

## I.

### **THE NOBLE BOYAR LINEAGE OF THE SHEPTYTSKY'S**

The spirit of democracy that predominated at the end of the World War I, closed the era of the old dynasties such as those of the tsars of Russia and the kaisers of Germany and Austria, and also challenged the existence of many noble families. The numerous newly-formed states introduced agricultural reforms that stripped the nobility of their vast holdings which were the bulwark of their power and influence. In some countries even the use of the titles of nobility was abolished. In some countries under communist domination, families of the nobility disappeared without any vestige. The concept of nobility in the modern democratic world became passé. And yet, how ignoble it would be if we failed to acknowledge the contributions the nobility made over the centuries to world culture, to church life, to their own countries and people before they left the world scene. Overlooking the bleaker aspects of the era of nobility, we can only hope that today's elite in spirit or wealth could emulate their predecessors.

The noble classes were titled princes, counts, or barons and were the elite of their social milieu. They were privileged individuals, not only under the law, but also because of a dimly defined human destiny. Generally they maintained themselves comfortably on their family wealth or because of the exalted positions they held in government. As such, they were able to hand on the traits of noble breeding to their children. This material security, moreover, influenced their attitudes. They were self-assured, ambitious and much more prone to idealism than were people at the lower levels of society who were laden by the cares of daily life. What the nobleman inherited or acquired with ease, the gifted common man had to struggle for. To the man of noble class all doors and roads were open. Everywhere he enjoyed respect and privileged trust among the heads of state.

From princely times the Ukrainian nation had its own nobility, the boyars, who were "*the prince's better people*". They occupied leading posts in the royal court, in state offices and the royal army. After the demise of feudalism, they remained loyal sons of their nation. But when Ukraine came under the dominion of the king of Poland, several Ukrainian noble families: the princes Ostrozjky, Sapieha, Sangushki, Chartoryski, Vyshnevetski and others, succumbed to Polish influence because of the educa-