncomplicated, or hewed from one block of stone. His is entirely a baroque figure, of uneven, meandering lines. By nature, Orlyk was part sanguine, part melancholy, with many shifts from the greatest optimism to the deepest despair. The lyricism and melancholy of his nature have a Ukrainian tint. A sensitive and passionate person with a sincere heart, he experienced intensely the good and the bad vicissitudes in his many-sided life. He was spirited, interested in everything, did not like solitude and sought companionship. *Nulla societas, nulla conversatio*<sup>1</sup>—this was a state which could lead him to boredom and despair. He needed confidants to whom he could ease his heart and enthusiastically confide his secrets. It must be admitted that at times this was not done without a cunning, shrewd, purely Ukrainian speculativeness. Accompanied by warm feeling and sincerity, it often operated (especially with foreigners) as a means of attaining certain political objectives. The desire for tranquility, for pure golden science was alien to his whole nature. His was that which the Germans call *Kampfnatur*—restless, impatient, eager for new impressions. No wonder his many-years sojourn in Salonika seemed to him a misery, “a prison.” With all his strength he tried to return from this prison in order to have the chance to busy himself with vital and fruitful work. Perhaps he liked those moments of his journey best when it came to casting off from the old shore to start a new unknown life. And how he profited from the journey’s

\* This is a reprint from *Het'man Pylyp Orlyk (1672-1742)*, Ohlyad yoho politychnoyi diyal'nosty (Warsaw, 1937), presenting the book's last chapter, “Zahal'na kharakterystyka,” pp. 173-181.

<sup>1</sup> *Diyariy Het'mana Pylypa Orlyka*, Warsaw, 1936, Vol. 1, p. 123.

impressions, and with what interest he closely observed the churches, historical monuments, customs, people! This was not a Muscovite traveller, who with lamentation and sadness, as if sent to his death, goes forth into a distant, terrible Europe, thrust forth in pursuit of knowledge by the heavy fist of Peter I. For Pylyp Orlyk, Europe was his very own, closely related to him and interesting in all its aspects.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Hetman was destined to lead a very hard life and sometimes to make certain compromises, we must acknowledge that his spirit was and remained honest and sincere, capable of the greatest restraint and self-sacrifice. The pleasures of life had no great influence on him; personal enrichment was not a driving force in his life and in his political activities. True, the hard material circumstances, in which he found himself while in emigration, oppressed him, burdened him with many troubles, forced him to search for means of support, and to apply to various European governments with memorials and petitions. Yet he did not have himself alone in mind, but rather either his large family and associates whom he had to support, or the Ukrainian cause, which became the true interest of his life. A model family man and tender father, the Hetman deeply felt the misery in which his wife and children found themselves, and bitterly mourned the death of his son Jacob and, later, of his daughter Anastasia. In general his relations with people were characteristic of his natural tenderheartedness and humanity.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, the most beautiful feature of his nature is that devotion with which he acted towards the people who greatly influenced his fate: toward his teacher Stefan Yavorsky, toward Hetman Mazepa and Charles XII. It was Mazepa who thrust him on to the path which brought him to emigration, to wandering about the world without means of support, with almost unattainable political tasks on his shoulders. Yet we never hear words of reproach from him. The memory of

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandr Lazarevsky, "Malorossiiskie pospolitnye krest'yane (1648-1783)," *Zapiski Chernigovskago Statisticheskago Komiteta*, 1866, I, p. 35.

Mazepa was pure in his eyes because he saw in him a sincere Ukrainian patriot, and so thought of him in his diary, which evidently was not meant for strangers' eyes.<sup>3</sup> When he sharply criticized Danylo Apostol, it was not only from motives of competitive-political or purely personal character. The "treason" of Apostol is the argument he uses, reminding himself of the circumstances which caused Apostol to run away from Mazepa to Tsar Peter. Above all, Orlyk's deep religiosity is apparent, especially when one reads his diary, where this feature stands out with extraordinary clarity. His whole Weltanschauung was influenced by pioussness: in him it was simple, strong, organic and, at the same time, theoretically well-founded. When in Kraków (May, 1721) he learned of the death of his beloved son Jacob, there spontaneously burst forth from his long-suffering breast: *Dominus dedit, Dominus accepit, Sit nomen Domini benedictum in saecula...*<sup>4</sup> During his travels in Europe, he never failed to look for a church where he could pray to God. He always fulfilled church practises zealously even when ill (for example, in 1722 in Khotyn,<sup>5</sup> when he overexerted himself in order not to miss the Orthodox divine liturgy). Religious questions interested him extremely. With a lively interest and eagerness he entered theological discussions with the Jesuit fathers, with Catholic priests, and Orthodox priests, including the Metropolitan, bringing up the matter of the schism, the Church Union, profound dogmas of the church, etc. The ritualistic side of religion also drew his attention. With what disgust he speaks in his diary of the custom of public meals in Greek churches in the Balkans. He noticed these because people not only ate but also drank "blessed whiskey" in God's very sanctuary. Perhaps, this was one of the motives which, in the well-known memorial of

<sup>3</sup> It must not be forgotten that Orlyk's letter to Stefan Yavorsky of 1721, from which most can be learned about Mazepa, was an ordinary political maneuver.

<sup>4</sup> *Diyariy Het'mana Pylypa Orlyka*, Warsaw, 1936, Vol. 1, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

1727, led him to mention the evil condition, unknown in the Ukraine, of Orthodoxy in the Greek Church, and on the basis of that to propose to the Vatican the conversion of the Ukraine to Catholicism, which would be easy as soon as the eyes of Ukrainians were open to the true condition of the Greek Church. Certainly it was no more than an ordinary political maneuver for achieving aid from the Pope in the matter of acquiring the Hetman's mace in the Ukraine. But, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Hetman treated the Catholic Church very favorably and maintained close ties with the Catholic clergy. However, his relations with Protestantism were cool and, with the Church Union, even unfavorable. With outright disgust, he looked upon the Mohammedans as representatives of paganism. Here a Christian conscience made his many steps on Turkish soil difficult and contradictory to his religious convictions.

For his time, the Hetman was an unusually enlightened person, and that according to European standards. He knew several European languages and had mastery of the Latin tongue. The beginning of his education was, without doubt, established in the Kievan Academy. In his letters and memorials, written in Latin and other languages, he stands out as a rhetorician and a poet of the Academy, with that special pathos in style which so well characterizes him and his alma mater. Classical authors such as Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny, Vergil, etc., were very well known to him. During his wanderings in Macedonia he was never without Fénelon's *Telemachus*. His scholarly interests lay more or less in the realm of theology, history and politics. He eagerly read works by famous French preachers. He was interested in legal problems as presented by contemporary authors. As a politician he derived his knowledge of world events from French, Italian and Dutch newspapers (especially the latter) which, at that time, were the most informative publications. But the books from which Orlyk was almost never separated were the Psalter, Ecclesiastes

and St. Augustine because he always sought joy in religion.<sup>6</sup>

Orlyk's diligence and energy were very great. Not one of the Ukrainian Hetmans left so many letters, statements, petitions, and such a giant diary as he did. He was industrious, accurate and almost pedantic, as is seen clearly from the notes in his diary made while travelling—for the most part the dates were noted in both new and old styles. He had a brilliant mind—logical and rich in inventiveness. All these were qualities in an assistant-co-worker, in a "right hand." No wonder Mazepa took him while still a young person to be a general scribe. Indeed, he was a prolific scribe, who could compose statements and petitions very well, select suitable facts and present them in a clear, finished style. Also he did not lack knowledge of people—he had the qualities of a good observer, the ability of finding necessary information and of orienting to a given political situation. He undertook his political tasks with a pure Ukrainian stubbornness: many times he saw his plans destroyed, he experienced many failures in his lifetime, and yet he raised himself again, took on new energy, searched for other paths—and, thus, to the end of his life. Stubborn, yet responsive and flexible, he lacked in his disposition only one quality, indispensable for a statesman of great stature. His was not a nature made of steel like that of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Mazepa, with all the elasticity of the latter. His willpower was not as tough as iron and did not persist long enough after making a decision to enable him to follow it through to its ultimate consequences. In his letters or memorials, Orlyk frequently used the expression, *Scylla and Charybdis*,<sup>7</sup> drawing attention by this to the danger which threatened him upon acceptance of one of two opposite political orientations. In the opinion of this author the above expres-

<sup>6</sup> Illya Borshchak, "V knyhozbirni het'mana Orlyka," *Literaturno-Naukovyi Vistnyk*, Lviv, 1923, Book XI, pp. 260-266.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Al'fred Jensen, "Orlyk u Shvetsii," *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka*, Lviv, 1909, Vol. XCII, p. 114: "ex Scylla Moskoviticae subjectionis, incidamus in periculorosem et perniciosiorem Turcicae subjugationis Charybdim."

sion characterizes the very nature of the Hetman. Some kind of uncertainty, indecision, unwillingness to make an opposing stand seized him sometimes in moments when it was necessary to choose one definite direction from several paths and to take a resolute step in order to get out of the situation of serving two masters. This is seen especially clearly in the analysis of the relations between the Ukrainian Hetman and the king of Sweden. Orlyk never dared to outrightly come out from under the will of Charles XII, even though he estimated entirely realistically the king's chances in Turkey and did not (at least after the Prut events) have much hope for him. In 1711 (after Prut), placed between the orientation to Turkey or to Charles XII and supported by the Zaporozhian Host, he finally decided on opposition to the Swedish king. He rode out at the head of the Cossack delegation to Constantinople, but in the Turkish city of Baba he found waiting for him a categorical order from Charles XII to turn back. He did not persist, and returned, giving his delegation the necessary instructions. In general his diplomatic maneuvers pursued an uneven pattern. His political activities for the period 1725-1728 were characterized by seeking the favor of two opposing coalitions—Hanover and Vienna; this could be called an orientation to both sides, or, more accurately, an orientation to all sides: to Stanislaw Leszczyński, August II, Austria, and Russia, on one side, to France and England on the other; also to the Pope, the Jesuits, Duke of Holdstein, etc. He also manifested the desire to take simultaneously the Right-Bank Ukraine from the Poles and the Left-Bank Ukraine from the Muscovites. All this completes a picture of diplomatic attempts which can hardly be viewed as consistently transacted politics. To this, elements of pure fantasy mix in, as perceived in the project for converting the Right-Bank Ukraine to Catholicism through appeals to the intelligence of the Ukrainians, for whom it supposedly would be enough to be just shown the faults of the Greek Church to make them Catholics. Even in religious convictions, Orlyk did not hold fast to the end. It was some kind of middle course between Orthodoxy and Catholicism,

even though not in the meaning of an official Church Union. Similar swaying is found in the sphere of his legitimate thoughts and actions with respect to state affairs. With its limitation of the Hetman's rights and the establishment of the Cossack parliament, Orlyk's famous constitution of 1710 reflected a definite democratic tendency, which went along the line desired by the Zaporozhians and the ordinary Cossack masses, and was a reaction to Mazepa's autocratic regime. But in the Sultan's privilege, bestowed upon Orlyk in May, 1712, there is not even a trace of this tendency. This privilege speaks of the "despotic" law over the Ukrainian Cossacks of the Hetman and his successors,<sup>8</sup> an expression which could not have been accidentally formulated by the Sultan and his Turkish advisors, and which cannot be understood simply in the sense of external relations with the Turkish state. Orlyk himself comments in his later memorial of August 5, 1727 on the Sultan's privilege in this way: "...la Porte Ottomane qui pretendoit par le droit de la guerre retenir sous sa domination l'Ukraine Citerieure me l'offrit avec sa protection comme une province hereditaire des Cosaques, et m'en accorda la possession despotique par le Privilege Imperial..."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, even the constitution of 1710 and the certificate of 1712 have their limitations in Orlyk's memorial to Charles XII in the beginning of 1713, which was the result of the Hetman's definite desire to be rid of Turkey's special protection. Here appears as the first plan, the right of all the Ukrainian people to decide their own fate as a prerogative. Neither the Hetman nor the Zaporozhian Host subordinated to him have any rights in matters concerning "de publica universae Ucrainae integritate" to accept Turkish protection "sine consensu omnium tam spiritualium quam saecularium Universae Ucrainae ordinum ac statuum,"<sup>10</sup> because the entire Ukrainian nation ("universus populus") could later say: "Non de-

<sup>8</sup> See "Translatio Privilegii," an appendix to Orlyk's letter to Glemming of July 24, 1721, *Dresd. H. St. Ar.* loc 698.

<sup>9</sup> See *Lettre du Duc Philippe Orlik*, *Dresd. H. St. Ar.* loc 3306.

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Yensen, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

buistis tractare de nobis sine nobis." In connection with the person of the Hetman this means: "Dux e(x)tra Patriam de Patria protegenda nullo modo potest, privata activitate cum Porta Othomanica tractare."<sup>11</sup> These astonishingly modern ideas for the beginning of the eighteenth century were usually merely arguments in Orlyk's hands, because later he negotiated matters concerning the Ukraine, without closely examining his full authorization and without asking about the legally expressed will of the Ukrainian people. But still it must be stated that there was no definite line followed here. The Hetman's ideas had an unusually wide range—from the constitution for the Cossack's advantage to the despotic rights of the Hetman, together with an interesting remark about the all-national sovereign right of the Ukrainian people.

Undoubtedly, Orlyk was one of the most eminent Ukrainian statesmen. On his banner was written the independence of the Ukraine as far as possible in its ethnographic boundaries, with the exception of the Western Ukrainian lands, to which B. Khmelnytsky and, at certain times in their careers I. Vyhovsky and P. Doroshenko, attached much importance. Orlyk's objective was the union of Right- and Left-Bank Ukraine (as much as possible together with the Slobidska Ukraine) into a strong Ukrainian state under one Hetman's regimen. This was the inheritance which Mazepa left him and to which he remained loyal all his life. But in the beginning of his activity in Bendery, he undoubtedly went further than Mazepa. In Orlyk the independence of a united Ukraine was emphasized more strongly. The constitution of 1710 and the union agreement with the Khan recognized neither Polish nor Muscovite authority. In the meantime, Mazepa united the Ukraine as a separate principate with the Polish state of Stanislaw Leszczyński.<sup>12</sup> Therefore Orlyk retained the protection and

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> On relations between Mazepa and Stanislaw Leszczyński see Mykola Andrusiak, "Zvyazky Mazepy z Stanislavom Leshchyn'skym i Karlom XII," *Zaŕpysky Naukovoho Tovarystva imeny Shevchenka*, 1933, Vol. CIII, issue I, pp. 41-42, 50, 55, 59.



guarantees of the Swedish king. Also in the conferences with Turkey in the summer of 1711 (after the Prut events), he clearly safeguarded the idea of the union of Right- and Left-Bank Ukraine under his Hetman's rule and strongly emphasized the independence of the Ukrainian State, interpreting Turkish protection as a type of union treaty with the Sultan. Therefore the Sultan's privilege, which gave Orlyk the disposition only of the Right-Bank Ukraine and the *Sich*, made a discouraging impression on him and was the cause of the Hetman's definitely turning away from the Turks. Now began a period of compromises and the conduct of secret conferences with August II. The Hetman renounced the idea of independence in exchange for a modest Right-Bank Hetmanate (with protection of autonomous rights for the gentry) within the borders of the Polish state. But still he did not forget Kiev and the Left-Bank Ukraine. At least the propositions with which he tried to tempt the Polish statesmen concerned the union of the Right- and Left-Bank Ukraine under Poland's authority by settling Cossacks in the Right-Bank Ukraine and utilizing their claims to the Left-Bank Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> As is known, Orlyk's compromising policies ended without results. Therefore, he advanced them again in 1719-1721, in agreement with Sweden, proposing to Poland the idea of freeing Kiev and the Left-Bank Ukraine from Muscovite authority and from its union with Poland, apparently with an outlook for union of both halves of Ukraine under his Hetman regimen. The Right- and the Left-Bank Ukraine again figure in Orlyk's projects of 1725-1728, but this time each of them is dealt with separately. The impression is left that the Hetman now saw two chances in the Polish and the Muscovite Ukraine, which he dealt with together, in hopes of getting one of them in his hands. In the last period of Pylyp Orlyk's political activity of 1729-1742, there first appeared the matter of liberating the Left-Bank Ukraine from Russia through an understanding with the Turks and with Poland. And here there was no lack of

<sup>13</sup> Alfred Yensen, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

timely projects involving the advantage of uniting the Right- and Left-Bank Ukraine into one whole in the interests of European equilibrium. With these, Hryhor Orlyk, evidently in full agreement with his father, turned chiefly to the French government. When all this is taken into account, it must be acknowledged that Orlyk's political action assumed its greatest swing at the beginning of his hetmanship; later, it was lost in compromises. The Hetman was not an extremist par excellence. In time, he more and more adapted to circumstances, but when he saw some kind of possibility, he always returned to the course of fulfillment of the ideal of the union of the Right- and Left-Bank Ukraine.

Moscow played a particular role in his political concepts. The line of his politics was fundamentally anti-Muscovite, even though he sometimes made attempts to be reconciled with it through various mediators. Steadily and consistently his politics revealed themselves as anti-Muscovite in the last period of his life—in the years 1729-1742. He felt Moscow's threat in general to European and especially to East European standards. Russia's aspiration for conquest in the West he imagined as some kind of advance of barbarians against European culture. Under certain conditions all Europe, in his opinion, remained under the threat of Muscovite expansion. Even more dangerous was she for her immediate neighbors, Sweden, Poland and Turkey. For this reason, he turned to them first of all with his numerous proposals (particularly after the Bendery period) for establishing Eastern coalitions against Moscow. In his projects, not only Poland, Sweden and Turkey appear as active forces and chief contracting parties of anti-Muscovite action, but also the Crimea, the Budzhatsky horde, the *Sich*, the Hetmanate, the Don Cossacks, the Astrakhan and Volga Tatars, etc. As ideas for joining all possible powers that were worthy of notice and that were interested, above all, in Moscow's defeat, Orlyk's plans seem very interesting. Thinking in such broad terms, he also treated the Ukraine's role responsibly. The Ukraine

was closest to Moscow and was most threatened from that side. Orlyk foresaw that the Hetmanate and the *Sich* could not stand up against Moscow and would be victims of Moscow's imperialistic policies. After that, it would be Poland's turn, and so on. In the meantime, the existence of a strong, united Ukraine was necessary for European equilibrium which was threatened by Moscow's expansion. On the other hand, the Ukrainian state could become a protective bulwark against Moscow, as for example—in the general and in the special Eastern European sense—for Poland or Turkey.

In conclusion, we ask ourselves what drove Pylyp Orlyk to the sacrifices which he made for the Ukrainian idea by his incessant work of more than thirty years in emigration? Was this for ambition, for the good of the Ukraine or for other motives? Undoubtedly, Orlyk was an ambitious person, but in a higher sense which entirely characterizes statesmen who are aware of their work and responsibility. With dignity he faced the task which he took over from Mazepa and his Hetman government. For him to be chief of the nation was not a matter of empty words or an objective for mere speculation. It was an obligation—and all the harder since it meant working in exile and under impoverished conditions to represent the Ukraine—not as a nation under the yoke (as she actually was) but as a nation that was free, about which desires could be expressed and attempts made to realize them. Unquestionably, Pylyp Orlyk had a sincere and warm feeling for the Ukraine and her fate. Without a doubt, he was a Ukrainian patriot, although some people might have doubts upon examination of his statements in certain letters to Polish politicians and noblemen. In these, he calls Poland "das betrübte Vaterland,"<sup>14</sup> he feels "candorem" for the Polish republic,<sup>15</sup> he desires nothing else "but to be joined to

<sup>14</sup> Letter of P. Orlyk to Sapieha (German copy) of January 4, 1739. Dresd. H. St. Ar. loc 3278.

<sup>15</sup> Alfred Yensen, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

the body of his fatherland,"<sup>16</sup> etc. From this we must not draw the conclusion that Orlyk was a person who was a stranger to Ukrainians. Whoever seriously observes the situation in which these statements were made will note that there is much political calculation in them. Neither in the diary nor in the letters to his son does the Ukrainian Hetman give evidence of his Polish patriotism, but only in the correspondence with Polish or even non-Polish leaders, from whom he expected one or another kind of support for the Ukrainian or his own cause. In the very places where he could express himself more freely, without regard to definite political tasks, altogether different dispositions ruled. In the letter to his son of August 27, 1730, his chief care is "our poor Ukraine."<sup>17</sup> His devotion to Mazepa (in emigration) has no other source but love for the fatherland. Also, his son knew the "Cossack" language (according to Nyepluyev) and worked a great deal for the good of the Ukraine.

Some call Orlyk a person of Polish culture, as, for example, S. Tomashivsky: Orlyk... "is culturally a Pole of Polish political orientation."<sup>18</sup> This cannot be completely contradicted, but it also must be noted that, in time, Orlyk became a person who, it can be said, reached higher degrees of European culture. His long sojourn in Europe, beginning in Sweden and ending in his long wanderings in central Europe, tended toward this development. Orlyk's Polishness became apparent in his respect for his origin and in the interest with which he approached the history of his ancestors in Bohemia and Poland, which so clearly appears in the diary of his journeyings. He always stressed his belonging to the gentry class. He felt at home in the atmosphere of gentry-magnate life. But along with that, there is nothing else about him of any kind of specific feature of seventeenth-eighteenth century gentry

<sup>16</sup> Letter of P. Lamar to Count Wertern from Lviv, November 28 (new style), 1713. Dresd. H. St. Ar. loc 3278.

<sup>17</sup> Illya Borshchak, *Velykyi Mazeptynets' Hryhor Orlyk, heneral-poruchnyk Lyudovyka XV*, Lviv, 1932, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> Stepan Tomashivsky, *Pro ideyi, heroyiv i polityku*, Lviv, 1929, p. 59.

ideology. It must be admitted that Orlyk's personal attitude to the Poles was never negative. However, he faced Moscow and the Muscovites quite differently. To him everything Muscovite was alien, wild, Asiatic, hostile. Such was Moscow not only in Orlyk's eyes, but also generally in the eyes of enlightened Ukrainians of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century—even in the eyes of the simple Ukrainian people, who instinctively shunned all contacts with the Muscovites. It also must be noted that in Orlyk's spiritual mien, many features of a purely Ukrainian national nature are evident.

Pylyp Orlyk's activity has considerable significance in the history of Ukrainian independence movements. He was the eminent spokesman of the first Ukrainian emigration. Some of his political ideas even today maintain their relevance. In him, the Ukraine gained an extraordinarily active representative of its interests in the international forum—a representative who, at least for thirty years, maintained the Ukrainian cause in an active state. Even though as a statesman he had faults—he did not complete his tasks, he did not achieve an independent and united Ukraine—his energetic, stubborn and indefatigable work has left its traces. It left traditions, created certain ties with Europe, and gave reality to the Ukrainian problem for Europe in the first half of the eighteenth century. This is significant not only for the past of the Ukraine, but also for its future life as a state, in which the preparations made by Orlyk could be useful for strengthening Ukrainian ties with Europe on the basis of definite historical tradition.