

Nezhyvyi O. I.

RESILIENT SOUL

(dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of Professor Ivan Bilohub)

January 20, 2013 marked the 100th anniversary of Ivan Mikhailovych Bilohub, a literary scholar and a teacher. He dedicated forty-five years of his life to work in Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University.

Ivan Bilohub spent his childhood and adolescence in Voznesens'ke Village in Krasnohrad District (Kharkiv Oblast). Although the village is ten kilometers from the district center Krasnohrad, today its population is only thirty people. In 1929, I. Bilohub finished Krasnohrad labor school and, after working for several months in Kharkiv Serp i Molot Plant, joined the courses for working youth at Kharkiv Institute of Pedagogical Vocational Education. Since 1930, he was a student of the School of Philology in this institute, which, in 1933, became Kharkiv University and, thus, regained its status of one of the oldest universities in Ukraine. Therefore, I. Bilohub developed literary and artistic ideals, interest in research already during the study at the university, which he graduated from in 1934. His memoirs *Nekrolog (Obituary)*, first published in 1988, confirm this statement. A boy from village, he was zealous in studying at the university. His memoirs tell us that in those days the University community saluted its most prominent graduates: O. O. Potebnya, I. I. Sreznevsky, M. F. Sumtsov. Students enthusiastically attended the lectures of their favorite professors: O. I. Bilets'ky, L. A. Bulakhovs'ky, O. H. Rosenberg. The youth was also interested in the literary and artistic events in Kharkiv, which was the capital at that time. They met with the writers Mykola Kulish, Leonid Pervomaisky, Petro Panch, Volodymyr Sosyura. Ivan Bilohub wrote reviews of new Kharkiv literary works for radio.

The Berezil' theater staged the favorite plays by Les Kurbas: *The Haidamaks* by Taras Shevchenko, *Maklena Grasa* by Mykola Kulish: "There was one more way to connect with Berezil' – with the help of the magazine *Masovy Teatr*. Leonid Boloban, the deputy editor, organized a group of young teatrologists. Each member was to study the life and work of one of the actors and write an article fashioned as a literary portrait. I wanted to write about A. Buchma or Krushelnytsky, but no such luck – I ended up writing about Hirnyak. I would come to the theater, talk to the actor, try to understand the system of Kurbas, his demands to the actors, the unity of rhythm and time, as well as other concepts that I did not quite understand. But, a month before the anniversary, we were told that everything was canceled. Kurbas was suspended from his work. We knew nothing about the reasons. We had to stop talking about what happened, that's all. Berezil' lost not only its director, but its name and value in the theatrical life of the republic and abroad" [4, 26].

Still studying at the university, I. Bilohub worked as a teacher of the secondary school No. 40 in Kharkiv and, since 1936, started his career as a junior research fellow at Taras Shevchenko Art Gallery and as a Ukrainian literature professor at Kharkiv Library Institute, first as the assistant of O. H. Rosenberg, a professor of foreign literature, then as a teacher of Ukrainian literature. He conducted his literary research, including the history of creation of Taras Shevchenko's monument in Kharkiv. Unfortunately, this research work became a reason for his unjust arrest... The young scholar adamantly refused to add the director of the Art Gallery as the co-author of his already completed research. As a result, a denunciation was made, and, on April 29, 1937, I. Bilohub was arrested.

In his memoirs *Nekrolog (Obituary)*, we are reading: "... I was brought to the investigator on Sunday. They obviously needed more working days per week. All these night meetings and rides in "paddy-wagons" that preceded this meeting gave me enough time to think. So I thought about the shadow that covered me as well as many others. Professor Ya. S. Bludov, rector of Kharkiv State University, was sent to Pechora by so-called "special council of the NKVD". His sister Lyuba was my wife. So I am a relative of an "enemy of the people". And this fact alone is sufficient to

encourage prosecution. Shortly before Yakiv Semenovych Bludov's arrest, there was an article in a republican newspaper that slandered him and one or two other philosophers. It was a signal. Bludov was suspended from the leadership of the University.

Once the article was published, Lyuba and I visited Yakiv Semenovych in his new apartment, which he was just "granted". Large empty rooms would look uninhabited, but for a table and a bed.

The host was overwhelmed by everything what happened. We tried to console him, but to no avail. Being a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, he understood the situation deeper than we, naive youth. He knew M. O. Skrypnyk, who shot himself dead. He knew a lot more as well, so he felt doomed" [4, 35].

During the perquisition in Bilohub's apartment, the following "incriminating evidence" was found: bibliographical reference book *Desyat' Rokiv Ukrayins'koyi Literatry. 1917 – 1927 (Ten Years of Ukrainian Literature. 1917 – 1927)* (Kharkiv, 1928), edited by Serhiy Pylypenko, and 18 issues of the journal *Ilustrovana Ukrayina (Illustrated Ukraine)* (Lviv, 1913). The resolution of the investigator of July 12, 1937, classified these publications as "counter-revolutionary nationalist literature" and, therefore, decided that "these books are material to the case and should be entered into evidence in the criminal case against Bilohub Ivan Mikhailovych" [3, 9]. The absurdity of this accusation was obvious. After all, this literature was available to readers in libraries. The next document in the "case" was the "Statement of Destruction of the Counter-revolutionary Nationalist Literature", dated the same day. The counter-revolutionary nature of the publications was easy to detect in those days: the editor of the book, the writer Serhiy Pylypenko, was persecuted for political reasons, and the journal *Ilustrovana Ukrayina (Illustrated Ukraine)* was published abroad, i.e., in Lviv; moreover, the publisher was Prosvita.

On September 7, 1937, special tribunal of the Kharkiv Regional Court sentenced I. Bilohub to four years in prison. He was accused of the possession of counter-revolutionary nationalist literature, as well as of criticizing the Soviet art

policy in conversations with the director of the Art Gallery and his deputy; also, in 1935, in a conversation with a former classmate, he praised counter-revolutionaries Kurbas and Hirnyak (i.e., the director Les Kurbas and the actor Yosyp Hirnyak [added by O. N]) and even listened to an anti-Soviet joke that he told.

I. Bilohub took to heart the unjust and cruel sentence, but still hoped to restore justice. For this reason, on October 14th, he appealed the tribunal's decision to the Republic Supreme Court, emphasizing with despair that he was not a criminal and that he was only 24 and did not want to waste those most precious and labor intensive years of life. However, the Supreme Court did not change the verdict. In the late autumn of 1937, the train with convicts arrived at the station Taiga. He started his work in timber harvesting. Later, I. Bilohub recalled: "Living in a camp in Taiga station was, probably, a happy period of my sentence. Dramatic events were still far ahead. Hardly could I foresee them. Quite on the contrary, during the first days after arrival in Taiga, I persistently sought truth and justice. I appealed to all prosecution and court authorities with motions, requests, petitions to reargue the case, elicit truth, and release a wrongfully convicted person.

I said "requests". No, this word does not reflect the nature of my appeals to myrmidons of the law. Along with formal petitions, I wrote informal letters, not particularly caring about the proper tone. About a dozen or more letters started with the following words: "Bandits of the special tribunal of the Kharkiv Regional Court committed an atrocious crime..." Then I would describe in detail, substantiate, and attempt to prove my innocence. In vain! Sometimes the answer was: "Denied", sometimes "no reasons to review the case"; sometimes there was no answer whatsoever. Patience and hope to find the truth were exhausted" [4, 43].

In June of 1938, I. Bilohub was transferred to an "Ustvymlah" camp near the village Voyezhal' in the Komi Republic. It was there that I. Bilohub ventured an escape. It may have looked like a senseless act of a desperate prisoner, but the explanation of the fugitive was logically clear and brief: the protest against the unjust sentence. Having determined that the escape constitutes an attempt to continue counter-revolutionary activities in Ukraine, the camp trial comprised of three

individuals added three years to the term of sentence. At the end of 1938, he tried to escape one more time, and, two days later, the investigator received the following explanation: I will be trying to escape again and again, until you kill me. One more quick trial and three more years added...

The term of unjust imprisonment ended in 1946, as one year of the sentence was remitted. I. Bilohub recalled later: “That year, had they not remitted the sentence, I would have broken down. I had no consolation, even among kindred spirits. No freedom whatsoever” [4, 57]. However, having arrived in his home village, the former “prisoner” faced hostile attitude of the authorities, so he returned to Ukhta and took a freelance job with the research field party “Oil and Gas Prospecting”.

At the end of 1946, Ivan Bilohub moved to Voroshilovgrad and, later, became a lecturer in a regional lecture bureau. Following the advice of an experienced lawyer, he decided not to mention the fact of his conviction. Since then, filling employment-related forms, he would write that in 1934 he graduated from Kharkiv State University, then taught Ukrainian literature at Kharkiv Library Institute, and, since 1942, worked in “Oil and Gas Prospecting” in Moscow, as this where it was headquartered. This bizarre record would appear many times. It was only in the late 1980s that Ivan Bilohub wrote in his autobiography that on April 29, 1937 he was arrested for political reasons, served his sentence in a Siberian camp (Taiga station) and, from 1938 to 1946, was in “Ustvymlah” in the Komi Republic.

Ivan Bilohub decided to move to Voroshilovgrad because his elder brother, Luka Mikhailovych Bilohub, worked there in a pedagogical institute since 1939. A graduate of the School of Geography of Kharkiv State University, he defended his doctoral dissertation and became the head of the Department of Geography. During the war, he was a fire-unit commander and was decorated for war services. Until 1964, L. M. Bilohub chaired the Department of Geography. He became a famous scholar and authored articles in encyclopedias, the monograph *Luhansk Region*, and textbooks. He died in 1967.

In 1949, I. M. Bilohub was offered by the head of the Department of Ukrainian Literature H. M. Honcharuk to work as an assistant professor, teaching courses on

Ukrainian Literature and the History of Ukrainian Literature of the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th Centuries. Also, he published the article *Donbas Workers in Modern Literature* in a regional newspaper. But after this publication he had to keep a low profile until 1956, as it was only following the relaxation of the totalitarian regime that he was able to publish his works in scientific journals and popular press without restriction or interference. Although most publications of those years were ideologically perfect and dedicated to atheism in Ukrainian literature and atheistic education, it was not always helpful, since, for example, he was able to defend his dissertation only in 1967, when he was already 54. It became possible after the Supreme Court of the USSR officially rehabilitated him in 1965 for the absence of the event of crime.

Since 1971 and for about 20 years, I. Bilohub chaired the Department of Ukrainian Literature (in 1973, he was elected for this position on a competitive basis) of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko State Pedagogical Institute, fostering love for literature and the profession of a language teacher. In 1980, he was awarded professorship, the rank he held until his death on August 22, 1994.

Ivan Bilohub became famous mainly for his research on regional literature. In particular, in 1963, the journal *Donbas* published his article with the eloquent title *Eternal Traditions*, in which he stated that *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* gave rise to the literary history of our region. This publication was followed by the research on the literary organization *Zaboy (Working Face)*, reviews on the books of his fellow countrymen, and the articles commemorating Ukrainian writers. Thus, on April 3, 1968, the regional newspaper *Luganskaya Pravda (Luhansk Truth)* featured Ivan Bilohub's article dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Oles' Honchar. In this article, Ivan Bilohub expressed his appreciation of the novel *The Cathedral* despite the indiscriminate criticism prevalent in its reviews of those days. He emphasized that the talented writer stood up to murderers of the beautiful – poachers of the material and spiritual life of the people of his native land; he further argued that the characters in the novel were revealed through their attitude to history, centuries-long culture, and the heroic past.

But it was Luhansk region literature that was truly Ivan Bilohub's aspiration. He was intolerant to those who tried to justify the existence of a unique "Donbas culture". In the same way, he strongly opposed the consequences of the totalitarian regime under the guidance of the party, as well as the attempts "... to deprive the people of its historical heritage and cultural experience, knowledge, and skills of previous generations, its historical experience, bring it into a state of spiritual desolation ..." [6, 4].

Already at the end of his life, Ivan Bilohub revised his regional studies in the book *Literaturno-krayeznavcha Luhanshchyna (Lugansk Region through the Prism of Literature and Regional Studies)* (the first part was published in 1993 and the second one – after the author's death in 1994, thanks to the literary critic Yuriy Yenenko). In this paper, the scholar substantiates a number of important theoretical statements. First and foremost, literary regional studies include a range of sources of historical and ethnic, artistic and aesthetic, moral and ethical nature and are an important tool in the formation of culture. Secondly, literary and artistic life of Luhansk region, from the period of Kyivan Rus-Ukraine's *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, is part of Ukrainian culture and has age-old traditions that remained uninterrupted, although suffered from the government oppression, especially in the 19th and into the 20th Centuries.

Meanwhile, I. Bilohub studied the life and work of the Russian writers A. Kol'tsov, A. Chekhov, V. Garshin, who visited Luhansk region, emphasizing the specific examples of their love and respect for the Ukrainian people. Thus, unlike the majority of scholars who declared the one-way influence of the Russian literature on the Ukrainian one, he offered striking facts that illustrated the importance of Ukrainian culture in the literary and linguistic heritage of Volodymyr Dahl, stating in his foreword to Yu. Yenenko's book *About Cossack from Luhansk*: "Literary, scientific linguistic, and social work of V. Dahl made him a true brother and a real friend of the Ukrainian people, which he was not for the Russian autocracy with its oppressive policy" [7, 8].

Another aspect of the literary interests of I. M. Bilohub was the life and work of Shevchenko National Prize winners – writers Ivan Svitlychny, Mykola Rudenko, Vasil' Holoborod'ko, as well as former political prisoners – Yuriy Slipko, Ivan Savych, whose life and work were inseparably connected with Luhansk region.

He was also interested in the study of visual arts, which found its expression in his research into the work of the sculptors and artists of Luhansk. Among the most successful research papers was the preface to the album *Vasyl' Fedchenko* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo. 1974).

His memoirs *Nekrolog (Obituary)* are fashioned after fictional documentary prose, and their own literary approach is molded by means of skillfully composed dialogues, portraits, author characteristics, and generalizations. Ivan Bilohub's life is typical for Ukrainian intelligentsia of that time, as such cruel fate befell on hundreds of thousands in the 1930s. Tyranny wanted to destroy creative personalities by all means, turn them into slaves. However, the Ukrainian character, yet again, demonstrated its dignity and resilience: “You were not allowed to live, thrown overboard by contempt or fear. There was every reason to surrender in such a situation. There was every chance to slide to hating the entire world. Giving up on the world, loosing genetic ties with the people and the motherland, becoming an orphan. I survived thanks to my family, father, mother – common illiterate people, my school and university. Thanks to people who acted with honor, decency, loyalty to the people and the motherland.

Thus, my obituary is the memory of those people who will never be able to tell the truth to their descendants, to say a word in their defense, a word of their dignity, spiritual world, independent thinking, and patriotism.

May the names of the people returned from oblivion help current and future generations to learn to hate the bestial face of any tyranny and develop civic intransigence on it [4, 65 – 66].

This said, Ivan Bilohub not only survived, but condemned totalitarian crimes against humanity. This memoirs of the former prisoner of Soviet concentration camps were published in 1988 in a regional newspaper for the youth *Molodohvardiyets'*

(The Young Guard) among the first such memoirs released in Ukraine. The following year, fictional documentary prose titled *Shadows on the Snow* was published in the *Donbass* newspaper (1989. No. 6).

On the occasion of Ivan Mikhailovych Bilohub's 70th anniversary, i.e., in 1983, the regional newspaper *Prapor Peremohy (The Banner of Victory)* published my article entitled "*Thank you, Teacher*". This article mentioned, among other things, that our favorite teacher was characterized by the dedication to his work, which he loved, as well as by diligence and kindness toward students. Among the articles that followed, there was *Ivan Bilohub's Lessons* (1995), *I. M. Bilohub's Lessons – Continuation* (1996), *Ivan Bilohub's Resilient Soul* (2000), *Ivan Bilohub, a Graduate of Kharkiv State University* (1999) and, finally, his memoirs *Nekrolog (Obituary)*. The University museum exhibits a stature of Ivan Bilohub called *The Rehabilitated* by Nikolay Shcherbakov, the Honored Artist of Ukraine.

One of the Regional Literature classes in Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University is called *Ivan Bilohub's Artistic Heritage*. His literary and regional research, revolving around the fate of the Ukrainian national culture in Luhansk region and its future, remains of topical significance.

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Неживий О. І. Душа вистояла (до сторіччя професора Івана Білогуба)

У статті розглянуто життєвий і творчий шлях професора Івана Михайловича Білогуба, якому 20 січня 2013 р. виповнилося сто років від дня народження. У 1934 р., закінчивши Харківський державний університет, – учитель середньої школи № 40 м. Харкова, з 1936 р. – викладач української літератури Харківського бібліотечного інституту й за сумісництвом молодший науковий працівник Галереї картин Т. Г. Шевченка в м. Харкові. 29 квітня 1937 р. репресований і до жовтня 1946 р. був ув'язнений. З 1949 р. по липень 1994 р. працював у Луганському державному педагогічному інституті імені Тараса Шевченка на кафедрі української літератури, з 1971 р. по 1990 р. – завідувач кафедри. Професор І. Білогуб найбільш плідно досліджував історію

літературно-мистецької Луганщини. Одне із занять із літератури рідного краю в Луганському національному університеті імені Тараса Шевченка називається «Творча спадщина Івана Білогуба».

Ключові слова: літературознавець Іван Білогуб, життєвий і творчий шлях, література рідного краю, літературне краєзнавство, мемуари.

Неживой А. И. Душа выстояла (к столетию профессора Ивана Белогуба)

В статье рассматривается жизненный и творческий путь профессора Ивана Михайловича Белогуба, которому 20 января 1913 г. исполнилось сто лет со дня рождения. В 1934 г., после окончания Харьковского государственного университета, – учитель средней школы № 40 г. Харькова, с 1936 г. – преподаватель украинской литературы Харьковского библиотечного института и по совместительству младший научный сотрудник Галереи картин Т. Г. Шевченко в г. Харькове. 29 апреля 1937 г. был репрессирован и до октября 1946 г. находился в заключении. С 1949 г. по июль 1994 г. работал в Луганском государственном педагогическом институте имени Тараса Шевченко на кафедре украинской литературы, с 1971 г. по 1990 г. – заведующий кафедрой. Профессор И. Белогуб наиболее плодотворно исследовал историю литературной Луганщины. Одно из занятий по литературе родного края в Луганском университете имени Тараса Шевченко называется «Творческое наследие Ивана Белогуба».

Ключевые слова: литературовед Иван Белогуб, жизненный и творческий путь, литература родного края, литературное краеведение, мемуары.

Nezhyvyi O. I. Resilient Soul (dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of Professor Ivan Bilohub)

The article is dedicated to Ivan Mikhailovych Bilohub's life and career as a professor who would be celebrating his 100th anniversary this year. Upon graduation from Kharkiv State University in 1934 with a major in Primary Education, he worked as a teacher of the secondary school No. 40 in Kharkiv and, since 1936, he started his

career as a Ukrainian literature professor at Kharkiv Library Institute and as a junior research fellow at Taras Shevchenko Art Gallery. On April 29, 1937, he was persecuted for political reasons and sent to prison until October of 1946. He was rehabilitated on November 28, 1964 by the Supreme Court of the USSR due to the absence of the event of a crime. He, then, worked in Luhansk Taras Shevchenko State Pedagogical Institute at the Department of Ukrainian Literature from 1949 until July 1994 and, since 1971 until 1990, was the Chair of the Department. His research interests were focused on the history of the literary and artistic aspects of Luhansk area, leading to the initiation of a new academic course devoted to the study of regional literature as a part of the curriculum. He is the author of more than 70 scientific and semi-popular publications, 100 contributions and reviews in the periodicals. Prominent among them are *Vohnem Promteya (With the Fire of Prometheus, 1960)*, *Vasyl' Fedchenko (1974)*, *Bibliografichna karta pys'mennyka na urokakh ukrains'koyi literatury (Writer's Bibliography Map in the Study of Ukrainian Literature, 1983)*, *Literaturno-krayeznavcha Luhanshchyna (Literary and Regional Studies in Luhansk Region: part 1 – 1993, part 2 – 1994)*. A book of memoirs *Nekrolog (Obituary)* was published in 2000. One of the Regional Literature classes in Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University is called *Ivan Bilohub's Artistic Heritage*.

Key words: Ivan Bilohub as a theorist of literature, life and career, regional literature, literary regional ethnography, memoirs.

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The Rehabilitated. The portrait sculpture of I.M.Bilohub by Nikolay Shcherbakov, the Honored Artist of Ukraine.

