

# *Історія освіти*

Oleh W. Gerus  
*University of Manitoba*  
Winnipeg, Man.

## **IVAN OHIENKO AND THE FOUNDING OF KAMIANETS-PODILSKY UKRAINIAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

When, after the fall of tsarism in the Russian empire in March 1917, the Central Rada in Kiev began evolving into the government of Ukraine, one of its principal goals was the creation of a comprehensive Ukrainian educational system. Such a system had been a dream for which generations of Ukrainian intelligentsia had struggled in vain. The fledgling department of education of the Central Rada thus placed emphasis on the organization of Ukrainian public schools, since none had been allowed under tsarism.<sup>1</sup> As far as the universities were concerned, the ministry proposed to Ukrainize the existing Russian universities in Kiev, Kharkiv and Odessa and at the same time transform the informally established Ukrainian People's University of Kiev into a state institution with a network of affiliates which would be located in the major cities of Ukraine. Because little attention has been paid to local history in the period of the Ukrainian revolution and struggle for independence, the time has perhaps come to focus on the manner by which the rather inconspicuous city of Kamianets-Podilsky acquired a university. The founding of a state university with the related emergence of one individual, Professor Ivan Ohienko, as a major national force, constitutes a remarkable story of local initiative and ethnic co-operation.

In January 1918 the ministry of education provisionally designated the city of Vynnytsia in the populous (nearly four million) province of Podillia as the location for one of the proposed branches of the Ukrainian People's University. A handful of civic leaders who had been contemplating some sort of cultural centre for the city of Kamianets-Podilsky felt slighted by their exclusion and initiated efforts to attract a university affiliate to their city. The process of founding a university in the incredibly short period of only six months involved

---

<sup>1</sup> In the development of a national school system Ukrainian pedagogues favored the German unified labor school concept, a twelve year program of academic and practical learning. H. Waskowycz, *Shkilnytstvo v Ukraini, 1905-1920* (Munich, 1969) p. 95. See also I. Krylov, *Systema osvity v Ukraini, 1917-1930* (Munich, 1956) and S. Siropolko, *Istoriia osvity na Ukraini* (Lviv, 1937).

two components: the local civic initiative and an outsider, Professor Ivan Ivanovych Ohienko of Kiev, who could be termed the catalyst who turned the dream into reality. As far as can be determined, only four individuals were primarily responsible for the initiative. Olympiada Pashchenko,<sup>2</sup> a feminist and community activist, was in 1918 a deputy to the Central Rada and head of the Kamianets-Podilsky county self-government (zemstvo). Aleksander Shulminski was a passionate Polish patriot, a long time mayor of the city and the recognized leader of the large Polish community. He had always wanted his city to have an intellectual profile and was obsessed with the idea of a university, regardless of its national character. Dr. Kost Solykha, an elderly and respected head of the provincial Prosvita Society was a long time proponent of higher public education. Victor Prykhodko,<sup>3</sup> a veteran Ukrainian activist in Podillia, was a key official in the provincial zemstvo. These four formed part of the liberal intelligentsia which appeared early in the revolutionary process and which before long would be swept aside by the forces of reaction and radicalism. Given the location and the size of Kamianets, the promoters of the university faced an immense challenge in selling the idea of a local university, first to the city itself and then to the Ukrainian government.

Kamianets-Podilsky was a picturesque provincial town with roots reaching back to the eleventh century. It was located at the extreme corner of the province of Podillia, near the Rumanian and Galician frontiers. Its only viable link with the rest of Ukraine was a railroad built shortly before the war. The town itself had been a minor administrative centre and the tsarist civil service had been the major industry. During the war all of the government institutions had been evacuated. At first glance, the population composition of Kamianets did not seem to lend itself in favor of a Ukrainian university. Of the approximately 40,000 inhabitants, more than half were Poles, Jews and Russians who dominated its economic and social life. Like many other Ukrainian cities, Kamianets was a cosmopolitan island in a Ukrainian sea. Furthermore, its possible rival, the bustling city of Vynnytsia was strategically situated on railroad and highway axes, had a major economic base in its sugar industry and appeared as the logical choice for a Podillia university.

The initiative group of four worked hard to turn their obvious disadvantages into assets. In the presentations made to the various levels of government they emphasised the potential advantages of Kamianets-Podilsky's size and location. The city's proximity to Galicia and Bukovyna (at that time still under Austrian rule) would allow the

---

<sup>2</sup> O. Pashchenko, "Zasnuvannia Kamianets-Podilskoho Derzhavnoho Ukrainskoho Universytetu." *Nasha kultura*, no. 5, 1936, pp. 332-346.

<sup>3</sup> V. Prykhodko, "Povstannia Ukrainskoho Derzhavnoho Universytetu v Kamiansi na Podilli." *Nasha kultura*, no. 5, 1935, pp. 305-316 and no. 6, 1935, pp. 364-378.

future university to serve not only the four million inhabitants of Podillia but Ukrainians in Austria as well. Situated as it was between Kiev and Lviv, Kamianets was a logical centre for bridging and synthesising the two Ukrainian cultures into one. The stability and economic well-being of the city would provide an ideal atmosphere for intellectual activity, and this was no small asset during a time of growing social turmoil. The city boasted not only major architectural monuments from its Turkish period but also an available physical plant, an unused new technical school complex, including student dormitories, which could become the nucleus of the campus.<sup>4</sup> In sum, Kamianets was being promoted as the future Heidelberg of Ukraine.

The first obstacle facing Strumlinski and Pashchenko was the Kamianets city council with its newly elected and unpredictable political parties and factions. An experienced and shrewd politician, Strumlinski convinced the Polish faction to support a university proposal. In her own way, Pashchenko had won the support of the Ukrainian and socialist factions which consisted of young and idealistic people. Thus, when the city council met, Strumlinsky made his surprise proposal, which was to take advantage of the intention of the Central Rada to open provincial affiliates of the Kiev university and to petition the ministry of education for such a facility in Kamianets. Preparatory lobbying of the city council assured the acceptance of the proposal. While a number of Russian and Jewish deputies expressed skepticism and disbelief, for the sake of harmony they too supported the idea of a university. So the council authorized the initiating group to carry on.<sup>5</sup>

In February 1918, that is, after the formal proclamation of independence of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Kamianets delegation arrived in Kiev. The current minister of education, Viacheslav Prokopovych, was preoccupied with the difficult and complex task of the development of a national public educational system and responded to the Kamianets petition rather ambivalently.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the delegation met with the special commission that had been established at the Ukrainian People's University for the purpose of organizing affiliates throughout Ukraine. The meeting resulted in the formation of an ad hoc committee consisting of Professors I. Hanytsky, V. Dubiansky and I. Ohienko as secretary charged with doing a feasibility study.<sup>7</sup> The Kamianets delegation returned full of optimism and began a drive for broad community support.

It was Professor Ivan Ohienko who was destined to play the pivo-

---

<sup>4</sup> O. Pashchenko, p. 339.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>6</sup> Ohienko characterized the response as "cool." Ivan Ohienko, "Moye zhyttia." *Nasha kultura*, no. 8, 1935, p. 510. Prykhodko described it as "sympathetic." *Nasha kultura*, no. 6, 1936, p. 367.

<sup>7</sup> Ohienko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 8, 1935, p. 510.

tal role in the formation and the short life of the Kamianets-Podilsky university.<sup>8</sup> Ohienko was an ambitious thirty-six-year-old scholar working at both Kievan universities — St. Volodymyr's and the People's. Although of poor peasant background, he overcame economic and social obstacles to graduate in Slavic philology and church history from St. Volodymyr's University. Despite his intellectual brilliance, the tsarist government denied him a university position until 1914 because of his pronounced Ukrainian national tendencies. Like his contemporaries among the Ukrainian intelligentsia Ohienko was actively involved in the Ukrainian literary revival after the tsarist ban on the Ukrainian language had been lifted during the revolution of 1905. However, unlike the majority of the intelligentsia, Ohienko refused to become radicalized in 1917, and remained a moderate conservative. He had evolved into a Ukrainian patriot largely through his exhaustive studies of the seventeenth century Ukraine, studies which convinced him that Ukrainian historical institutions and traditions, rather than revolutionary rhetoric, were essential to the successful establishment and survival of Ukrainian statehood. He thus stressed the concept of re-birth or revival rather than of newness. In his view, the emerging Ukrainian People's Republic was not a political innovation but the restoration of Ukraine's former status as a sovereign nation. Ohienko was convinced that historically the single most important Ukrainian institution had been the Orthodox Church, which had given Ukraine a sense of identity until the church became Russified in the eighteenth century. In a presentation to the All-Ukrainian Church Council meeting in Kiev, Ohienko argued for the re-establishment of a national Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which would serve as the moral and historical base of the modern Ukrainian state.<sup>9</sup> However, when the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, a body dedicated to the formation of an independent or autocephalous Orthodox Church, demanded the formation of a department of religious affairs in the Central Rada and nominated Ohienko as minister, Professor Mykhailo Hrushevsky, president of the Central Rada, turned down both the proposed office and Ohienko's candidacy. Ukraine's foremost historian believed that Ukrainian social democracy demanded strict separation of Church and state.<sup>10</sup> While Ohienko was building his reputation in Church circles as a promoter of de-Russification of the church, he was also gaining prominence as a successful author of popular books on Ukrainian culture

---

<sup>8</sup> Ohienko's life, based on his diary, was chronicled in 1935 and 1936 issues of *Nasha kultura*. See also A. Nesterenko, *Mytropolyt Ilarion: Sluzhytel Bohovi i Narodovi* (Winnipeg, 1958).

<sup>9</sup> Ivan Ohienko, *Riaturvannia Ukrainy* (Winnipeg, 1968), pp. 3-13.

<sup>10</sup> Ohienko quoted Hrushevsky during their meeting, which included Archbishop Oleksander Dorodnytsia, as saying, "We will get along just fine without priests." *Ibid.*, p. 9.

and language.<sup>11</sup> The arrival of the Kamianets delegation found the self-confident Ohienko looking for opportunities to demonstrate his leadership qualities.

In March 1918 Ohienko and his colleagues ventured to Kamianets. There they met with the concerned public and delivered lectures. Ohienko, who was a popular orator, made a strong impression on the audience at the local theatre. The fact that the lectures were given in Ukrainian also represented a triumph for the language itself. For the first time ever the Kamianets intelligentsia was exposed to a scholarly discourse on Ukrainian subjects in the Ukrainian literary language.<sup>12</sup> The students and the non-Ukrainian intelligentsia apparently appreciated the difference between the professorial presentations and the vernacular of the marketplace with which they were familiar. The committee was duly impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of the Kamianets community leaders. Upon his return to Kiev, Ohienko began formulating a proposal which called not for an affiliate college but for a full-fledged state university in Kamianets-Podilsky.

In the meantime, the Kamianets initiating group transformed itself into a formal university commission which included Polish and Jewish representation. The commission was headed by a distinguished retired Polish professor, P. Bachynski. The commission understood that the Ukrainian government would not be able to provide all the necessary financial support. Much of the funding would have to be local and the commission proceeded with exemplary skill and perseverance to establish a material base for the future university. Again Strumliński used his political skills to win a pledge of one million karbovantsi, a donation of 100 desiatyn of land and the property of the technical school from the city council. At the Podillia zemstvo assembly meeting in Vynnytsia, where the drive of a university never materialized, Prykhodko and Pashchenko also succeeded in obtaining a pledge of one million karbovantsi which represented five percent of the total provincial budget.<sup>13</sup> The Prosvita Society too promised a million. These were impressive sums, although one must bear in mind that in the increasingly volatile political climate of 1918, when most treasuries were empty, government pledges had little practical application. Escalating inflation further complicated the matter. Just exactly the extent to which these pledges materialized remains a mystery. Nonetheless, the psychological impact of such pledges on the public and on the

---

<sup>11</sup> For example, Ohienko's brochure, *The Ukrainian Culture*, was published in 100,000 copies and distributed to the armed forces. It seems Ohienko earned substantial royalties from his works. *Nasha kultura*, no. 7. 1935, p. 452.

<sup>12</sup> Pashchenko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 5, 1936, p. 340.

<sup>13</sup> It was the lobbying of Pashchenko and the persuasive presentation of Prykhodko that swayed the provincial zemstvo to commit one million karbovantsi to the university to be paid in five annual installments of 200,000. Prykhodko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 6, 1935, p. 366.

central government was profound and very useful to the proponents of the university.

Suddenly, in May 1918 the entire Kamianets-Podilsky project seemed placed in jeopardy when the Central Rada was overthrown and replaced by a German-supported conservative regime, the hetmanate, headed by General Pavlo Skoropadsky.<sup>14</sup> Although new administrative structures were introduced, the key players in the university drama of Podillia remained at their posts. A similar situation occurred in the ministry of education where the new minister, Mykola Vasylenko, managed to retain most of the Central Rada officials. That there remained some continuity thus boded well for the university project. Ohienko, who prided himself on being politically independent, became an advisor to the ministry. In June he travelled once again to Kamianets now as an official of the ministry.<sup>15</sup> In addition to obtaining the reaffirmation of earlier pledges, he solicited new funds from the Polish and Jewish communities. In a series of discussions with Shumlinski and Dr. Zalenski for a commitment of 50,000 karbovantsi Ohienko agreed to recommend a chair of Polish studies and unlimited enrollment in the university for Polish students. At this stage the Kamianets Poles were still positive in their attitude towards Ukrainian authorities.<sup>16</sup> Tensions and hostilities in Podillia would break out in November as a result of the Polish-Ukrainian war for Galicia. Ohienko also deemed it important to have the official support of the Jewish community (over 300,000 in the province). His discussions with the chief rabbi, Oksman, resulted in the promise of a chair of Judaic studies and Jewish student enrollment of not less than 25 percent in return for a pledge of 100,000 karbovantsi.<sup>17</sup> In both cases the respective ethnic communities would nominate their professors. Ohienko was always proud of his initiative in establishing the only chair of Judaic studies at any university. His personal interest in Biblical scholarship instilled in him a deep sense of respect for the Jews. This attitude was as great a factor in his initiative as was his pragmatism.<sup>18</sup>

In his final report to the minister of education Ohienko called for the formation of a Ukrainian state university in Kamianets-Podilsky. There would be five faculties eventually, but only three initially: arts

---

<sup>14</sup> Despite its age, D. Doroshenko's *Istoriia Ukrainy, 1917-1923 rr.*, vol. II, *Ukrainska Heimanska Derzhava 1918 roku*. (Uzhorod, 1930) is still the best work on the Skoropadsky period.

<sup>15</sup> Ohienko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 8, 1935, p. 511.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> When violent anti-Semitism erupted in 1919, Ohienko strongly condemned the pogroms. In a telegram to the town of Smotrychi in Podillia he threatened the local officials with capital punishment: "You will be responsible with your lives for anti-Jewish pogroms." *Nasha kultura*, no. 5, 1936, p. 324. Unfortunately, the Directory lacked the political and military capacity to crush the violence carried on largely by deserters and anarchist bands.

(historical-philological), science (nature studies and mathematics) and theology. Law and agriculture would be added later.<sup>19</sup> The minister of education, Vasylenko, at first rejected Ohienko's ambitious proposal as unrealistic but Ohienko persisted in his persuasion until the minister seemed convinced. Vasylenko, who had a strong commitment to Ukrainian culture and education, undertook to introduce Ohienko's scheme to the cabinet and to Hetman Skoropadsky. Vasylenko's acceptance in principle allowed the university's commission to designate a rector for the proposed university. Ohienko was elected rector for a two-year term.<sup>20</sup>

Ohienko took his election seriously and threw his seemingly limitless energy and superb administrative skill into transforming an idea into a functioning university within a mere six months. Indeed, as such reputable observers as Professors V. Bidnov<sup>21</sup> and D. Doroshenko<sup>22</sup> have noted, it is quite unlikely that the university would have been realized at all without Ohienko's leadership and work. In retrospect it is evident that Ohienko possessed qualities rare among Ukrainian leaders in 1918 — notably his political pragmatism and his keen public relations talents. By example and by a combination of charm and intimidation he reached many of his goals. He was also fortunate that Hetman Skoropadsky developed a personal interest in the university, an interest which helped Ohienko enormously in dealing with the various relevant ministries, especially finance.<sup>23</sup> While still in Kiev, Ohienko began organizing the university administration.

In August 1918 Ohienko arrived in Kamianets-Podilsky to assume full direction for the founding of a university. He made a point of meeting with all the interested parties as well as with the prominent politicians and the bishops of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. The most serious immediate challenge was restoration into a teaching facility of the three story technical school, which had been severely damaged by Russian soldiers previously billeted there.<sup>24</sup> While there was plenty of volunteer manpower, the required building mate-

---

<sup>19</sup> Draft notes. *Ilarion Archive*. Although Ohienko Metropolitan Ilarion left a massive archive in Winnipeg, Canada, it contains precious little on the Kamianets university as Ohienko left the entire documentation there.

<sup>20</sup> Ohienko noted in his diary that his competitor for the post was Professor Oleksander Hrushevsky whom he defeated 19 to 2. *Nasha kultura*, no. 8, 1935, p. 512. But according to Pashchenko, the second candidate for the rectorship was Professor Fedir Shvets. *Nasha kultura*, no. 5, 1936, p. 342.

<sup>21</sup> V. Bidnov, "Pershi dva akademichni roky v Ukrainkomu Derzhavnomu Universyteti v Kamaianets-Podilskomu." *Naukovyi vistnyk (Lviv)*, vol. 12, 1928, p. 328.

<sup>22</sup> D. Doroshenko, *Moi spomyny pro nedavne-mynule, 1914-1918*, part II (Lviv, 1923), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> P. Skoropadsky, "Ukrainska kulturna pratsia za Hetmanshchyny 1918 roku." *Nasha kultura*, no. 4, 1936, p. 244.

<sup>24</sup> Prykhodko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 7, 1935, pp. 442-443.

rial and equipment were in critically short supply. Window glass, for example, had to be brought from Austria. Ohienko not only directed his master-plan but personally supervised most of the detail of establishing a university. Although occasional resentment did surface among his subordinates, they recognized that his leadership was essential. By the end of August, Ohienko's former elementary school teacher, Ivan Slyvka, began organizing the university library. In a relatively short time, donations from private and public collections in Podillia and Kiev made possible a library of over 30,000 volumes.<sup>25</sup>

On August 17, 1918 the hetman government enacted a law, retroactive to July 1, establishing the Kamianets-Podilsky Ukrainian State University. According to Dmytro Doroshenko, then minister of foreign affairs and a participant at that cabinet meeting, the ministers were supportive of establishing two Ukrainian state universities, one in Kiev and one Kamianets-Podilsky, parallel to the existing three universities.<sup>26</sup> The decision to create a new university in Kiev rather than to take over and Ukrainize the prestigious St. Volodymyr was highly unpopular in nationalist Ukrainian circles and was seen as a further example of Skoropadsky's Russophilism. Yet the government followed the conservative agenda of slow Ukrainization. Whereas the Central Rada attempted to transform the Russian universities into Ukrainian institutions totally and quickly, Skoropadsky decided to establish a new parallel system of Ukrainian universities and colleges while compelling the existing Russian institutions to introduce Ukrainian studies.<sup>27</sup> The Kamianets-Podilsky project was accepted, with only minor changes: the proposed chair of Rumanian studies, for example, was rejected because relations between Rumania and Ukraine were unfriendly.

Under the law creating the Kamianets-Podilsky university the university would be governed by the Russian imperial statute of 1884 until the new Ukrainian university statutes and regulations were published.<sup>28</sup> The 1884 document was characterized by an uncompromising denial of academic autonomy and freedom, since it made the subordination of the universities to the ministry of education direct and absolute.<sup>29</sup> The hetman statute did introduce several modifications which provided for Ukrainian as the working language of the university and for a local university building commission to be responsible for the physical plant. The Kamianets-Podilsky Ukrainian State Uni-

<sup>25</sup> Yu. Gudzi, "Z zhyttia Kamianets-Podilskoho universytetu." *Nasha kultura*, no. 3. 1936. p. 230; L. Bykovsky, *Knyharni-Biblioteky-Akademiia* (Munich, 1971), p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Doroshenko, *Moi spomyny...*, part II p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukrainy, 1917-1923*. pp. 357-359.

<sup>29</sup> On higher education in Imperial Russia see A. Vucinich, "Politics, Universities and Science." in T. G. Stavrou (ed), *Russia under the Last Tsar* (Minneapolis, 1969), pp. 154-178 and V. M. Fichte, "Vysshaha shkola v kontse veka." *Istoria Rossii v XIX veke* (St. Petersburg, n.d.) vol. IX, pp. 128-179.

versity was granted a budget sufficient to support a faculty of fifty professors and the right to offer graduate degrees. Although the hetman government intended to treat the university as an extension of the department of education, the distance between Kiev and Kamianets pretty well assured the university a great deal of autonomy and Ohienko certainly took advantage of the situation.

When the recruitment of faculty began, Ohienko discovered that the isolation of Kamianets-Podilsky deterred a number of established scholars from coming to the new university. An exception was the noted church historian, Vasyl Bidnov, who eagerly joined the faculty. As it turned out, the ensuing revolutionary instability and the Soviet and Russian wars in 1919 made the isolation of Kamianets a definite asset for those seeking a degree of security.

The official opening of the Kamianets-Podilsky university was scheduled for October 22, 1918. Ohienko appreciated the psychological value of well-orchestrated public ceremonies and had the entire city involved in the preparations. He was anxious to have Hetman Skoropadsky present but in the climate of escalating opposition to his regime, Skoropadsky justifiably feared for his life and declined the invitation. However, at Ohienko's persuasion Skoropadsky kept his decision secret in order not to undermine the impact of the anticipated ceremonies.<sup>30</sup> The official invitation sent to European universities in part expressed Ohienko's vision of his university.

"The new university will not be an ordinary university of an Eastern type. The Kamianets-Podilsky Ukrainian State University will have the first ever Theological Faculty in Eastern Slavdom. In addition two new national chairs have been established at the Historical-Philological Faculty — chairs of Polish and Judaic literature and history. True to the finer traditions of European universities, the Kamianets-Podilsky Ukrainian State University has as its goal the unceasing pursuit of scholarly and scientific knowledge and truth for the benefit of the native Ukrainian culture."<sup>31</sup>

Ohienko was striving towards the realization of a university with a strong liberal arts base supplemented by science and professional faculties. The new university was concerned with the need to train cadres of nationally conscious Ukrainian civil servants, a vital ingredient that was lacking in the administration of Ukraine.

The official opening ceremonies, like many Ukrainian formal functions, lasted the entire day and featured endless speeches by political, cultural and religious dignitaries.<sup>32</sup> Skoropadsky was represented by general Libov. There were representatives from the neighboring uni-

<sup>30</sup> Ohienko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 8, 1935, p. 516.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 518-519.

<sup>32</sup> Pashchenko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 6, 1936, pp. 413-416. Bidnov noted the obvious but passive hostility of the Russian inhabitants to the Ukrainian university. Bidnov, *Op. cit.*, p. 236.

versities of Lviv and Chernivtsi, in the disintegrating Austro-Hungarian empire, as well as from the local Polish and Jewish communities of Kamianets. One of the highlights was the performance of the Ukrainian National Choir conducted by Oleksander Koshets. This choir was destined to become Ukraine's most successful cultural ambassador to the world. Several thousand visitors arrived by a special train from Kiev and, despite the chronic housing shortage in the city, Ohienko somehow accomodated them. In all, the official opening was a major Ukrainian event. The first community-organized Ukrainian university became a reality.

Classes began on November 1, with Rector Ohienko's inaugural lecture.<sup>33</sup> Statistical data on the first year of the university's life is lacking, but it is estimated that around 800 students registered, mainly in the faculty of arts. With the 1919-20 academic year, the Kamianets-Podilsky university would grow to five faculties when law and agriculture were added.<sup>34</sup> The academic staff numbered over forty and the student body, 1401. A number of prominent and promising scholars graced the university: P. Klymenko, P. Klepatsky and D. Doroshenko in history; L. Biletsky and M. Plevako in literature; M. Drai-Khmariv in sociology; M. Stoliarov in mathematics; and, of course, Ohienko and Bidnov. Ohienko's attempts to persuade M. Hrushevsky, the foremost Ukrainian historian and the former President of the Ukrainian People's Republic, who was in Kamianets-Podilsky, to join the faculty failed. Hrushevsky regarded the university as Skoropadsky's institution and chose to dabble in socialist politics rather than teach.<sup>35</sup>

In terms of national composition, the 1111 Ukrainian students represented an overwhelming majority.<sup>36</sup> Jews were second with 211, mainly in law. There was a sprinkling of other nationalities as well. While more than half of the students came from Podillia, a substantial Galician contingent enrolled in Kamianets-Podilsky after the fall of Lviv to the Poles. Of the total, 914 were regular students while 487 were auditors. It is noteworthy that more than one-quarter of the regular students were women, thereby giving Kamianets-Podilsky the distinction of having the largest female enrollment of any university in Ukraine. Socially the students tended to be of peasant background.

<sup>33</sup> Since the actual university academic calendar could not be located, it is unclear as to the exact nature of the curricula. A glimpse into the law program is provided by the class registration of Stefania Strilchuk. The introductory law semester (Fall, 1919) consisted of 32 hours of lectures and seminars in political economy, statistics, financial law, history of Roman law, history of Ukraine and Ukrainian language. (Courtesy of Professor Ihor Kamenetsky).

<sup>34</sup> Gudzi, *Nasha kultura*, no. 4, 1936, p. 292.

<sup>35</sup> T. M. Prymak, *Mykhailo Hrushevsky: The Politics of National Culture* (Toronto, 1987), p. 189.

<sup>36</sup> Gudzi, p. 292. Ivan Ohienko, "Zhyttia i pratsia studentiv Kamianets-Podilskoho Derzhavnoho Ukrainskoho Universytetu." An outline of a speech delivered in Warsaw on Oct. 15, 1938. *Ilarion Archive*.

Many were mature people, such as teachers and priests, who attended on a part-time basis. To accommodate this large constituency Ohienko scheduled all classes in the afternoons and evenings.

Available reminiscences of students and faculty agree that life at the university then was both exciting and full of hardships. Various cultural, political and ethnic circles flourished, including a communist club.<sup>37</sup> This was made possible by Ohienko's determination to preserve university autonomy at all costs. Ohienko demonstrated sincere concern for the material well-being of his students, most of whom were poor, and he generated as many stipends and bursaries as he could, even donating his administrative salary for the purpose. Both students and faculty were handicapped by a critical shortage of Ukrainian language text books and scientific equipment. Economic conditions in the city and at the university would deteriorate drastically in 1919-1920 when the city experienced Bolshevik and Polish occupation. But, despite hunger and cold, the student body would exhibit a spunky commitment to its alma mater.<sup>38</sup>

In December, 1918 a socialist-democratic coalition forced Skoropadsky to give up power and it restored the Ukrainian republic. Executive power was vested in the hands of a five-man directory in which Symon Petliura emerged as the supreme leader. Professor Fedir Shvets, one of the directors, invited rector Ohienko to join the new government as minister of education.<sup>39</sup> The choice of Ohienko was undoubtedly influenced by his highly publicized work in Kamianets-Podilsky. Despite his close relations with Skoropadsky, Ohienko was considered a political independent and had the reputation of a consummate administrator. Ohienko claims in his recollections that he agreed most reluctantly to serve and then only because of his concern for the university.<sup>40</sup> It seems, however, that he had doubts about the leadership abilities and policy direction of the two key members of the Directory — Petliura, the nationalist, and Volodymyr Vynnychenko, the socialist. At the same time he realized that as minister of education he would be in a more favorable position to assist his university. He agreed to become minister on condition that he retain his position as rector of Kamianets-Podilsky. From January 1919 until his exodus

<sup>37</sup> One of the more ambitious projects was the launching of the university journal, *Nashe zytтя*, by the staff union. Only three issues appeared. Gudzi, *Nasha kultura*, no. 4, 1936.

<sup>38</sup> "In 1919 Kamianets was so isolated that food was scarce and expensive. We saw no white bread and had to be contented with dark bread full of various fillers... Instead of tea, we used all kinds of substitutes, generally dried apple and cherry leaves... In winter we suffered from cold. Wood was in short supply and expensive..." Bidnov, *Op. cit.*, p. 331-332. Also see "Ukrainskyi Derzhavnyi Kamianets-Podilskyi Universytet." *Vira i kultura* (Winnipeg), no. 10-11, 1959, pp. 15-19.

<sup>39</sup> Ohienko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 1, 1936, p. 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

from Ukraine in 1920, Ohienko fulfilled a dual function as minister and rector. He used his new position to protect former hetman officials, such as Vasylenko and Doroshenko, from the repression of the Directory by assigning them to the faculty of Kamianets-Podilsky.<sup>41</sup>

Although initially Ohienko moved to Kiev, the inability of the Directory to hold on to the city in the face of the Bolshevik and later White Russian occupation forced the ministry of education to find refuge in Kamianets-Podilsky. Ohienko held the education portfolio for seven months. During that time he enriched his university with special grants and implemented a number of educational reforms, including a general Ukrainization of all high schools, abolition of tuition fees for secondary education, compulsory primary education and substantial pay raises for the teachers.<sup>42</sup> The true impact of Ohienko's programs, however, was felt only in regions that were under the effective control of the Directory and these were steadily shrinking.

In fact, in May 1919, the city of Kamianets-Podilsky itself experienced Soviet occupation and Ohienko and other members of the Ukrainian government were forced to flee to Galicia. A Bolshevik student, Voliansky, was placed in charge of the university and a period of mismanagement and chaotic socialist experimentation followed. The university employees had previously formed a union and now this union strove to maintain a degree of normalcy.<sup>43</sup> The commissar of education for the Ukrainian Soviet government based in Kharkiv, Zatonsky, a native of Podillia, visited the university and closed the faculty of theology. Several professors were arrested. However, on June 3, Petliura's army liberated the city and Ohienko returned to the university. He acquired more buildings and property and opened the faculties of law and agriculture.

In the summer of 1919 Kamianets-Podilsky, because of its relatively secure location and Ohienko's insistence, became the seat of the Ukrainian government.<sup>44</sup> The city was inundated with nearly five thousand civil servants and thousands of soldiers, all of whom strained its resources to the utmost and increased local Polish-Ukrainian tensions. The political in-fighting and anti-Petliura conspiracies were also transferred there from Kiev. Ohienko strove to keep the university autonomy intact by denying the use of university facilities for openly partisan political activities. In September the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood nominated Ohienko as its candidate for the ministry of religious affairs. As this portfolio was of great personal interest to Ohienko, he accepted it eagerly. The drive for a canonical and independent Ukrainian Church proved to be a most complex and difficult matter, how-

---

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65. Doroshenko, *Moi spomyny..*, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ohienko, *Nasha kultura*, no. 1, 1936, p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> Gudzi, *Nasha kultura*, no. 4, 1936, p. 293.

<sup>44</sup> I. Mazepa, *Ukraina v ohni i buri revoliutsii* (Prague, 1943), vol. III, pp. 188-205.

ever, for it involved a broad spectrum of politics of religion outside of Ukraine: in Moscow and Constantinople.<sup>45</sup> While Ohienko accelerated the Ukrainization process of Church services and liturgical books, he sought only a canonical or legal solution to Ukrainian problems and this led to clashes with the more radical members of the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood and to Ohienko's ultimate resignation from that body.<sup>46</sup>

When in desperation Petliura decided to negotiate with the Polish government for assistance against the Bolsheviks, the Ukrainian government, for rather ambiguous reasons decided to abandon Kamianets-Podilsky to the Polish army which was in the process of occupying Podillia. Ohienko vehemently protested this decision, calling it a betrayal of Ukraine, and he categorically refused to leave his university. In view of his position, the retreating cabinet on November 15, 1919 designated Ohienko an Extraordinary Minister, in fact a caretaker of Ukraine, to deal with the Poles as he saw fit.<sup>47</sup> Without giving up his rectorship, Ohienko assumed the new task which suited his temperament and energy. To him and perhaps to others his office personified what was left of Ukrainian statehood and for the next six months he was determined to act as head of state. He deliberately treated the Polish presence as a temporary military occupation and at every step frustrated Polish efforts to establish civilian administration over Podillia. In those peculiar circumstances he handled the affairs of "mini" Ukraine with honor and relative success.<sup>48</sup> The high esteem which Ohienko as rector had enjoyed among the local Poles was a definite asset and it led to fruitful relations with the Polish commander, General Krajowski.

In April, 1920 the draft of the Polish-Ukrainian treaty by which the Directory reluctantly abandoned its claims to Galicia in return for

---

<sup>45</sup> The journal of the ministry of religious affairs, *Vistnyk Ministerstva Ispovidan Ukrainskoi Narodnoi Respubliky*, no. 1-4, June 15, 1920 to April 8, 1921, contains a wealth of information on the issue of autocephaly. Other relevant sources include O. Lototsky, *Storinky mynuloho* (Bound Brook, 1966), vol. IV; I. Wlasowsky, *Narys istorii Ukrainskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy* (New York, 1966), vol. IV, part I; N. Polonska-Vasylenko, *Istorychni pidvalyny UAPTs* (Munich, 1964), pp. 94-116.

<sup>46</sup> Ohienko organized a publishing firm called the "Ukrainian Autocephalous Church" which disseminated his ideas.

<sup>47</sup> Ohienko describes this period, November, 1919 to September, 1920 in his published diary, *Riaturannia Ukrainy* (Winnipeg, 1968).

<sup>48</sup> It seems that Ohienko faced almost as many difficulties from the Ukrainian left as he did from the Poles. Yet, "Minister Ohienko provided Ukraine with outstanding service. He conducted himself with dignity, defending Ukrainian society and institutions from the Polish appetite and taking back from the Poles whatever was possible to take back. At all times he was governed by the interests of the nation." O. Dotsenko, *Litopys ukrainskoi revoliutsii* (Lviv, 1924), vol. II, p. 169.

military assistance was ready for approval by the individual Ukrainian ministers. Ohienko's first hand experience with the Polish occupation convinced him that Poland could not be trusted and he refused to sign the document.<sup>49</sup> Although history proved Ohienko correct, his attitude did not endear him to Petliura. When Petliura arrived in Kamianets-Podilsky in May 1920, Ohienko, whose special assignment as Extraordinary Minister finally ended, staged a carefully orchestrated reception for the Supreme Leader which was designed to generate public enthusiasm for Petliura and to impress his Polish allies.<sup>50</sup> Petliura's cool, almost rude, behaviour towards Ohienko hurt and infuriated this highly sensitive and protocol obsessed individual, who quite rightly expected to be treated more generously.

The Polish-Ukrainian alliance ended in disaster for Petliura and Ukrainian independence. Soviet forces won control of Ukraine. In November 1920 Ohienko abandoned Kamianets-Podilsky for the last time. Most professors fearing the Soviets also left the university. Ohienko donated to the university library his personal collections and the ministerial archives, which he was unable to take with him. With the rest of the Ukrainian government Ohienko was interned in Tarnow, Poland where limited activity of the government-in-exile was still carried on. Ohienko continued handling religious affairs and the Ukrainian Red Cross. His primary concern lay with the thousands of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Finally in July 1923 Ohienko was relieved of his ministerial post and forced to survive as an emigré in a hostile and impoverished country. After several years of career instability and material insecurity, he managed to become professor at the Orthodox Theological Studium at the University of Warsaw. During the 1930s he acquired wide prominence as editor and publisher of two journals, *Ridna Mova* (Native Language) and *Nasha Kultura* (Our Culture), in which he popularized the use of the standardized Ukrainian literary language in daily life. His interest in the Orthodox Church remained keen and during the Second World War he was consecrated Archbishop Ilarion of Kholm. When he died in 1972 at the age of ninety as primate of the Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church of Canada, he left a massive literary legacy consisting of a new Ukrainian Bible and over 1200 scholarly and popular publications on Ukrainian culture, language, church, history and poetry.

Following the consolidation of Soviet authority over Podillia, the Kamianets-Podilsky Ukrainian State University did not survive long. The commissar of education of Soviet Ukraine, Oleksander Shumsky, abolished the university. In line with the educational priorities of the Soviet government, the university was replaced in 1921 by two training institutions: a teacher's college and an agricultural institute.

<sup>49</sup> Ohienko, *Riaturvannia Ukrainy*, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup> Ohienko, "Urochystyi vizd S. Petliury do Kamianets-Podilskoho i travnia 1920 r." *Nasha kultura*, no. 5, 1936, pp. 321-331.

Despite its brief and interrupted history of a mere three years, the story of the Kamianets-Podilsky university constitutes a significant aspect of Ukrainian local history during the turbulent period of Ukraine's unsuccessful struggle for independent statehood. The city of Kamianets-Podilsky was a microcosm of urban Ukraine of the early twentieth century, a city with a Ukrainian minority, since the vast majority of the Ukrainian peasantry preferred to remain true to their land and their agricultural activities. The cooperation of Polish and Jewish communities, the majority, with a Ukrainian-oriented project illustrates the effectiveness of a grassroots involvement of the citizenry in the pursuit of a popular and mutually beneficial goal. The fact that the Ukrainians, the Poles and the Jews wanted a university, albeit for different reasons, united them in common action. Given the history of Ukrainian-Polish and Ukrainian-Jewish tensions and hostility, the Kamianets-Podilsky story demonstrates that tact and pragmatism of community leaders contributed above everything else to the cooperative success. Not enough is known about the social dynamic of other Ukrainian cities to determine whether the Kamianets-Podilsky experience in ethnic cooperation was a rare exception to the general rule or a potential role model.

The university itself served as a major socializing agency for the province of Podillia. One of its initiators, Olympiada Pashchenko, astutely noted how the university began the process of breaking down traditional social barriers in Ukrainian society by its outreach programs. The sight of university professors working jointly with village teachers in promotion of adult education, for example, did much to instill the notion that the university was not elitist but public. The enrollment of several hundred provincial civil servants at the university strengthened the relationship between the university and the province, as did Ohienko's proposals to train cadres of badly needed professionals. For Ohienko personally, Kamianets-Podilsky university proved to be a vital stepping stone into the national arena. His success as a university administrator was directly responsible for his rise from the rank of junior academic to that of senior minister in the government of the Ukrainian National (People's) Republic.