

CLANDESTINE ESSAYS. By *Ievhen Sverstiuk*. Translated and with an introduction by *George S. N. Luckyj*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Monograph Series. Littleton, Colo.: Ukrainian Academic Press, Libraries Unlimited, 1976. 100 pp. \$7.50 (U.S. and Canada), \$9.00 (elsewhere), cloth. \$5.00 (U.S. and Canada), \$6.00 (elsewhere), paper.

The author of these essays is one of many Soviet Ukrainian intellectuals now being confined for alleged political offenses. In 1973, Sverstiuk was sentenced to seven years of hard labor and five years of exile apparently because he questioned the legality of the closed trials at which other Ukrainians were being sentenced.

A native of Volyn' and a graduate of the University of Lwów, Sverstiuk is a literary critic, writer, and lecturer. This volume presents two of his longer essays in a very readable translation, and George Luckyj's lucid introduction relates the author to major Ukrainian literary trends. The essay, "A Cathedral in Scaffolding," interprets Oles Honchar's novel, *Sobor* (1968), which elicited much discussion because of its theme: the old Ukrainian Baroque cathedral built by Zaporozhian Cossacks—declared a historical monument but in need of renovation and used as a warehouse—and how it affects the people around it. Through its harsh realism and implied criticism, the novel reflects the many contradictions in Soviet Ukrainian conditions, including the bureaucracy and unsolved ecological problems. For Sverstiuk the cathedral represents civilization and spiritual values, part of the national tradition and consciousness, the "enshrined . . . spirit of our forefathers and their secret relay message to posterity." He sees the cathedral with its "eternal silent music and . . . national symbolism" as a "living memory of the past"—an inspiration to some and an annoyance to others. Among the latter is Volod'ka Loboda, a Communist and *raion* cultural official who seeks to demolish the church but encounters popular resistance and is disowned by his father. Yet the structure is not restored, although the younger Loboda has the idea of erecting a scaffolding around it. Thus the fate of the neglected monument remains unresolved, the scaffolding apparently representing pretense as well as the potential for restoration. Sverstiuk sees Volod'ka Loboda as "a functional man who is not yet a robot, but who is devoid of permanent human values and criteria" (p. 45). The critic also raises some basic questions regarding the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the "boor complex," and the "ostrich syndrome." He characterizes Honchar's novel as "a literary attempt to restore justice, openness and public opinion and . . . one of the most humane works of socialist literature" (p. 56). He sees as its basic meaning "the search for spiritual foundations . . . the deciphering of national traditions and values to which a people can hold to save its own being and character in the shaky world of standardization" (p. 24).

The essay, "Ivan Kotliarevsky Is Laughing," places the father of modern Ukrainian literature in the context of literary development, dissent, and *samvydav*. Kotliarevsky was a tsarist official who went "against the current" and made possible the literature that defended the Ukrainian nation "before the autocratic bureaucracy, which set the boorish tone and official attitude of regarding the Ukrainian people as hewers of wood and drawers of water, manure and yeast for the Russian Empire" (p. 87).

Sverstiuk's essays range far beyond the scope of their titles. His sentences are often pithy and reflect an epigrammatic style. Yet they also require attentive reading, for much is implied. Included in the volume is Sverstiuk's statement to the court in which he succinctly expressed the plight of the Soviet literary critic who desires to be honest and professionally responsible. It should be obvious—except to Soviet courts and prosecutors—that Sverstiuk is a highly talented writer who possesses a subtle mind and merits recognition. It is regrettable that Soviet authorities in their shortsightedness have seen fit to confine him and to stifle this talent.

JOHN S. RESHETAR, JR.  
*University of Washington*