

## **Report on the dissertation of**

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**on the subject: "Intelektualna biografia Mykhaila Rudnyts'koho (1889-1975)**

Ukrainian historiography requires at the present moment some work at the foundations, which would include biographies of figures who were central to the aesthetic and political definition of Ukraine itself. It faces the inherent difficulty that such figures almost always lived through multiple political regimes, which requires that relatively little in he background can be held constant. The difficulty is magnified by the fact that these regimes, and especially the transition from one to the other, are the subject of extreme ideological commitment, which results in distortions and silences. These make it more difficult to react the fundamental question of the original of modern Ukrainian politics as such. The Rudnyts'kyi family provide an extreme example of the significance of Habsburg modernization and the related capacity for national choice. A biography of a figure such as Mykhailo Rudnyts'kyi is thus not only desirable as a building block in the history of Ukrainian culture, but also as a way to follow Ukrainian history back into the origins of political modernity and then through the ruptures of the twentieth century. This dissertation succeeds in these goals.

### *Methodology*

This dissertation takes the form of an intellectual biography with a theoretical introduction (chapter 1). This chapter provides concepts ("liberal," "cultural liberal") and provides a theoretical framework of "literary fields" (pp. 42-43). The two-part structure introduces certain awkwardnesses, because the reader may feel that the arguments about the figure are being made before the evidence has been presented. The introduction is also static, which gives the impression that the figure did not change over time. In revisions for book publication, much of the argumentation that is presented in chapter 1 might be usefully integrated into the narrative. A similar problem arises in the discussion of survival under German occupation and under Soviet power. When separated from the historical context, and from the particularities of Rudnyts'kyi's life, the discussion of survival (44-45) seems very abstract. It seems like the juxtaposition between the two regimes flattens into a hasty comparison (192). Yet the reader understands later that Rudnyts'kyi did have some choice about the degree to which he identified with the Soviet regime after the war. He did not have any choice about the degree to which he was understood by the German regime as a Jew. The discussion of the Soviet period chiefly concerns finding a middle ground and the tensions inherent in that effort. But during the German occupation the issues were really much simpler. During the Soviet period, the formal contrast emerges between what Rudnyt'skyi said in public and what he did in private. During the German occupation, he had no public presence; that is precisely what had to be entirely suppressed. If the issue is physical survival (46), it would seem important to ask what percentage of people with Jewish mothers physically survived the German occupation, and what percentage of Ukrainian writers physically survived Soviet power.

### *Source Base*

As would be expected in a biography of a public figure, the source base is rather broad. The candidate was able to use Ukrainian state archives as well as some Canadian and American archival sources. Rudnyts'ky's writings are used as both primary and secondary sources. Secondary literature is used to establish both the general contexts (Habsburg Galicia, interwar Poland, wartime occupations, postwar USSR) as well as to frame certain theoretical questions in the introduction. Secondary works that might be worth considering as the project is expanded would be: Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (36), to ask the question about the structure of nations and the existence of particular nations. Gellner might be right that modernization brings nations, but which ones, and why? Mary Gluck's biography of the young Lukacs (48) is valuable on the rebellion of sons against fathers and on "cultural liberalism." Deák's study of the Habsburg army (51) might help to situate the experience of Rudnyts'kyi père during his military service. Liberalism is a different proposition when you do not control the state. On liberalism and minorities and interesting U.S. perspective is Charles Mills. Shimon Redlich, of a later generation, has a memoir of Berezhany (58). Nathan Wood's study of Cracow would be valuable on the question of "Polish liberalism." (69)

### *Critique*

The concept of an intellectual might be made more central to the analysis (5). One traditional understanding is that an intellectual in certain (east European) situations must be political, because the intellectual must stand in for the absent state. Is that what Rudnyts'kyi is rebelling against? Another argument (Thomas Mann) holds that an intellectual position is political, even abstinence from politics, because it just makes room for others to carry out their politics. It seems as if this debate about what an intellectual might be worth asking at different points. Was Rudnyts'kyi a Ukrainian intellectual in the 1920s? In the 1950s? It also helps us to see the difference between the German occupation and the other periods. In translating Hamlet was Rudnyts'kyi an intellectual? I don't think so, precisely because the work had to be secret. But this is worth pondering.

In an intellectual biography the timing of influences should be made clear, at least when that is possible. Stanisław Brzozowski (78-80, 108) seems to be the most important example of an influence on the young Rudnyts'kyi, but the reader will not really learn who Brzozowski was and how he mattered. Brzozowski had an electrifying effect on Józef Czapski, essentially convincing Czapski to become a Pole. He was tremendously important to major figures such as Czesław Miłosz and Andrzej Walicki, both of whom wrote books about him. It seems like where there might be some themes to consider, since Miłosz's book is about the political difficulties of intellectuals, and Walicki's is about the possibility of a cultural Marxism. Incidentally, the references to Bergson (80) should include a discussion of Lenin. We need to know that Brzozowski and Sorel occupied were very far away from Engels (and Lenin) in interpretations of Marx. Maybe this is all not very important, because Rudnyts'kyi's youthful interest in socialism fades, but it does at least remind the reader that there was a variety of interpretations of Marx before 1917. It also sets us up for the problem of socialist realism, which is not really developed. Rudnyts'kyi admires Soviet

Ukrainian writers in the 1920s. Why is this? What exactly does he admire about them? Can we establish relationships between the thinkers Rudnyts'kyi and the writers he admired? This would also help with the chronology. It seems to matter that Rudnyts'kyi was confronted by Soviet culture in 1939 rather than in say 1927. It seems that by then he had less to admire, and so his choices would have had less to do with any "sovietophilia."

The German period probably deserves more comparisons with survival by people in similar positions and fewer direct juxtapositions with Rudnyts'kyi's Soviet periods. There is a large literature on survival, some of which is consulted (159). One major finding is that people who are assimilated and middle class and who have social contacts with non-Jews are more likely to survive. Presumably Rudnyts'kyi has a number of negative experiences beyond the ones that we know about: this is a general problem of intellectuals of Jewish origin who remain in the communist world after 1945 (people did not even know Głowiński was Jewish before *Czarne sezony*). Two recent Polish biographies of Stanisław Lem, a Polish Jew from Lwów, have brought out something of the importance of his survival here to his literary work. This might be worth consulting. In general it seems to me that 1939-1975 is a very differentiated period and deserves multiple chapters. It might be worth spending more time on the particular duties and personal characteristics of an editor. There is a good discussion of legitimation of national culture. The fact that Rudnyts'kyi was above all an editor in the interwar period deserves some more attention. The editor is a certain kind of intellectual, a certain kind of journalist, and some of them have had tremendous political and cultural influence. As an aside, it would be interesting to know by just what channels "Polish liberalism" reached Rudnyts'kyi. One of the most important Polish liberals, of an older generation of course, was Wilhelm Feldman, the editor of *Krytyka*, in Cracow but also in Lviv. Feldman was from an Orthodox Jewish background. It would be interesting to know if his example mattered in any way, or if *Krytyka* was of any importance as an example. Feldman incidentally was also the author of the best short history of Polish politics.

I am not sure that the category of "cultural sovietophilia" is doing any useful work. Usually a "-philia" is about a general attitude, not a specific conviction. It is a way of seeing the world, a set of assumptions in favor of this or that. It does not seem that Rudnyt'ski had a positive inclination to the USSR, but rather that he appreciated ukrainization or its results. In the later discussions of "sovietophilia" (131-140) there is need for more chronology. Views of ukrainization or of the USSR generally might be expected to change over the course of the 1930s. In particular, the reader wonders whether Milena Rudnyts'ka's work to bring attention to the Holodomor (which is only mentioned later, out of sequence) had any effect.

The category of liberal, once introduced in the first chapter, should be applied throughout the work. It is worth thinking first thought about just what is meant. It is entirely normal for a liberal to think that public life is a realm of rationality and private or interior life is a realm of passions or irrationality. The distinction between private and public is, arguably, normal for liberalism. So what does it mean to say that Rudnyt'ski is a cultural liberal? Does that add anything to a description of a "liberal who is not very interested in politics"? The perspective of the dissertation seems to be that Rudnyts'kyi had an unintegrated self (97) and that this made him vulnerable to Soviet power. But a liberal would not necessarily think that the self has to be integrated.

Schorske by the way is about the internal contradictions of "cultural liberalism." It is not about how "cultural liberalism" is a sustainable position that is defeated by external force. Relatedly: there is a certain awkwardness in only mentioning the spouse at the time of marriage (102) and of divorce. How does the private life fit with the public life? That is a question for a liberal, and we don't really know anything about the family. Is there something to be said here about the family of origin being more important than the family he himself founds? Is that a trend for this generation of Rudnyts'kyis in general?

A related question is the fit between Soviet power and Rudnyts'kyi's liberalism. In a certain way, the USSR gave him what he wanted: a position in a university, and so a respected position in public life. That he then could only express his thoughts in private life could seem like an extreme version of the liberal division between public and private. It might be worth asking (17, 70, 147) whether this is why it seemed natural for him to remain: that his version of liberalism in some way prepared him for such a division between public and private. Naturally, the demand from Soviet power was to blur the public back in to the private (with the self-criticism) and to blur the private back in to the public (with the informing). This is an example of his concepts that are introduced in chapter 1 might be sustained and considered throughout the dissertation.

### *General Evaluation*

The dissertation provides a pioneering biography of a crucial figure and meets the criteria to advance the candidate.

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