

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

History of War in Art

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Prince Oleh marching with his army by Yuri Lohvyn.
(Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford)

Throughout the centuries various aspects of the nature of warfare, triumphant or tragic, were documented in written records and visually conveyed in works of art. They could alternately be of a grand scale or of a modest form, but just as powerful in their capacity to convey their intent. It is in this way that the most significant historical events were immortalized visually. Depending on the method and style the artist used a historic event may evoke in the audience a variety of spontaneous emotions – a feeling of pride, wonder, sadness, grief, or anger. Works of art of this nature very often fulfilled an educational or a cultural purpose. They served as an enhancement of national ideals by glorifying the past, disseminating patriotic emotions, inspiring courage and other passionate feelings when specific events either demanded or required it. The best example of such courageous behavior is the resolve and determination we see in our soldiers today who, in this long war with the Russian enemy defend Ukraine's right to exist and are fighting until decisive victory is achieved.

War themes in art have

always been a widespread topic and became one of the most favored subject for artists. Depicting war scenes is a complex process. It requires the artist to be well versed in the historic age of the event, the social characteristic of the depicted lives and mores, the components of war and the talent to be able to convey the dynamics, the spirit, the emotions, and pathos of the event. Among Ukrainian artists we have quite a number who represented war subjects in their works. It was especially popular during the years of national rebirth in the 19th and early 20th centuries, although there were also a significant number of graphic works of outstanding artistic quality dealing with warfare done in the 17-18th centuries.

Our museum has a select number of paintings depicting war scenes with which we would like to acquaint our readers. The first group of paintings which we will introduce are works depicting the Kyevan-Rus era. The artist who depicted this historic period is Yuri Lohvyn, 1939- , the son of Hryhorii Lohvyn, 1910-2001, a notable art scholar whose timely and significant

publication *Po Ukraini* (Through Ukraine, 1968) described the architectural gems of Ukraine, their grandeur, their high artistic quality and their fates when in the hands of the Soviet occupation. Yuri Lohvyn – is a graphic artist, creator of many color linocuts, book illustrator and a writer. The three paintings we have depict the activities of Prince Oleh (ca. 910-922). On one we see Prince Oleh marching with his army, on the second he is directing his soldiers in the transporting of boats around the Dnipro River rapids on his way to attack Byzantium and on the third we see the building of war boats in the Kyivan-Rus era.

The second artist we are including in this essay is Leonid Perfeky. He almost exclusively devoted his artistic creativity to the depiction of historical battle scenes. Leonid Perfeky, 1901-1977, studied at the Oleksa Novakivsky art school in Lviv and the Krakow Academy of Art. The works in our collection are watercolors of small format which portray warfare during the years of Ukrainian struggle for independence, 1918-1921. One of the paintings illustrates the most tragic and most heroic battles for Kyiv known as the Battle of Kruty. Five hundred young army cadets tried to block the advance of a Bolshevik force of 4000 men on the capital at Kyiv, at a railroad station near Kyiv. Although many of the young cadets died their heroic defense delayed the Bolshevik cap-

ture of Kyiv long enough to make it possible for the Ukrainian government to conclude the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Other paintings in this series depict the Securing of the railroad station in Lviv, Overtaking the Arsenal in Kyiv, and an Episode of a battle for Lviv.

Although many art works often depict specific war scenes, there are those which may condense into one illustration centuries of warfare undertakings in the struggle for freedom. A work of this type was done by the artist Vasyl Petruk, 1886-1968. He was born in a Hutsul village in the Carpathian mountains. After displaying artistic aptitudes, he was sent to study art in Kolomyia. During the war, he served in the Ukrainian contingent of the Austrian Army and later in the Galician Army. After losing the war, soldiers of the Galician army were interned in POW camps in Czechoslovakia. Vasyl Petruk's painting entitled *Vilna Ukraina* (Free Ukraine) depicts an Archangel with widely spread

wings holding a sword upturned and a shield with the Trident and the words Ukrainian National Republic. Behind the angel are marching ranks of Cossack and Ukrainian army soldiers. In front of the angel stands a mother – symbol of Ukraine in a crown of thorns on her head protectively embracing two children. On her right is a soldier in the uniform of a Sichovyi Strilets and on her left a Cossack, both with unsheathed swords, holding broken chains of bondage. Further down on the left and right are two flag bearers, one is a Sichovyi Strilets and the other a Cossack. One flag has the words For the Freedom of Ukraine and the other has the words of Taras Shevcheko's poem *Fight and you will be victorious!* (Boritesia – poborete).

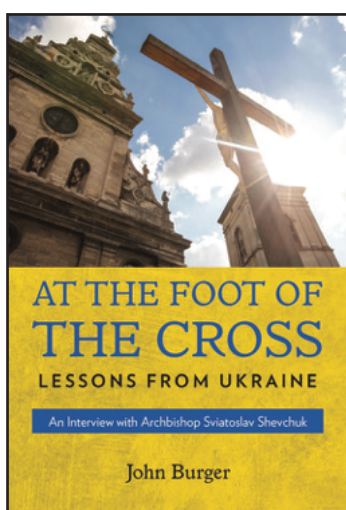
This painting of Vasyl Petruk is the epitome of centuries struggle for freedom for which we are still fighting today - to achieve our nation's permanent freedom and liberty, once and for all. ❖



Overtaking the Arsenal in Kyiv by Leonid Perfeky.
(Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford)

Book Review by Museum Director

Msgr. John Terlecky



At the foot of the Cross – Lessons from Ukraine – an interview with Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk by John Burger. (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2023, \$21.95)

This is a book that should be of

interest to many Ukrainian Catholics. To the best of my knowledge, it is the first English-language book either by Patriarch Sviatoslav or about him and his vision for our Church in the twenty-first century. The author of the book is quite familiar with our Church and its place in the contemporary Catholic world. Mr. Burger is a journalist on religious matters for the international Catholic website Aliteia. Even more so, he frequents the Ukrainian Catholic community of Saint Michael the Archangel in New Haven, Connecticut, and is a member of its Knights of Columbus branch.

The book is divided into two major sections: autobiographical material and thoughts on the issues of the day.

The author interviews His Beatitude about his childhood days and growing up in the Soviet Union. He turns his attention to his family and its influence on him as regards the issues of faith and religion within the context of

an atheistic and totalitarian regime. He lived in an environment where the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was forbidden to operate in open society. Yet he states that the transmission of the Ukrainian language Divine Liturgy over the Vatican Radio had a profound effect on his life. In his interview, His Beatitude praises his grandfather, a Soviet professional, yet, at the same time, a friend of the underground Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, whose home became a meeting place where that Church gathered and prayed in secrecy. It was here in the underground Church that a vocation to the priesthood was born and first developed.

The book goes on to deal with the seminary experience of His Beatitude. It started in the underground Church seminary in Yaremche in the Carpathian Mountains. It was during this time that Ukraine declared its independence on August 24, 1991. By this

time, the opportunity was offered by Bishop Andrii Sapeliak to join the seminary community in Argentina. After a short time there, he returned to Ukraine and entered Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic seminary in Rudno, Lviv.

Under the spiritual guidance of a wonderful underground priest, His Beatitude made a difficult decision – he chose celibacy for the priesthood in a Church whereby, I would say, 99% of his classmates chose the married state of the priesthood. Following priestly ordination, Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky invited him to take up studies in Rome. Here he excelled and earned his doctorate degree in moral theology. He returned to Ukraine now as a member of the seminary faculty and quickly thereafter became vice-rector of that seminary where he had previously studied.

By this time, Lubomyr Husar had

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14