

The Mission of the Ukrainian Fulbright Association --- A Sovereign Ukraine

Since the 2004 pre-election campaign when trains in Ukraine carried maps of Ukraine divided by two colors, it became common to use the phrase “two Ukraines.” Mostly it was misused and continues to be misused to this day by those politicians who in Freudian terms either believe this or want to benefit from it. According to Liubomyr Beley today when the post-election Ukraine is being torn apart by the revenge of the victors, the confusion of the opposition and the apathy of the average Ukrainians, it is undoubtedly very appropriate to look at the source of contemporary Ukrainian culture, to the inheritance of the great educators Cyril and Methodius. In the reality of Ukraine 2010 this is an effective alternative to the pragmatism and the ruling political expediency¹.

It is important to turn to the authentic inheritance of the equal to the apostles Cyril and Methodius and not to the one which was forced on us by Soviet ideologists and which continues to be propagated by their current followers. Cyril and Methodius did not create the Cyrillic alphabet, they created the Glagolitic alphabet. They did not fight Catholicism since they lived some 200 years prior to the church division. And, in fact, Cyril (Constantine), as a lay person, and could not Christianize Transcarpathia as propagandized.²

The first Slavic teachers, in contrast to their contemporaries in Rome and Constantinople, focused in their sermons on the early Christian ideals of church unity, tolerance, democracy and equal rights of all peoples. These worldview principles became the fundamentals of the formation of Ukrainian sacred cultural tradition, became the backbone of early Kyiv Christianity, demarking its main theses, later inherited by Orthodox Christianity. They included democracy of church life, independence of church from state, national characteristics of the traditional cultural sphere and sacred art, the church’s doctrinal openness to other Christian centers of West and East.³

Cyril and Methodius fulfilled their mission – to make it possible for Slavs to converse with God in their own language. Moreover, deeply respecting the western tradition of Christianity, they turned to the Pope with a request to recognize their Slavic translations of liturgical texts and to ordain the candidates which they had educated, and presented the Pope with the relics of St. Clementine, Pope of Rome, which Cyril had found during his missionary work near Kherson in Crimea, on the territory of current Ukraine.⁴

Such parallels with the mission of Sts. Cyril and Methodius based on the ideals of unity, tolerance, democracy, come to mind when I begin to analyze the mission of the Ukrainian Fulbright Association founded in Kyiv some eleven years ago. More than a decade of activity by Fulbright alumni, numbering more than 700, underlines the historical commonality of Ukrainians. Fulbright alumni – scholars, young specialists, students – represent all regions of Ukraine, such as Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Zakarpattia, Luhansk, etc.

The Fulbright Association organizes annual conferences and occasional seminars addressing the research interests of Fulbrighters in USA and Ukraine. The wide array of topics include: “Ethical Principles in Scholarship and Education;” “The Ukrainian Project in the 21st Century;” “Idea of a University;” “Ukraine and the World: Yearning for Change;” “Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Ukraine;” “Image of Ukraine in the World – Actualities and Aspirations.” The association has always worked for one Ukraine. The issue of some sort of “two Ukraines” has never emerged. In gathering at the annual conferences or at the scholarly seminars, we all feel a united body of one country and we focus on those values which unite Ukraine as well as Europe and the world.

Certainly during more than a decade of the Association’s activity an evolution has occurred in the scholarly views of the Fulbrighters and changes have happened in their career paths. However, the Fulbright Association has never questioned its priorities. They remain the existence of a civil society, one which alone can control government (regardless of its flags and slogans) as well as a sovereign Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Fulbright Alumni Association will always work towards that unity.

Myroslava Antonovych

President, Ukrainian Fulbright Association

¹ Любомир Белей. Словянська місія // Український тиждень. – 2010. – № 21. – С. 47.

² Там само. – С. 46.

³ Олег Щурик. Святий Климент Римський — символ єднання християнства // www.klyment-church.org.ua/index.php?id=our_kl

⁴ Любомир Белей. – Вказ. праця. – С. 47.