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Subject : BAZHAN, Mykola of Kiev, Ukr SSR [ ]

Source : ~~MOB~~ AS SOGOWRY/54  
Project HERCULES/WHM

Date : 26 Oct 1965

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2007

1. Source met Subject on 9 Oct 1965, <sup>in Rome</sup> at the hotel "Plaza" in Via del Corso where Subject stayed together with his wife. He was one of the Soviet representatives to the Conference of European Writers. DIEV of Soviet Embassy was the one who gave the Source the address of Subject's hotel, on telephone. The meeting itself was arranged by Source on telephone, too. Subject remembered Source from last year and gladly agreed to see him in his hotel. Source arrived there at approx. 17.30 and they talked for more than one hour. Subject remarked at the very beginning that he had to go to the Embassy and quite equivocally when smiling added: "You know that when the Embassy calls you, you certainly have to be there..."

2. The actual conversation started with Subject informing Source that UNGARETTI was elected President of the Writers' Association this time, and his admiration for vitality of that 87 years old Italian poet. TVARDOVSKY and a Georgian were elected as Vice Presidents and thus Subject had to give his post as Vice President to that Georgian. "Ukraine gave her place - he continued - to Georgia this time in order to satisfy Georgians". According to Subject, Georgians were quite apprehensive about omitting them at various international forums and should have strongly protested against it.

As to TVARDOVSKY, Subject said, he was probably of Byelorussian origin, quite probably that his ancestors were kripaks of Polish landlord Twardowski. Subject was of a very high opinion about TVARDOVSKY (the writer) and described him as one of the most talented at the present. He stemmed from Smolensk-region.

3. About himself Subject told Source that he stemmed from Kamianets-Podilskyi, has a daughter, aged 36, married to a Jew, they have a small boy who goes now to a kindergarten. At daughter's house they Speak Russian but the boy knows also Ukrainian because he has to speak Ukrainian at the kindergarten. Smiling Subject added that his grandson only swears in Russian. His wife stems from Kharkov.

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4. Asked about the position of Ukrainian in Eastern oblasts of the Ukraine Subject stressed that the usage of Ukrainian was recently remarkably increasing. This applied also to Donbas in which Source was particularly interested. To prove his assertion Subject gave the following example: he was elected as delegate to the Supreme Soviet by a small town in Donbass, so small and quiet, that he could not even remember its name. Nevertheless, during the election campaign he had to go there to make speeches. He was sure that he will have to speak in Russian thinking about the situation in Donbas in the past. He was, however, quite surprised when the first speaker introducing him began to talk in Ukrainian. So did the others who followed him. Subject realized then that he will have to speak in Ukrainian too and so he did for two hours.

Subject added that of course there was a mixed population in Donbass at the present - Ukrainians, Russians, Tatars and other. But important fact was that Ukrainian element was not only increasing in quantity but also gave more and more <sup>of</sup> its "imprint" on civic & cultural activities. Particularly Ukrainians from Western Ukraine are contributing very much in this respect. There are quite a few of them now in Donbass, most of them came in search for better jobs and higher standard of living. On this occasion he added that nowadays it was everybody's dream to obtain a car. "A car is the masses' dream" - as he put it.

5. Much worse is the situation in the ethnic Ukrainian territories of the Russian SFSR, in Kuban, Voronizh and Kursk regions. Efforts are being made to improve it but it's not easy. Books are being sent there and last year mass celebrations of Shevchenko were organized in those territories. But there are no Ukrainian schools. Asked why, Subject only sighed and replied "It hurts us very much, we feel very sorry for that..." but avoided direct answer.

To the question whether there could be any chances to start action for inclusion of <sup>those</sup> Ukrainian ethnic territories into Ukrainian SSR, Subject replied that "this is a very complex and delicate matter". There is also a strong Russian layer in the population and moreover Don-Kozaks are rather anti-Ukrainian. In case of Kuban there would arise a complex problem of the city of Rostov which would be really difficult to solve. Then Subject added that Ukrainians in the Ukraine are today mainly concerned with retention and strengthening of existing Ukrainian potential within the Ukrainian SSR itself. Incidentally, even here they meet some

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problems, as for instance, in case of Crimea, where there are entire rayons without Ukrainian schools. Asked why, Subject replied: "Because they don't allow them ...." and interrupted the sentence indicating that he would rather not speak about it.

As to Ukrainian ethnic territories in Poland Subject thought it was encouraging that more and more Ukrainians were returning to them from resettled areas in the Western Poland. As to Khrushchev's plan to include the Ukrainian territory up to Yaroslav into Ukrainian SSR, if such has existed at all, Subject thought it unrealistic at that time. He was sure however, that in the future this problem will be raised between Ukraine and Poland and an eventual return of Ukrainian territories to the Ukraine was not impossible.

6. Source asked Subject about the actual situation in the Ukraine and mentioned the fact that quantity of Ukrainian books published in the UkrSSR was usually very small. Subject confirmed it and added that e.g. a wonderful translation of Odyssea by Ten and <sup>of</sup> Decameron by Lukash were printed in such a small number that today only through special favors one could find a copy among friends. "It's really shameful - he continued - when the book is being drawn out clandestinely from under the shelf as though it were a forbidden one and given to you in such a secretive manner as to prevent others from seeing it".

7. To Source's comment that such things would never happen if Ukraine were an independent state Subject did not reply directly but instead pointed out that their main problem nowadays was the shortage of Ukrainian intelligentsia. When Source remarked that Subject's statement seemed to be incongruous with the official statistics on education, he replied: "Yes, there are schools, but what kind of schools?" "Only eight-grades. Those are for everybody. But what are they being taught there? A real culture? No! They teach them how to clean rosted iron-plates!" "They prepare <sup>students</sup> for practical but not to read Shevchenko, Goethe, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare or Pushkin for there is no time for them." "And then what culture can this youth bring out from the school?" "And there is no wonder that later such people occupy responsible positions in publishing houses, and in bookstores, and behave irresponsibly as they usually do nowadays".

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"We have too few universities - Subject continued - and intelligentsia can be brought up only at good universities". "Yes, intelligentsia, the intelligentsia is our main problem today"- he concluded.

8. Asked about the latest Plenum of the CC CPSU and subsequent reforms, Subject restricted himself to the comment that " they were important from the point of view that they rendered all cultural-educational institutions to the competence of republics". He did not touch on other aspects.

9. Time was running short and Subject asked Source if he had anything special still to say, because soon he will have to leave for the Embassy. Source replied that he would like to mention at least one issue namely what were the chances for sending Korotych, Vinhranovsky, Drach or someone of Shestydesiatniki to Italy. Recently here was Evtushenko who made a huge propaganda, not for the entire Soviet Union even, but for Russia only. Subject interrupted him at that point and smilingly said: "Ho, ho..!" implying what else could you expect from him. Then he added that Source's idea was very good and he will make efforts to implement it. A similar affair they were going to organize in the near future in Paris, France, something in the style of a chamber concert without hopak and sharavary. They (from Kiev) are going to send one of their best solo singer so good that even solo singer of Milanese Scala would envy her.

According to Subject most suitable for Italy is DRACH. VINHRANOVSKYI was fully absorbed by cinematography. Actually DRACH too, was preparing at the present a script. But he could come to Italy. The only trouble would be with translating his poems into Italian.

Source interjected that he himself would gladly help in that. Subject thanked and thought that ~~maybe~~ the whole affair would be best organized by Italian themselves in direct contact with the Union of Ukrainian Writers.

10. In the meantime came Subject's wife and reminded him that it was time to go to the Embassy. Subject introduced her to Source. She began to talk in Russian but soon switched over to Ukrainian. She was quite surprised when Source told her that he was teaching in Rome in a Ukrainian grammar school. She never heard about it though already had been to Rome four times. Subject confirmed that there was a Ukrainian grammar school in Rome. Subject's wife made quite a positive impression. She seemed to like Italy very much and as she put it "simply admired this country".

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Subject saw Source to the hotel door and on the way told him that he also met here DrROSTETSKY with his wife and found him a very pleasant individual.

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