

CHAPTER IV

The Program

Six documents, printed in the appendices to this book, comprise the program of the Brotherhood: (1) the by-laws (*ustav*); (2) the rules (*glavnye pravila*); (3) *Zakon bozhy* (God's Law); also known as *Knyhy bytiia ukrainskoho narodu* (The Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People); (4) the appeal to brother Ukrainians; (5) a similar appeal to the Russians and the Poles; and (6) Vasyl Bilozersky's note.

The By-laws

The by-laws of the Brotherhood, which include some points made in Bilozersky's note (Appendix 6), consist of six points, setting out the premises on which the society was based. Point one proclaims that the goal of all the Slavs should be their "spiritual and political union." There follows a clarification that at the time of their union each Slavic tribe should have its independence (*samostoiatelnost*). The list of the Slavs eligible for such a union includes Ukrainians (*Yuzhno-russy*), Russians (*Severo-russy*), Belorussians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Lusatians, Serbians (*Iliro-serby*), Slovenes (*Khorutany*),¹ and Bulgarians. Point three assures that each tribe should be ruled by the people (*pravlenie narodnoe*) and should observe equality among all, as well as the Christian faith. The government of the Slavic union, its legislation, and the right to private property and education should be based on the religion of Jesus Christ (Bilozersky's note is most emphatic here). Point five elaborates that under such equality good education and pure morals should be a condition for participation in government. Finally, a general Slavic council (*sobor*), representing all the tribes, should be established. Apart from their Christian ideology, the by-laws provide the bare bones of the governmental structure of the Slavic Union. Kostomarov, in the first

version of his autobiography, dictated to N. Bilozerska, expounded further on this structure. He recommended that Russian be used, at first, as the common language of the Union, since it is "the most widely spoken," that serfdom and capital punishment be abolished, and that corporal punishment be reduced. He proposed a different distribution of the Slavic states with "two Little Russian ones," part of Galicia (Austria) being attached to one of them. Kiev should be an ex-territorial capital where the assembly (*sejm*) would gather. The general assembly should consist of two houses, one with elected deputies. Each state should have its own *sejm*, which would be convened every year. It should also have a president, chosen for four years, and foreign and interior ministers. The Union would have a small army, and each state a militia. Because of the unequal numbers among the different nationalities, some tribes would in fact be less equal than others.² Some scholars, such as Zaionchkovsky and Papazian, pointed to similarities between Kostomarov's outline and the Decembrist Nikita Muravev's constitution, but it should also be stated that there is a resemblance to the constitution of the United States. There are also similarities with the federal structures advanced by the Polish Society of United Brethren, especially with the Brotherhood of St. Stanislas.³

The Rules

The second document, "The Chief Rules of the Society," consisted of eleven points. The goal of the society was to disseminate its ideas among young people. Each member on admission must swear an oath, and if he were to be apprehended he should not betray his brethren. This rule was evidently not enforced. Point three specified that the society had a duty to help the families of those of its members apprehended by the enemy. Each member could induct new members without revealing to them the names of other members. All members should be Slavs, and complete equality would prevail among them. Each member could keep his faith, but the society would try to reconcile their differences. Point eight asked for the abolition of serfdom and the introduction of universal literacy. Because the Brotherhood was a Christian society, it rejected the atheistic belief in the end justifying the means. Several members of the society might hold separate meetings as long as these did not contradict the rules and ideas of the society as a whole. Finally, each member was reminded that the society was secret.

It is clear that the society was non-violent and that it aimed at education and indoctrination. Its flexible internal organization was also its weakness. From further investigation it is certain that both the by-laws and the rules were the work of three men: Kostomarov, Hulak, and Bilozersky. The contribution of each is clearly discernible.

The Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People

The central document of the Brotherhood is *Zakon bozhy* or *Knyhy bytiia ukrainskoho narodu*. It is much longer than the by-laws and the rules, and it has great richness and density. Four copies of *Zakon bozhy* have been preserved. The first two copies, one in Ukrainian and the other in Russian translation, are Kostomarov's, the third copy, in Russian, is Hulak's, and the fourth, in Ukrainian, is by Navrotsky (for the use of Kulish and Bilozersky). Naturally there are some discrepancies among them, but these are minor. According to Professor Papazian, who had access to the archives, yet another copy, written by a police scribe, was made for the tsar to read.⁴ Kostomarov's copies are usually regarded as the most authoritative.

The document is written in biblical style, with 104, or sometimes 109, main points or verses. It is a condensed history of the world, with a strong emphasis on the Slavic countries. We are first told that God, the creator of the world, has ordained the division of people into tribes, each with its own territory. The purpose was to enable them to worship God even better. However, people forgot their God, invented their own little gods, and started to wage wars. The result was human unhappiness, poverty, and discord. All these are regarded as the Lord's just punishment, the worst being slavery. Yet God is not mocked, so that while kings and rulers sold themselves to the devil, the true God remained unshaken. He chose the Hebrews and sent Moses to them, who established order based on law. But the Hebrews elected a king who became an autocrat and, like the devil himself, vied with God. The Lord chastized the Hebrews, who lost their kingdom. Next came the Greeks, who wanted no king, but wished to be free and equal. For a while they flourished. But the Greeks invented their own gods, had slaves, and so offended God, who punished them. After them came the mighty Romans, who, too, offended God by having an Emperor. They triumphed briefly until God took pity on the human race and sent his own Son to redeem them. Christ's message was that all men were brethren and that they should love God and one another. He preached this to the people, and the Roman authorities became afraid. They apprehended Jesus and sentenced him to death. However, Christ rose from the dead, and his disciples, the poor fishermen, spread the gospel to all the corners of the world. Thus, the Christians multiplied, despite terrible persecution by the Romans. The Roman emperors tried to resort to craft and accepted Christianity without relinquishing their powers. They believed that it was possible to be both a Christian and a master. But all power was from God, and the worldly masters did not know this. They desecrated Christian freedom. Blessing was given to various peoples, among them the Slavs. The Greeks, the French, the Italians, the Spaniards, and the Germans attained some power, but eventually lost it because of their idolatrous ways. Some philosophers