

CHAPTER I

Antecedents

The short-lived Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Kiev (1845–47) has been regarded as, first, the birthplace of the modern Ukrainian identity; second, an early centre of federalist thought in the Russian Empire; and third, a secret society of religious-minded intellectuals. It was all these things and more. The story of the Brotherhood, supported by documentary evidence, has been told in Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and French,¹ but each time with some degree of reserve and circumspection—dictated not only by the purely political considerations that guide scholarly works in the Soviet Union, but also by the inability to recognize the place of the Brotherhood in Ukrainian intellectual history. Yet the story of the Brotherhood is not merely fascinating in itself, but contains and highlights those specific concerns that have characterized Ukrainians in their historical continuum spanning the last three centuries. The seeds of a Christian-based, federalist, and, at the same time, national-autonomist ideal in Ukraine may be clearly discerned in the eighteenth century. These seeds matured and were harvested during the period of the Brotherhood's existence, but they continued to nurture the Ukrainian intelligentsia for a long time to come. The vestiges of federalist and autonomist ideas may be perceived even today in the Soviet constitution. However transformed, they attest to an evident archetype in the modern Ukrainian psyche.

The beginnings of this long story go back to the times before modern nationalism was born. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Ukraine was in the final stages of absorption and domination by Russia, which began after the treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654. For more than a century, from 1648 to 1764, the Hetman state, established after a successful uprising against the Poles by the Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, continued to exist as a *sui generis* society of "estates"

(*Ständestaat*). The Cossack government, based on regional military regiments, was spread over the Kiev, Bratslav, and Chernihiv palatinates. After 1700 it was limited to the Left Bank of the Dnieper and the Kiev enclave only, with capitals successively in Chyhyryn, Baturyn, and Hlukhiv. A vassal of Poland and, after 1654, of Russia, the Hetman state possessed administrative and legal practices inherited from Poland and Lithuania, which, after the state's demise, survived until the reign of Nicholas I (the Lithuanian Statute was abolished in 1835, and the Magdeburg Law, regulating Ukrainian municipalities, in 1831–35). "Important elements in Ukrainian society," wrote E. Thaden,

—especially among the burghers, clergy and Cossacks—stubbornly resisted the growing economic and political power of the Polish magnates and *szlachta* as well as the allure of Polish secular and religious culture and civilization. Orthodox [church] brotherhoods and schools had flourished in the Right-Bank Ukraine during the seventeenth century. In 1632 the Kiev Metropolitan, Peter Mohyla, organized a collegium, which, as the Kievan Academy, was the first institution of higher education for the Orthodox Eastern Slavs and which trained numerous Ukrainian nobles and clergy for political and church careers in the Commonwealth, the Ukraine, and Russia.²

This Ukrainian contribution to Russian education, mostly in theology, proved to be significant, although short-lived, as Russia became more interested in direct contacts with Western secular culture beginning in the eighteenth century.

The cultural and political identity of Ukrainians during the Hetman era was under constant pressure and attack by Russia. Despite the promises at Pereiaslav to "grant special privileges to the Cossack Host,"³ the Hetman state was abolished by the tsar in two stages (in 1764 and, finally, in 1781), and the Cossack stronghold of the Zaporozhian Sich was destroyed in 1775 on the orders of Catherine II. Large numbers of the Cossack officer corps (*starshyna*) were absorbed into the Russian gentry and nobility (*dvorianstvo*), while the Ukrainian educational system was curbed, abolished (Mohyla Academy was closed down in 1817), and replaced with a Russian one. The parish brotherhood at the monastery of the Epiphany, established in 1616, which was the progenitor of the Mohyla Academy, declined and was closed down. It was the name "brotherhood," with all its historic connotations, that later appealed to the Cyrilo-Methodians, who chose it as a name for their secret organization. While the Mohyla Academy and the brotherhoods declined, the establishment of the first university in Ukraine, in Kharkiv in 1805, was achieved entirely through the efforts of the local gentry.

The forced integration of Ukraine into the Russian Empire evoked various responses. There were, of course, those who welcomed it and