

## PERCEPTION OF MYKHAILO HRUSHEVSKY'S WORKS DURING INTERWAR PERIOD

**Telvak V. P.**

### INTRODUCTION

Perception of M. Hrushevsky's works by his colleagues from Slavic world has been in the focus of special historiographical interest for a long time. The Czech contribution to this intellectual reflection is not an exception. Let us recall the most thorough modern work of Vitaliy Telvak<sup>1</sup>. The researcher concentrates of the most prolific period of Czech Hrushevsky studies of the last years XIX – the beginning of XX century when the Ukrainian intellectual was at the peak of his scientific activity, actively responding to polemic remarks of his colleagues from the banks of Vltava. Regarding such a chronological accent, the after-war period, when Hrushevsky was in search for possibilities of creative self-realization in emigration and when he later put titanic efforts into the renewal of academic Ukrainian studies in the Motherland, often is outside scientists' focus. As it will be demonstrated below, the mentioned years 1920–1930, though were less marked by research reflection, but had a unique historiographical character, defined by the rapid change of social-political situation. The above-mentioned years are also important because of the establishment of Chech independent Slavic tradition, that did not imposed almost traditional remarks concerning Hrushevsky's unconventional hypotheses, peculiar for previous imperial era.

### 1. The Last Decade

Numerous difficulties of economic and personal character in the organization of scientific work that M. Hrushevsky faced in emigration, pushed him to the idea of returning to Ukraine, where the Soviet government had already firmly established. Thus, when the Kyiv Communists, aiming at splitting Ukrainian emigration in Western Europe, offered M. Hrushevsky the title of academician and provided guarantees of

---

<sup>1</sup> Тельвак В. Чеська грушевськіана першої третини ХХ століття. *Історіографічні дослідження в Україні*. 2008. Випуск 19. Ст. 240–258.

personal security, he decided to return to Ukraine in March 1924. Having certain hopes, he depicted in a letter to J. Bidlo his plans for the future: “I have broad and heterogeneous scientific plans: I would like to continue the history of Ukraine and the history of literature, organize publishing of sources and scientific journal: I do not know which project would succeed. In any case I will let you know”<sup>2</sup>.

Those were significant results in the scientific and organizational work of a newly elected academician of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (hereinafter – UAS) that attracted one more time the attention of the Czech researchers. Especially the Czech colleagues were impressed how “Nestor of Ukrainian history”, as he was referred to by one of the Czech observers, established a wide publishing activity, which quickly brought visible consequences.

The Czech observers were contented with the restoration of M. Hrushevsky’s magazine “Ukraine” – according to their unanimous assessment – the most outstanding of the Ukrainian studies. For example, in reviewing the first issues of the revived “Ukraine”, J. Bidlo drew attention to the difficult conditions in which the Ukrainian scientist had to realize his creative plans in the Soviet state. Therefore, the peer-reviewed publication is believed by the Czech observer to be a clear testimony to M. Hrushevsky’s thorough organizational talent<sup>3</sup>. The lively interest of the Czech observers was caused by the publication of materials dedicated to prominent figures of Ukrainian culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Mykhailo Maksymovich, Mykola Kostomarov, Olexander Lazarevsky, Panteleimon Kulish and Volodymyr Antonovich<sup>4</sup>.

With considerable interest, the Czech Slavists also followed the appearance of other periodicals edited by M. Hrushevsky. Among them, the Czech colleagues focused on the collection “In 100 Years”, devoted to the publication of sources about the Ukrainian modernist revival of the nineteenth century. Several reviews highlighted the high professional level of the publication, the importance of materials published in it for the knowledge of the important era of the Ukrainian past<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Чеські адресати Михайла Грушевського. *Хроніка-2000*. 1999. Вип. 29–30. Ст. 20–25.

<sup>3</sup> Bidlo J. [Review] *Ukraina, naukovyj tr'õchmisjačnyk ukrainoznavstva za rok 1924. Časopis národního musea*. 1925. Roč. XCIX. S. 83–87.

<sup>4</sup> Charvat V. *Časopisy. Slovanský Přehled*. 1926. XVIII. S. 481–482; Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1927. Roč. XXXIII. S. 677; Charvat V. [Review] *Україна. Науковий двохмісячник. Slovanský Přehled*. 1927. Roč. XIX. S. 72–73.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Hájek Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1929. Roč. XXXV. S. 224.

Particular attention was paid to the contributions of M. Hrushevsky to the investigations of the Czech-Ukrainian cultural relations. The scholar's "Influences of the Czech national movement of XV century on Ukrainian life and culture, as a problem of experimentation. A few notes", which was prepared by the author during the work on the fifth volume of "History of Ukrainian Literature" was especially warmly accepted by Czech critics<sup>6</sup>. Its content was introduced to readers of the magazine "Slovanský Přehled" by a well-known journalist and politician Vincent Charvat. First of all, he stressed at the importance of the appearance of "this short but extremely interesting studio of the most prominent Ukrainian historian, since Hrushevsky's more voluminous work is inaccessible to wider circles of the Ukrainian and Slavic public"<sup>7</sup>. A Ukrainian researcher provided a significant amount of material about the Czech influence in Ukraine and Belarus in the 14th and 15th centuries, as well as systematized views of Polish, Russian and Ukrainian scholars on this issue and "clearly, briefly described the penetration of the Czech culture to the Eastern Europe in the late XIV and early XV century where it was significantly spread in the Polish administrative and church circles".

The Czech critics met the continuation of M. Hrushevsky's work on "The History of Ukraine-Rus" with numerous reviews. On the pages of the Prague "Časopis národního musea", the two parts of the ninth volume were immediately reviewed by a long-time friend of Ukrainian scientist J. Bidlo. Describing M. Hrushevsky as "the indefatigable and fruitful creator of modern historiography (and to a large extent revolutionary history) of Ukraine or, better, of the Ukrainian people", the reviewer emphasized at the importance of continuing the astonishing scientific activity after returning from emigration. Writing for the Czech reader about the tirelessness of the Ukrainian colleague, the reviewer noted: "The IX volume of his "History of Ukraine-Rus" is fascinating, which is not the only result of his efforts and creativity during those several (7-8) years when he firmly settled in "Soviet" Ukraine. In 1923 he already began publishing a new original "History of Ukrainian Literature", and from 1926 he published 5 volumes, giving a new understanding and description of literary development, and at the same time he was editing several very

---

<sup>6</sup> Грушевський М. Впливи чеського національного руху XIV–XV вв. в українськiм життiю i творчостi, як проблема дослiду. Кiлька замiток i дезидерат. *Записки НТШ*. 1925. Т. CLI-CLIII. Ст. 1–13.

<sup>7</sup> Charvat V. [Review] Михайло Грушевський: Впливи чеського національного руху XIV–XV вв. в українськiм життiю i творчостi... *Slovanský Přehled*. 1927. Roč. XIX. S. 546.

meaningful and valuable scientific journals and collections (“Ukraine”, “In One Hundred Years”, “Primary Citizenship”...)”<sup>8</sup>.

Further, J. Bidlo vividly depicted the unfavourable circumstances of the work of a Ukrainian scientist during the years of war and revolution, noting the complexity of writing and printing volumes of the Cossack cycle of “History of Ukraine-Rus”, since materials collected for many years were destroyed together with the historian’s house by the Bolshevik forces of Muravev in January 1918 in Kyiv. Thus, it was necessary to do all the preparatory work practically anew with the help of his Lviv and Kyiv students.

The ninth volume, as the reviewer emphasized, contained an enormous amount of new source material that the author readily shared with his reader. This saturation of the scholar’s narrative with extensive quotations from sources, which was usually criticized by the Ukrainian observers of the ninth volume of “History of Ukraine-Rus”, J. Bidlo presented as a positive trait since unknown texts became available to a wide range of researchers. Involving a large number of new documents allowed the Ukrainian scientist not only to reconstruct the unknown pages of Khmelnytsky era, but also to largely revise the stereotypical views established in science.

Quoting excerpts from the work of M. Hrushevsky, the observer drew attention to the conceptual aspects of the work in question, fully solidifying with the author. J. Bidlo provided numerous examples that showed the originality of the author’s approach in solving many scientific problems, demonstrated his unbridled erudition and professional skills in the analysis of diverse sources and significant historiographical literature. The reviewer also noted the stylistic skill of the author, arguing that from that point on, the artistic value of “History of Ukraine-Rus” is steadily increasing so much that: “in the latter parts one can speak of a virtuoso writer”.

Listing the debatable points of the ninth volume, J. Bidlo dwelled in detail on the characterization of the figure of Bogdan Khmelnytsky by M. Hrushevsky. He wrote about the considerable controversy of his assessments of this prominent personality, which, in the opinion of the Czech scholar, will contribute to the growth of interest both among researchers and among ordinary readers. According to J. Bidlo, M. Hrushevsky, “as a

---

<sup>8</sup> Bidlo J. [Review] Mychajlo Hruševs’kyj, *Istoriija Ukraïny–Rusy*. Tomu devjatoho perša polovyna. *Časopis národního musea*. 1931. Roč. CV. S. 130–131.

supporter of modern collectivism”, skilfully demonstrated who is actually a historical hero and how complex his relations with the masses can be. At the end of his review, the Czech observer noted an interesting source list in the book and extensive references<sup>9</sup>.

Summarizing his critical review, the Czech researcher pointed out: “The history of Ukraine-Rus” by Hrushevsky from its first part is a work, if not to say, of a brilliant, then of a highly talented scientist with synthetic abilities, who possesses not only the knowledge of source and scientific literature, but also of modern sociological-historical theory, and has a rare vision of the development of world history. It is also a patriotic work that has become a significant contribution to the creation and spread of national consciousness in the broad sections of the Ukrainian population and among educated people, but at the same time the story is generally impartial, presented from the angle of world history, measured by the standard of universal development”<sup>10</sup>. In view of this, as J. Bidlo assured, readers would look forward to the continuation of the important work of M. Hrushevsky about that crucial era of Ukrainian and Eastern European history.

Alongside with the review of J. Bidlo, the newspaper “Prager Presse”, an informal speaker of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also responded with the review of the “The Flourishment and Decline of Ukraine”. The ninth volume was called a new brick, which M. Hrushevsky put into the building of holistic synthesis of Ukrainian history carried out by him for decades. The reviewer emphasized at the significance of the events described in the new work not only from a historical point of view, since the last years of Khmelnytsky were marked by a powerful upsurge of Ukrainian struggle for independence, but also in view of their social resonance – the resemblance of the recent independence revolution of one of the largest Slavic peoples. Considering the solid historiographic tradition of the Cossack era in the writings of Ukrainian, Polish and Russian researchers, M. Hrushevsky managed to express his significant and original concept not only in the source-related aspect – involving a huge number of newly discovered documents, but also in an attempt to reconsider largely mythologized by the previous tradition historical facts and personalities. Compared to the works of the Cossack scholars of the nineteenth century, the ninth volume of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem. S. 142.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem. S. 134.

“History of Ukraine-Rus: “...does not present a radically new description of the hetman, but it shows a completely new presentation of personalities and events, it completely eliminated legends, and traditional romanticism is replaced by sober, scientifically grounded historical judgments”<sup>11</sup>. Despite the heroic nature of the described events, their importance in the future fate of the Ukrainian people, the researcher rested restrained and correctly reproduced the peculiarity of that turbulent era.

In the second half of the 1920's another multivolume studio of M. Hrushevsky “The History of Ukrainian Literature” was noticed by Czech observers. This work, although it was not marked by special reviews, was repeatedly mentioned on the pages of the Czech scientific journals when reviewing the novelties of Ukraine science. In these reviews, “The History of Ukrainian Literature” was unanimously attested to as a fundamental synthetic work – the organic addition to “History of Ukraine-Rus”<sup>12</sup>.

Alongside with the fundamental researches of M. Hrushevsky, Czech counterparts also reviewed his articles. Thus, the magazine “Český Časopis Historický” published the controversial article by M. Hrushevsky “The History of Slavic Literature – A Fiction or a Necessary Scientific Postulate?” – a response to the speech of the Polish Slavist Ventsislav Lednicki. Debating with a young Polish colleague, the Kyiv academician advocated the possibility and need for synthesis in Slavic studies. The reviewer of this discussion, Z. Hájek, completely agreed with the position of M. Hrushevsky<sup>13</sup>.

A peculiar result in the perception of M. Hrushevsky by his contemporaries was the widespread celebration the sixtieth anniversary of his birthday and fortieth anniversary of scientific and scientific-organizational activity in 1926. Among many letters addressed to the jubilee there were also congratulations from his Czech counterparts. M. Hrushevsky received the congratulations from the President of the Czech Academy of Sciences J. Zubaty<sup>14</sup>. Signed by J. Polivka and J. Yanko, there was also a sincere congratulation from the Czech Scientific Society: “The Royal Czech Society of Science, which includes the jubilee to its foreign members, cannot stay away from such an even.

---

<sup>11</sup> M. H. Der Ukraine Glanz und Niedergang (M.Hruševs'kyj: Geschichte der Ukraine). *Prager Presse*. 1931. № 99. S. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1927. Roč. XXXIII. S. 677.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Hájek Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1932. Roč. XXXVIII. S. 627.

<sup>14</sup> Ювілей академіка М.С.Грушевського. 1866–1926. I. Ювілейні засідання. II. Привітання. Київ, 1927. Ст. 138.

On the contrary, being full of sincere enthusiasm for everything that the researcher has reached in the domain of science in general, and Slavic and Ukrainian studies in particular, with joy and pride that we are among the first to congratulate him, we wish a lot of physical and mental forces to work and to complete his main project”<sup>15</sup>. Vaclav Novotny congratulated the famous historian and leader of the fraternal people on behalf of the Historical Society in Prague. In its turn, under the signature of Matviy Murko, the editorial office of the philological magazine “Slavia” congratulated the “Honored historian of Ukraine” prof. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who enriched Slavic philology with his cultural-historical and literary-historical works”<sup>16</sup>.

Alongside with the congratulations from the institutions, personal greetings were also sent to the anniversary committee in Kyiv. The most touching among them were the greetings from J. Bidlo. Having received an invitation to take part in the commemoration of the Father of Modern Ukrainian Studies, the distinguished Czech scientist replied: “Thank you sincerely for your announcement of the 60th anniversary of the famous historian and patriot Professor Mykhailo Hrushevsky, I ask you to accept sincere manifestations of my dear respect for him and his work. I highly value all his scientific works, but I regard his “History of Ukraine-Rus” as a work of a world’s scale, which belongs to the most prominent historical works. I consider the Ukrainian people’s awareness as the influence of this work, because it was through its study that I gained a proper understanding of the Ukrainian question. [...] I wish the jubilee many happy years and fruitful work in scientific and public domain”<sup>17</sup>.

Responding to the celebration of M. Hrushevsky’s anniversary, his Czech friends informed the country about it. The pages of the “Prager Presse” presented a letter written by J. Bidlo printed with a portrait of a jubilee. In this essay, for the first time in the Czech literature, the rich scientific, literary and political activities of the scientist were thoroughly characterized, with a special emphasis on the achievements of the most fruitful period of his life in Lviv.

In a more detailed presentation in his essay, the author dwelled on “History of Ukraine-Rus”, which, in his words, “belongs to the largest and most notable works of historical literature of the whole world not only

---

<sup>15</sup> Там само.

<sup>16</sup> Там само.

<sup>17</sup> Там само. Ст. 139.

because of its volume and richness of generalized material, but also due to its high professional level, its concept, breadth of vision and unusual scientific clarity”<sup>18</sup>. For J. Bidlo, the main work of the jubilee was a work that met almost all the requirements of the modern historiography, since it presented not a traditional depiction of political history, but a holistic version of the history of culture in which political history is only one dimension of integral entity.

Especially characteristic of the conceptional and methodological refinement were fifth and sixth volumes of his great work of M. Hrushevsky. The author depicted the synthesis of social, administrative, legal, ecclesiastical, economic and cultural relations that dominated in the Ukrainian lands from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, that is, during the active creation of the Ukrainian nation. “Hrushevsky”, as the Czech scholar emphasized, “wrote his work in the national Ukrainian spirit in order to serve as a Ukrainian and remain an objective historian in general. And precisely this impartiality resulted in the fact that anyone who wants to know in detail the history of the Ukrainian people can turn up to “History...” of Hrushevsky and understand that present desire of Ukrainians to be an independent nation is a natural consequence of the special historical development of the lands they inhabit”<sup>19</sup>. In this sense, J. Bidlo compared the “History” of M. Hrushevsky with the work of the Czech philosopher F. Palacky about the past of the Czech people: both works written in a patriotic spirit and at the same time based on strict objectivity and met all scientific requirements. Therefore, it is logical for the Czech professor that “History...” of M. Hrushevsky had a tremendous influence on the progress and development of Ukrainian national life. J. Bidlo convinced that it would be a great idea to compare M. Hrushevsky with F. Palacky also in terms of their contribution to the organization of the scientific life of their peoples. After all, Ukrainian scientists owe SSS in Lviv and and UAS in Kyiv for their fruitful activity in the field of science.

Turning to the public activity of M. Hrushevsky for his people, J. Bidlo pointed at the immutability of his progressive aspirations, which allowed the author to notice the similarity of M. Hrushevsky with another prominent Czech, T. Masaryk. Briefly depicting M. Hrushevsky’s political activity in the times of Ukrainian statehood (for its estimation, according to

---

<sup>18</sup> Bidlo J. Michajlo Hruševskij. *Prager Presse*. 1926. № 267. S. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.



J. Bidlo, there is still not enough time that passed for more objective estimation), the researcher paid tribute to M. Hrushevsky's decision to return to Soviet Ukraine, where the prominent historian took up organization of scientific work in very difficult financial circumstances. He stated that "Ukraine" seemed to be quite impressive in the scientific aspect, as well as a very valuable and original "History of Ukrainian Literature". By wishing the jubilee a good health and improved conditions for scientific work, J. Bidlo finally noted: "The value and merits of Hrushevsky have been appreciated in Czechoslovakia for a long time (1914), when he was appointed as a foreign member of the Royal Czech Scientific Society". In 1919, Hrushevsky became a member of the "Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts". I think that he would be happy if his popular "Illustrated History of Ukraine" was published in Czech. It would be very useful for mutual relations between Ukrainians and Czechoslovaks"<sup>20</sup>. The sincere sympathy, with which J. Bidlo's essay was written, aroused the grateful response of his Ukrainian colleague, who called the article "Prager Presse" as "one of the best I've ever seen"<sup>21</sup>.

The Czech Slavic magazine "Slovanský Přehled" also responded with an informative article on the anniversary of M. Hrushevsky. The author of the essay, philosopher-ukrainist Frantisek Tichý, accurately noticed that after the death of Lesia Ukrainka and Ivan Franko, it was M. Hrushevsky who became "an indisputable spiritual mentor of cultural Ukraine". Briefly depicting the life and creative path of the jubilee, he called him "one of the most outstanding and most prominent representatives of modern Slavs", the Czech researcher investigated in detail the Lviv period, because at that time the scientist launched a "worthwhile surprise of diverse activities"<sup>22</sup>. F. Tichý described the "History of Ukraine-Rus" as an epoch-making work, which, together with a productive scientific and organizational work, gave M. Hrushevsky a place of honor in the pantheon of European science. The productive activities of the jubilee also were noted in other areas: publishing, pedagogical, public, etc. Together, all this sacrificial work of a prominent figure for the benefit of Ukraine allowed without exaggeration, according to the Czech scientist, to call him "Father" of his people.

Considering the wide range of scientific interests of M. Hrushevsky in the domain of history, literature and sociology, F. Tichý separately

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> Чеські адресати Михайла Грушевського. *Хроніка-2000*. 1999. Вип. 29–30. Ст. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Tichý F. Michajlo Hruševskýj. *Slovanský Přehled*. 1926. Roč. XVIII. S. 643.

emphasized at the contribution of the jubilee to the study of Ukrainian-Czech cultural relations and on the pages of his synthetic works, and in special studios. At the end of the essay, the author joined the assessments expressed by J. Bidlo, and on behalf of the Czech scientific world wished the historian strength and energy for new creative plans – “so that he managed to implement them all and wait for the fruits of his noble great vitality”<sup>23</sup>. We also recall that F. Tichý’s article was supplemented by the portrait of a jubilee the same that illustrated the article by K. Kadlec in “Slovanský Přehled” on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of M. Hrushevsky.

The communication between M. Hrushevsky and his Czech counterparts, well-established in the second half of the 1920’s, is also evidenced by the participation of Ukrainian academician in the celebration of the jubilee of his Prague friend, J. Bidlo. In a scholarly book on the celebration of the sixtieth birth of a Czech scientist, the Kyiv historian published an article “The Unification of Eastern Slavs and Plans of Expansion in the Balkans in 1654–1655”<sup>24</sup>.

The relationship between M. Hrushevsky and his Czech counterparts were violently interrupted by Stalin’s repressions against Ukrainian science and one of its leaders, which unfolded at the turn of the 1920’s and 1930’s. From 1931, the scientist was in a “honorable” exile in Moscow, where, despite the considerable weakening of health (Hrushevsky was virtually blind), he continued to work on two major multivolume projects of his life, taking advantage of the unabated help of his daughter and wife. In the autumn of 1934, he and his family left for vacation to Kislovodsk, where he fell ill with carbuncles and died, during the unsuccessful surgical operation, on November 24.

## 2. Honoring Memory

The premature death of M. Hrushevsky was with great concern perceived by the scientific community in the free world, in particular by his Czech counterparts and caused a real downfall of publications about the scientist. The first information about the tragic news from Kislovodsk to the Czech audience was sent by the Prague Radio on November 26, 1934,

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem. S. 645.

<sup>24</sup> Hruševs’kyj M. Sjednocení východního slovanstva a expansivní plány na Balkáně v letech 1654–1655. *Z dějin Východní Evropy a Slovanstva*, in: *Sborník věnovaný Jaroslavu Bidlovi, profesoru Karlovy University k šedesátým narozeninám*. V Praze, A.Bečková. 1928. S. 340–345.

and the evening newspapers circulated this news. Already the next day, obituaries appeared in the authoritative Prague newspaper “*Lidové noviny*”<sup>25</sup> and other editions. In these writings, M. Hrushevsky was portrayed as a true patriarch of Ukrainian culture and science; he was compared with the great Czechs figure F. Palacki. Separately there was mentioned the tragedy of persecuted by the Soviet authorities researcher exiled from his native land.

Along with the daily press, academic journals also reacted to the death of M. Hrushevsky with memorial notes. In the obituary on the pages of the Prague “*Český Časopis Historický*” Z. Hájek called M. Hrushevskyi the most prominent Ukrainian scholar and public figure, whose influence was felt far beyond the borders of the Motherland: “His works had a tremendous pivotal significance, as well as the Ukrainian national movement was largely under his influence”<sup>26</sup>.

J. Slavik responded to the death of M. Hrushevsky with a brief obituary note on the pages of the “*Slovanský Přehled*” magazine. By referring an interested reader to the previous reports about the Ukrainian scientist that appeared in the journal during the past decades, the Czech scientist summarized the achievements of the Soviet decade of the Kyiv academician’s life. Speaking about the persecution of M. Hrushevsky by the communist authorities, J. Slavik accurately noted: “The fate of Hrushevsky during the World War, when he became victim of the tsarist government, repeated again in the worst form”<sup>27</sup>. With some irony, the author referred to the “posthumous honor and retirement” that the Soviet functionaries attributed to the scientist in order to improve their image in the eyes of the Western public after years of persecution of the scientist, calling it a “little compensation for the persecution that the great scientist has lately suffered”.

Another vast obituary on the pages of the Prague “*Slavische Rundschau*” on the death of M. Hrushevsky was written by the long-time friend of the deceased J. Bidlo, who was well acquainted with his creative heritage, and with the general context of the progress of Ukrainian studies. In the beginning, the Czech scholar with dismay noted that instead of the anniversary article about the seventy years jubilee of M. Hrushevsky he was forced to write an obituary to his premature death, which became

---

<sup>25</sup> Dr. V. V. Michajlo Hrušovskij zemřel. *Lidové noviny*. 1934. 27 listopada. S. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Z. Hájek Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1934. Roč. XL. S. 671.

<sup>27</sup> Slavik J. Michajlo Hruševskýj. *Slovanský Přehled*. 1934. Roč. XXVI. S. 311.

“an irreparable loss to the whole historical science”. Schematically outlining the main facts of the biography of a Ukrainian colleague, the author focuses on the characterization of his creative heritage, calling it a fundamental one.

J. Bidlo called the “History of Ukraine-Rus” the culmination of all Hrushevsky’s works, which, despite its incompleteness and some shortcomings, mentioned by the author himself, was still admired: “This work is, if not a brilliant, but a talented synthesis, which equally perfectly serves as a source material, and professional literature, is well oriented in contemporary sociological theories and has a rare panoramic vision of world history”<sup>28</sup>. The innovative character of the synthesis of M. Hrushevsky consisted in combining traditional political history with the history of culture, social institutions and economic processes. Despite its distinctly national character, “History of Ukraine-Rus” is at the same time an entirely objective work, which convinced the impartial reader of the suitability of author’s hypotheses. This rare combination of patriotism and objectivity, as the author once again said, make the work of M. Hrushevsky resemble with the “History of the Czech People” by F. Palacky.

With the same enthusiasm J. Bidlo wrote about “The History of Ukrainian Literature”. This work, according to his observation, is “...a kind of new edition of cultural literary passages from “History of Ukraine-Rus”, is highly refined and supplemented”. The author then briefly acquainted the reader with the richness of the issues of this fundamental studio, also noting its patriotic character that characterizes Hrushevsky as a researcher”.

As a prominent organizer of Ukrainian science, M. Hrushevsky is best described by the multifaceted activities in Lviv, and later in Kyiv. In Galicia, the deceased succeeded in turning the SSS into the actual National Academy of Sciences. In the Soviet decade, his organizational talent was manifested in the development of research commissions and numerous publishing houses of the historical institutions of UAS. However, J. Bidlo accurately pointed out that “the new Soviet historiography” was a completely antagonistic towards the historical ideology of a Ukrainian scientist. Thus, the conflict was inevitable, and its consequences were quite predictable. Like his well-known predecessors,

---

<sup>28</sup> Bidlo J. Mychajlo Hruševs'kyj. *Slavische Rundschau*. 1935. Roč. 7. S. 62.

M. Hrushevsky was forced to live for ages in actual exile. Summing up, J. Bidlo emphasized that “the loss of this unique personality for Ukrainian scientific life will remain irrecoverable for many years”<sup>29</sup>.

J. Bidlo was the first among non-Ukrainian authors who also wrote a general work devoted to the life and activity of M. Hrushevsky, which was published by a separate booklet in Prague in 1935. Having reacted with plenty reviews on the main works of a scholar, the Czech scientist was well acquainted with the circumstances of the activity of his Ukrainian colleague in different periods of his life, and the long-standing correspondence with M. Hrushevsky made him aware of numerous unknown facts of his biography.

Already in the introduction, the author depicted the general traits of the deceased: “It was extremely fast and bright the scientific progress of this famous historian of the Ukrainian people; his scientific, literary and publishing activity was extremely fruitful, leaving a rich literary heritage; in the critical period of the Russian revolution of 1917, he had to play the exclusive role of the political leader of the whole people, and in the end – to endure four difficult years of great suffering, since he was suspected of being politically dangerous. Because of this, he was torn away from his national environment, for which he was a source that nourished not only the scientific activity but also the life itself”<sup>30</sup>.

Then in the narrative biographical key, the author disclosed the main stages of the formation of M. Hrushevsky as an outstanding organizer of Ukrainian science, historian, literary critic, publicist, public and statesman, relying, at the same time, on the “Autobiography” of the deceased. Like other scholars, the Czech scientist gave a more detailed look at the achievements of Lviv period of life and activity of M. Hrushevsky, when he “received extremely favourable conditions for scientific work and thus published throughout several years a number of very important works”.

The main efforts, as J. Bidlo correctly said, M. Hrushevsky directed at a great task to write a complete history of Ukraine. Briefly summarizing the content of each part of the “History of Ukraine-Rus”, the Czech scientist noted that the author of the first volume “was surprised by the full knowledge of the material not only of historical (Arabic texts), but also of archaeological character, perfect knowledge of the literature and problems

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem. S. 64.

<sup>30</sup> Bidlo J. Michal Hruševs'kyj. Praha, 1935. S. 3–4.

that were raised in it (namely, how the Rus state arose and who were Rus Vikings) and, in general, a new understanding of the Rus history”. Recalling the reception of the main work of the deceased, J. Bidlo directly pointed to misunderstanding and the rejection of his original ideas by many contemporaries, first of all, his Russian colleagues<sup>31</sup>.

J. Bidlo commented favourably on the theoretical and methodological basis of M. Hrushevsky’s historical studies, emphasized on his critical approach and objectivity, the respected erudition, and the skilful mastery of the sociological method. As the researcher pointed out that the Ukrainian colleague rightly selected as the object of his attention a wide range of manifestations of life of the Ukrainian people, synthesizing them in a coherent picture. He also pointed out at the magnitude of M. Hrushevsky’s contribution to the development of the sources of Ukrainian historical science. All this, as the Czech scientist insisted, made the role of M. Hrushevsky in Ukrainian science commensurate with the value of F. Palacky for the Czechs<sup>32</sup>.

Explaining the significance of the public service of Hrushevsky, J. Bidlo insightfully noted: “Not only those who had doubts whether to be considered Rusyn or Ukrainian or whether Ukrainians in general were just a fiction, but also those who from afar observed the Ukrainian people’s movement learned from the work of Hrushevsky that Ukrainian aspirations have deep roots in the historical development of society, which made it a natural phenomenon in general”.

Separately J. Bidlo noted the importance of the scientific popularization activity of M. Hrushevsky. According to his observation, such popular works as “The Essay on the History of the Ukrainian People” and “Illustrated History of Ukraine” had a much greater influence on the Ukrainian and, in general, the Eastern European readership. “It can be said”, J. Bidlo pointed out, “that Hrushevsky, through all his multifaceted activities made the most effective service to his Motherland”.

He also mentioned the talent of M. Hrushevsky as the organizer of Ukrainian scientific life. As in his previous reviews, he called the reformed SSS the actual Academy of Sciences. He wrote about the creation of new scientific sections and periodicals, mentioned the education of many talented students who continued the project of the teacher.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem. S. 7–9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem. S. 13.

He paid attention to M. Hrushevsky's public-political and journalistic activity, pointing out its importance for the modernization of Ukrainians. In elucidating the public credo of the Lviv professor, the author rightly stated that he has always been a supporter of the progressive direction, the successor of the establishment of an equitable interethnic dialogue in Galicia. After 1905 these ideas of M. Hrushevsky moved to Dnieper Ukraine, which he regarded as the core of national life.

J. Bidlo naturally defined the main role of M. Hrushevsky at the first stage of the Ukrainian revolution as a prominent one, when he was unanimously elected a chairman of the Central Rada. In general, sympathetically depicting the activity of his colleague, the Czech scientist did not skip his mistakes as a politician, referring to the witness of that time, his Prague colleague Dmytro Doroshenko.

Briefly describing the exile of M. Hrushevsky, the researcher summed up the naturalness of his decision to return to the Bolshevik Ukraine. The latter was due not only to the scientific plans of the scientist, but also to his ideological beliefs in the necessity of not being indifferent to his people<sup>33</sup>. The justification for such a step, was the "amazing" scientific, publishing and organizational achievements of the Soviet era of M. Hrushevsky's life, according to J. Bidlo. For the first time in Czech historiography the researcher summarized and accurately characterized "The History of Ukrainian Literature." According to J. Bidlo, this studio "...was written by a historian who has previously proved to be the author of a great historical work in the direct sense of that word, and then took up the history of literature with a deeper interest, in particular social and sociological aspects".

The Czech scientist depicted the last years of Ukrainian scientist's life as full of deep tragedy. Despite the deterioration in his health, Hrushevsky managed to continue his work. Describing the essence of the conflict of the deceased with the Bolsheviks, J. Bidlo accurately noted: "[...] Judging from his writings, [M. Hrushevsky] was essentially a scholar, a historian, who was primarily concerned with the knowledge and disclosure of pure truth. That was the tragedy of his attitude towards the Bolshevik authorities, who had nothing to do with anything similar at all, who could not understand the soul and the efforts of a true scientist, and instead understood science as utilitarian and additional to politics".

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem. S. 26–27.

At the end of the book, J. Bidlo shared with the reader his personal impressions from the long-standing acquaintance with M. Hrushevsky, noting the determining character of his personality. The testimony of a Czech scientist about his last meeting with a Ukrainian colleague on the eve of his return to Ukraine is interesting as well. In a confidential conversation, M. Hrushevsky said that he decided to accept the Ukrainian Bolshevik authorities, considering that the further struggle of Ukrainians with it was pointless<sup>34</sup>. The scale of the creative heritage of the author of “History of Ukraine-Rus” for the Czech reader was illustrated by a chronologically completed list of the main scientific works that the Ukrainian historian added to the book.

By its detailed description, the work of J. Bidlo about Hrushevsky drew the attention of observers of scientific life. In his review, Z. Hajek summarized the main ideas of the work, fully agreeing with the thesis that M. Hrushevsky’s contribution to the development of Ukrainian and Slavonic culture and science was an outstanding one.

The final chord of the Czech Hrushevsky studies became brief notes on the publication by M. Hrushevsky’s daughter, Catherine, of the last tenth volume of “History of Ukraine-Rus” in 1936. For example, on the pages of the Prague “*Časopis národního musea*” J. Bidlo briefly acquainted the reader on the content of the latter part of the main work of Ukrainian colleague. The Czech historian, with clear sadness, congratulated the “valuable” work on the Ukrainian past, which, regarding the method, structure and new source material, resembled previous volumes<sup>35</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the Czech Hrushevsky studies, we draw attention to a certain symbolism of the favourite comparison of Czech intellectuals of M. Hrushevsky with F. Palacky. Similarly to the famous Czech scientist, it was the Ukrainian historian who, through his numerous works, in which he skilfully united the love for his people and positivist objectivity, introduced to the world around Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Czech assessments of the various works of M. Hrushevsky were generally objective and, in general, quite favourable. The absence of mutual historical conflicts, the similarity of the experience of foreign

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem. S. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Bidlo J. Zprávy. *Časopis národního musea. Oddíl duchovědný*. 1937. Roč. CXI. S. 156–157.



oppression, the traditionally strong Czech-Ukrainian cultural relations, personal friendly relations between the scientist and the foremost representatives of the scientific world of Bohemia created a favourable atmosphere for building a fully-fledged international historiographical dialogue, not burdened with imperial heritage or mutual claims, as in case with Russia or Poland. In this uneasy dialogue on the Ukrainian side, M. Hrushevsky played a leading role.

Despite some reservations about his daring historical modelling, which the majority of his contemporaries did not understand, the Czech scholars with great acknowledgment relate to the versatile and sacrificial cultural activity of his Ukrainian counterpart, carefully monitoring the appearance of his scientific works. Hence, the greatest recognition of Czech scholars was attributed to scientific and organizational work of M. Hrushevsky, which, in their conviction, legitimized Ukrainian studies as an important direction of Slavic studies. In this context, the general recognition of the epochal nature of the work of Hrushevsky is traditional for Czech writers, as he was compared with the F. Palacky, who was in the same way important for the Czechs. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the greatest academic award, the status of a foreign member of the National Academy of Sciences, was attributed Ukrainian researcher in the Czech Republic. Czech historiography has in its turn the most delusional, beyond the Ukrainian literature, Hrushevsky studies: special publications devoted to M. Hrushevsky, mainly on the occasion of his anniversary dates, reproduced the image of the prominent Slavic scholar, the tireless worker on the field of Ukrainian culture, the principal protector of national interests.

## **SUMMARY**

The article is devoted to the study of the reception of the scientific heritage of M. Hrushevsky in Czech science and journalism in the interwar period. The results of his expanded activity as a head of the historic institutions of UAS, renewed an active discussion of the Czech researchers. The Czech colleagues were especially impressed with the establishment by scholars of wide publishing activity, which quickly led to considerable changes. It has been proved that in comparison with the certain degree of bias in the writings of Polish and Russian observers of M. Hrushevsky's activity, Czech scientists were generally objective and giving approving

reviews. Such a reaction was facilitated by the absence of mutual historical claims, the similarity of the experience of imperial oppression, the traditionally strong Czech-Ukrainian cultural relations, and the personal and friendly relations of M. Hrushevsky with many prominent contemporary Czech scholars (L. Niederle, J. Bidlo, T. Masaryk, K. Jireček etc.). A conclusion has been made about the richness of the Czech Slavic studies with elements of Hrushevsky studies.

### REFERENCES

1. Bidlo J. [Review] Mychajlo Hruševs'kyj, Istorija Ukraïny–Rusy. Tomu devjatoho perša polovyna. *Časopis národního musea*. 1931. Roč. CV. S. 130–131.
2. Bidlo J. [Review] Ukraina, naukovyj tr'òchmisjačnyk ukrainoznavstva za rok 1924. *Časopis národního musea*. 1925. Roč. XCIX. S. 83–87.
3. Bidlo J. Michajlo Hruševskij. *Prager Presse*. 1926. № 267. S. 5.
4. Bidlo J. *Michal Hruševs'kyj*. Praha, 1935. 43 s.
5. Bidlo J. Mychajlo Hruševs'kyj. *Slavische Rundschau*. 1935. Roč. 7. S. 62.
6. Bidlo J. Zprávy. *Časopis národního musea. Oddíl duchovědný*. 1937. Roč. CXI. S. 156–157.
7. Charvat V. [Review] Михайло Грушевський: Впливи чеського національного руху XIV–XV вв. в українськiм життiу i творчостi... *Slovanský Přehled*. 1927. Roč. XIX. S. 546.
8. Charvat V. [Review] Україна. Науковий двохмісячник. *Slovanský Přehled*. 1927. Roč. XIX. S. 72–73.
9. Charvat V. Časopisy. *Slovanský Přehled*. 1926. XVIII. S. 481–482.
10. Dr. V. V. Michajlo Hrušovskij zemřel. *Lidové noviny*. 1934. 27 listopada. S. 4.
11. Hájek Z. Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1929. Roč. XXXV. S. 224.
12. Hájek Z. Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1932. Roč. XXXVIII. S. 627.
13. Hájek Z. Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1934. Roč. XL. S. 671.

14. Hruševs'kyj M. Sjednoceni východního slovanstva a expansivní plány na Balkáně v letech 1654–1655. *Z dějin Východní Evropy a Slovanstva*, in: *Sborník věnovaný Jaroslavu Bidlovi, profesoru Karlovy University k šedesátým narozeninám*. V Praze, A. Bečková. 1928. S. 340–345.

15. М. Н. Der Ukraine Glanz und Niedergang (M. Hruševs'kyj: Geschichte der Ukraine). *Prager Presse*. 1931. № 99. S. 8.

16. Slavik J. Michajlo Hruševskýj. *Slovanský Přehled*. 1934. Roč. XXVI. S. 311.

17. Tichý F. Michajlo Hruševskýj. *Slovanský Přehled*. 1926. Roč. XVIII. S. 643.

18. Zprávy. *Český Časopis Historický*. 1927. Roč. XXXIII. S. 677.

19. Грушевський М. Впливи чеського національного руху XIV–XV вв. в українськiм життiю i творчостi, як проблема дослiду. Кiлька замiток i дезидерат. *Записки НТШ*. 1925. Т. CLI–CLIII. Ст. 1–13.

20. Тельвак В. Чеська грушевськiана першої третини ХХ столiття. *Историкографiчні дослiдження в Украiнi*. 2008. Випуск 19. Ст. 240–258.

21. Чеськi адресати Михайла Грушевського. *Хронiка-2000*. 1999. Вип. 29–30. Ст. 20–25.

22. Ювiлей академiка М.С.Грушевського. 1866–1926. I. Ювiлейнi засiдання. II. Привiтання. Киiв, 1927. 143 ст.

#### **Information about the author:**

**Telvak V. P.,**

Ph D hab. (History), Assistant Professor,  
Department of World History and Special Historical Disciplines,  
Ivan Franko Drohobych State Pedagogical University  
48, M. Hrushevsky St., Drohobych, 82100, Ukraine