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Toward Perpetual Peace in Ukraine: Reception of Immanuel Kant in the Literary and Philosophical Reflections of Volodymyr Vynnychenko and the Present

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Abstract

The article offers a comparative analysis of the peacemaking views of Immanuel Kant and Volodymyr Vynnychenko, who sought to find effective mechanisms for establishing “perpetual peace on earth.” The model of the Ukrainian writer’s collectivist society represents the Kantian concept of a “federation of free states” and an alternative for the modern world without war. Common points of contact between the philosophical treatises of Kant and Vynnychenko are found and the progressiveness of the “utopian” projects of thinkers that have already been implemented or are at the implementation stage for its improvement is shown. It is proved that the Kantian-Vynnychenko peace is a phenomenon that developed in a certain cultural and historical context, so it is quite legitimate to talk about the identity of German-Ukrainian ideas in terms of the continuity of the philosophical tradition and temporal connections. We hypothesize that both authors created an effective conceptual basis for achieving peaceful coexistence on Earth, which is neither rational nor logical to neglect in today’s realities.

Key Words: Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Immanuel Kant, philosophical treatises, “perpetual peace,” collectocracy, “federation of states.”



Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian war, which began long before February 24, 2022, has renewed the desire, natural to the humanities, to understand the phenomena of war and peace. This thesis is confirmed by a real boom of Ukrainian and world anti-war prose during and after the two world wars. Then, the global problems of war and peace, life and death, humanism, and violence, and man and weapon became extremely acute and moved into the realm of philosophy. The noble goal of all such works is to warn, to avert. However, it was not to be. We are still learning from our mistakes, still living in a society that resembles Ken Kesey’s psychiatric hospital (“One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”) with its frequent bizarre fogs that cover our eyes and prevent us from seeing the obvious.

Fortunately, the global peacekeeping discourse demonstrates, as it has always done, an unprecedented consolidation of political, philosophical, and artistic efforts to find effective mechanisms to stop war and establish peace. It has its roots in the times of European humanism, the Enlightenment, and beyond. The programmatic works of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Adam Smith (1723–1790), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804),

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), and, most notably, the Ukrainian politician, philosopher, and writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko (1880–1951) have not lost their relevance and can be easily projected onto the modern context.

We intend to devote the proposed study to an analysis of the views of Immanuel Kant and Volodymyr Vynnychenko, as we believe that their vision of eternal peace is very consonant. Let us try to make a comparative analysis of Kant's treatise "Perpetual Peace" (1795)¹ with Vynnychenko's project of building a "single republic of the earth," declared in his Diaries,² philosophical and sociological treatises "A Testament to the Liberation Fighters"³ and "Concordism,"⁴ and his literary texts, such as the mature novels "The New Commandment"⁵ and "The Word is Yours, Stalin."⁶ We will find the answer to the question of how the Ukrainian writer's model of a collectivist society corresponds to Kant's concept and whether it can become an alternative for the modern world without war.

The end of the twentieth century brought us a large-scale return to Kant. In the twenty-first century, "the ancient idea of perpetual peace is in the area of our attention since ideas of this magnitude should be revised, clarified, and even developed from time to time."⁷ Therefore, in the Ukrainian scientific world, studies devoted to Kant and his ideas of democratic, commercial, and institutional peace are increasingly appearing. "Kant foresaw a situation, – rightly emphasizes Valentyn Gusev, – when the gradual development of civilization reaches a level where its own technical achievements, used for military purposes, can destroy this civilization itself with barbaric devastation, and cross out all the cultural achievements achieved by mankind."⁸ We are witnessing this time now. The nuclear threat is hanging over us like

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- 1 Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch," in *Kant: Political Writings*, transl. by Hugh Barr Nisbet, ed. by Hans Reiss (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93–130.
 - 2 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Schodennyk: 1911–1920 [Diary: 1911–1920]* (Edmonton; New York, 1980); Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951 [Diaries. 1943–1951]* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2020) etc.
 - 3 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Zapovit bortsiam za vyzvolennia [A Testament to the Liberation Fighters]* (Kyiv: Krynytsia, 1991).
 - 4 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm. Systema buduvannia schastia: Etyko-filosofskyj traktat [Concordism. The System of Building Happiness: An Ethical and Philosophical Treatise]* (Kyiv: Ukrainskyj pysmennyk, 2011).
 - 5 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Nova zapovid: roman [The New Commandment: a Novel]* (Kyiv: Znannia, 2011).
 - 6 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Opovidannia. Roman "Slovo za toboiu, Staline!"; piesa "Chorna Pantera i Bilyj Medvid"* [Stories. The Novel "The Word is Yours, Stalin!"; the Play "The Black Panther and the White Bear"] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2001).
 - 7 Serhii Datsiuk, *Ukrainska pravda, Vichnyi myr [Perpetual Peace]*, (blog), posted August 18, 2018, accessed January 16, 2024. <https://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/datsuk/5b84e9a6d8fb6/>.
 - 8 Valentyn Gusev, "I. Kant: filosofske obgruntuvannia idei myru" ["I. Kant: the Philosophical Substantiation of Peace Idea"], *Naukovi zapysky. NaUKMA. Filosofiia ta relihiieznavstvo* 18 (2000): 14.

the sword of Damocles, and it is impossible to predict at what point the “button” will be activated. “The real threat of self-destruction can put humanity on the brink... beyond which the world will exhaust the possibilities of progressive development through war, and eternal peace will become the only reality for it. The only difference will be whether it will be peace in which reason and law triumph, peace as a universal legal order, or whether it will be peace in the giant cemetery of humanity.”⁹

In exile, the disillusioned politician Volodymyr Vynnychenko writes in his Diary that he went through three phases of the struggle for Ukraine’s independence and independence. None of them were successful. So, the time has come for a higher form of struggle, the concordist struggle. It involves the establishment of human happiness on earth through harmony with oneself, the collective, nature, etc. Otherwise, it will not be possible to establish a “long, lasting, just” peace in the world because there will always be a difference of interests and a contradiction of egos. The year 1945 showed that “the peace-loving Allies are so ready for the next war that they begin to prepare for it before the current one is over.”¹⁰ Ukrainian researchers analyzed the last period of the writer’s foreign work quite scrupulously, almost unanimously calling it “an artistic design of a ready-made philosophical concept”¹¹ and “an approbation of the provisions of his philosophical and ethical theory of concordism.”¹² As for Kant’s and Vynnychenko’s comparative study in the context of German-Ukrainian philosophical peacemaking views has not yet been the subject of scientific research, so it is relevant, timely, and extremely promising.

The methodology of the proposed work is based on a comprehensive analysis, a systematic approach, and a comparative method. This combination allowed us first to formulate and then consider the problem of “perpetual peace” by Immanuel Kant and Volodymyr Vynnychenko in a broad cultural context. Our main hypothesis is that both authors have created an effective conceptual basis for achieving peaceful coexistence on Earth, which is neither rational nor logical to neglect in today’s realities. Unfortunately, the German philosopher’s treatise has long been known only to a narrow circle of specialists and has been unfairly rejected as utopian. Vynnychenko’s complete “return” to Ukraine also looks pessimistic. The latter declared his worldview not only in philosophical treatises, but also where he was best able to work – in literary works. We believe that now it is a good time for their re-reading, rethinking, and historical and philosophical reconstruction. In the first section, we applied specific

9 Ibid.

10 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 105.

11 Ivan Haivanovych, “Vynnychenkova systema konkordyzmu yak proekt samorehuliatcii suspilstva” [“Vynnychenko’s System of Concordism as a Project of Self-regulation of Society”], *Moloda natsiia* 3 (2000): 183.

12 Galyna Syvachenko and Antonina Anistratenko, “Volodymyr Vynnychenko i Volter: muzhenski ‘kazky’ i frantsuzkyj prosvitnytskyj filosofskyj roman XVIII st.” [“Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Voltaire: Muzhenski ‘Tales’ and the French Enlightenment Philosophical Novel of the Eighteenth Century”], *Aktualni pytannia suspilnykh nauk ta istorii medytsyny* 1, 33 (2022): 141.

historical and historical-philosophical methods that allowed us to consider Kantian-Vynnychenko peace as a phenomenon that developed in a certain cultural and historical context and to substantiate the possibility of comparing both peacemaking concepts, despite the lack of evidence that the Ukrainian writer was directly familiar with the content of the text “Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf” (it’s the original title of Kant’s treatise). Using the hermeneutic method allowed us to speak about the identity of German-Ukrainian ideas regarding the continuity of the philosophical tradition and temporal connections. The material of the first section was the treatises of both authors and Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s “Diary.” In the second section, a comprehensive approach helped to establish the connection between the anti-revolutionary and anti-war context of Vynnychenko’s novels of the “mouzenou cycle” and his author’s intention and implementation to trace the transformation of the ideas of “perpetual peace,” “concordism”/“absolute happiness on Earth,” “collectocracy,” and “world citizenship” in the narrative structure of the analyzed works. In order to get a complete picture of the topic under study, we first found common points of contact between the philosophical concepts of Kant and Vynnychenko and examined them in the Ukrainian writer’s fiction. Finally, we have shown the progressiveness of the “utopian” concepts of the thinkers that have already been implemented or are being implemented for the sake of improving life.

Kant and Vynnychenko: Text and Context

The practice of fighting to end war is not new to humanity. The First World War was expected and inevitable. As early as 1908, it was “predicted” by the unsurpassed science fiction writer Herbert Wells with the publication of his utopian novel “War in the Air.” It was supposed to put an end once and for all to the disregard for international law and encroachment on the sovereignty of independent states and to resolve the problems of militarism and autocracy on the European continent. “After the first planetary war, – Vynnychenko wrote, – many politicians and philosophers thought that the war would bring the development of democracy and its victory throughout the earth. What happened, on the contrary, was the decline and defeat of democracy under the blows of dictatorship. Now there will be prophecies again, heralding the victory of progress, equality, brotherhood, and freedom. I wonder what exactly will put all such prophets in the shoe?”.¹³ Perhaps the Second World War, which saw the greatest crimes against humanity in history – the Holocaust, torture in concentration camps, penal battles, the use of atomic weapons – and Ukraine lost eight to ten million of its citizens. It would seem that humanity has once again clearly realized that its own life is more valuable than territorial, ideological, religious, or gender enmity. The world community signed a fragile but long-lasting agreement on “perpetual peace” and, under the clear leadership of the United Nations, “restrained” wars for seventy years, adhering to three

13 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 58–9.

basic rules: absolute respect for human honor and dignity; the rule of international law; and economic interdependence. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the inevitability of a new war, which was widely discussed, became apparent, but no one believed that it would begin. Not even the Ukrainians themselves. “The rational mind, the computational mind (to use Buber’s image), which calculates the consequences and scenarios of events, said that this is absolute nonsense, something that cannot happen, something that cannot be thought. Any possible rationality, whether pragmatic or communicative, showed that this was irrational, whether in terms of increasing Russia’s influence or in terms of protecting its interests.”¹⁴ It was started by the authoritarian ruler Putin (according to Kant, wars are always started by authoritarian rulers, they put their ambitions above the people’s and are ready to sacrifice an unlimited number of human resources to achieve their own goals) and it seems that he is not going to stop. After all, who would choose a shameful surrender? In his time, reflecting on the Cold War and the role of the Soviet Union in it, Vynnychenko wrote in “A Testament to the Liberation Fighters” that for communism (and in today’s realities, for racism), admitting defeat “would be a sudden suicide. To accept peace, disarmament, and coexistence with private capitalism would also be suicide, only slow and shameful for it. What to do? It is clear what to do: delay the decision, deceive the enemy, promise, promise to keep the peace, sign solemn treaties and pacts, or, depending on the situation, frighten him with our strength, seize the best strategic positions where possible, and all the time frantically prepare all kinds of weapons: atomic bombs, tanks, aircraft, bacteria, germs, gases... It is hopeless!”¹⁵

Now Russia is doing the same thing in Ukraine, from time to time “scaring” our allies with loud statements, after which they make a “pause” in sending us weapons, while the aggressor builds up its own. However, the development of human civilization shows that any war, even a century-long one, ends in peace one way or another. For it to become long-term, the desire for peace must be global, otherwise, the prospect of external aggression will not disappear, and the need for regular armies and the costs of militarization, which the German philosopher categorically opposed, will become relevant again. In the context of Vynnychenko’s “honesty with oneself,” only worthy people should live in the “promised land.” After all, “disarmament and peace can only be with honest people, not with gangsters! One does not make peace with gangsters, but disarms them and puts them in the electric chair.”¹⁶ For Kant and Vynnychenko, “perpetual peace” is the ultimate evolutionary goal of humanity, which will inevitably come one day. And then (according to Vynnychenko) “the world will be able to move to a peaceful creative life, will be able to use all those

14 Volodymyr Volkovskiy and Roman Samchuk, “Chy mozhlyva ‘filosofia pislia Buchi’: vnesok vijny v filosofiiu” [“Whether ‘Philosophy after Bucha’ is Possible: Philosophical and Theological Considerations”], *Filosofia osvity* 29, 1 (2023): 23.

15 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Zapovit bortsiam za vyzvolennia* [A Testament to the Liberation Fighters] (Kyiv: Krynytsia, 1991), 56.

16 *Ibid.*, 67.

enormous forces that are now spent on preparing death and ruins for construction, for creativity, for life.”¹⁷

Let us begin our discussion of the common ground in the philosophical views of Kant and Vynnychenko with a brief excursion into their biographies. It so happened that both of them knew very well about the atrocities of the Russian occupation army not by hearsay. The seventy-one-year-old philosopher wrote his essay “Perpetual Peace” in 1795, silently watching as a powerful European state colonized Prussian Königsberg (the present-day Russian territory in the Baltic – Kaliningrad) with little or no resistance, established its order there by default, and practically absorbed the local elites. Kant was forced to swear allegiance to the Russian Empress Elizabeth. Moreover, he wrote a letter to her asking to appoint him to the vacant position of professor of logic and metaphysics at the local university. However, he received neither an answer nor a position. It was a period when Kant’s creative activity was practically zero, and his internal rejection of the situation resulted in the philosopher’s fundamental phrase: “The Russians are our main enemies.” And although more than two centuries have passed since then, the latter has not forgiven the scientist for his words. From time to time, the media reports about the desecration of the philosopher’s monument and his tomb under loud accusations of treason. They forget that Kant was a German. He lived and died on his own, German land, which will never spiritually become Russian. Even though Stalin’s efforts turned it into a military base and the “horrors” of the Suwalki Corridor.

Vynnychenko’s relationship with Russia was even more dramatic. As a key figure in the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, a member of the Central Rada, the first head of the Ukrainian General Secretariat, and the UPR Directorate, he had one goal: to achieve Ukraine’s independence at all costs. His political defeat was that he was not ready for a decisive armed conflict with the Bolsheviks, but still cherished the hope of reaching an understanding with them. According to almost all researchers, Vynnychenko “oscillated” between the Ukrainian national independence platform and the concept of a Ukrainian Soviet republic because he believed that negotiations could achieve results. His dreams were dashed when Muravyov’s army entered Kyiv, and the politically helpless Vynnychenko found himself in exile. It was then that he switched from politician to philosopher and publicist and, inspired by revolutionary events (as Kant was by the French Revolution) and with the help of free access to world philosophical thoughts, began to build his plan for eternal peace on earth.

Although more than a hundred years have passed between Kant and Vynnychenko, and the latter has the same “distance” to the present, we are convinced that it is expedient to compare their philosophical doctrines. A thorough analysis allowed us to identify their main common features. While for the East and West, there was only one way to prevent a new war: “force, military, economic, moral force, force, and force,”¹⁸ the Kantian-Vynnychenko peace project meant something radically different and

17 Ibid., 106.

18 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 397.

positioned itself as a planetary leadership. The guarantee of its long-term sustainability should have been not forceful deterrence, but free development in compliance with the three basic conditions (according to Kant):

1. The civil constitution of each state is exclusively republican.
2. The law of nations is based on a federation of free states.
3. The law of universal citizenship is limited to the conditions of universal hospitality.¹⁹

Kant believed that republics in which the legislative and executive branches are separated will never fight each other because they will gravitate toward pacifism more than other forms of government. However, Vynnychenko, having experienced two world wars, was rather skeptical about the moral condemnation of any aggression, believing that “people who speak of the pacifism of their people are either naive fools who do not understand the nature of modern society at all or clever hypocrites who understand it too much.”²⁰ However, for the writer, the need to restructure a discordant, and therefore totalitarian society is also obvious, in which “with some willingness, fervor, even enthusiasm, people become executioners, murderers, cruel to the point of insanity. Never has any morality of those religionists who preached love and mercy had so many ardent fulfillers of its commandments as the morality of Leninism-Stalinism, racism, fascism, the morality of cruelty, coercion, terror, hatred, torture.”²¹ The only way out is a “concordist republic” or a “democratic republic.”

As for Immanuel Kant’s second point, the Ukrainian writer fully shared the idea of creating local unions or regional state associations. For example, a union of states of the East or West, the United Republic of the Earth, the World Federal Association of States, etc. (according to his literary works and “Concordism”). On this occasion, he wrote in his “Diary” on January 24, 1947: “It is necessary to make an insertion in Concordism in the section on disarmament and peace. It is necessary to emphasize more clearly the need for a world economic federation as the only way to prevent war and at the same time establish a single democracy on the entire planet, to destroy Russian despotism.”²² It serves to illustrate the farsightedness of the views of Ukraine’s first Prime Minister. Almost a century ago, he realized that Russia was the greatest evil on the planet and that we, Ukrainians, would not be able to defeat it alone. How eerily prophetic Vynnychenko’s lines seem: “Ukraine’s independence is obviously becoming a complete utopia in the current integral situation. On its own, Ukraine will never be able to overcome Russia and break free.”²³ That is why the writer was so eager to convey to the world his idea of uniting peoples because as practice shows, it is slow to help a state outside a union or alliance – “festina lente.” For Vynnychenko, the inevitability of

19 Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch,” in *Kant: Political Writings*, *Kant: Political Writings*, transl. Hugh Barr Nisbet, ed. by Hans Reiss (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 106.

20 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 58.

21 *Ibid.*, 248–9.

22 *Ibid.*, 206.

23 *Ibid.*

a new war was only a matter of time: “Both Churchill and Hitler made speeches. One promised the end of the war not earlier than in a year or even two, and the other even better: that victory would certainly be on his side. After that speech, ‘peace and prosperity’ will come to the earth. Churchill also promises both peace and prosperity, but it still depends not on him, but on the consent of the ‘nations’. Churchill thinks that the ‘peoples’ will form a new League of Nations (under the new name of the Council of Europe and the Council of Asia), twisting the arms of the defeated states, and preventing them from ever fighting again. There is only one thing new in this project: the establishment of an international police force. This means that there will be a new war not in 25 but in 50 years. Or maybe even in 15, depending on what method of warfare the twisted and punished will come up with. In any case, our ‘children’ will have more fun!”²⁴. We already have! “The largest war in Europe since 1945. The largest concentration of troops on one territory in the entire modern era of warfare. Finally, an unprovoked attack by a nuclear weapon state, a member of the UN Security Council with a veto, on a non-nuclear country, which also gave up its nuclear weapons voluntarily, for the sake of peace and détente, and the aggressor himself was the guarantor of the country’s security.”²⁵ And the other signatories of the Budapest Memorandum “forgot” about their obligations to Ukraine. In this context, the recent incident with Emmanuel Macron and Pope Francis seems bitterly ironic. It is not for nothing that they say that all accidents are not accidental. Kant and Ukraine are connected: in October 24, 2022, United Nations Day, President Macron visited Pope Francis in Rome and presented to him a copy of the first French-language edition of treatise “Perpetual Peace,” published in 1796. As the stamp on the first page indicates, this book was from the collection of the Academic Reading Room, the first Polish scientific student society that operated from 1867 to 1939 in the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv is its successor). These are the vicissitudes of European history and memory...

Considering the third point of Kant’s notion of the so-called universal hospitality (*ius cosmopolitanum*), we believe that it is very much in line with Vynnychenko’s idea of world citizenship – “the right to the earth’s surface, which belongs to all mankind.” Above all, the Ukrainian thinker sought to bring humanity closer to “world-citizen construction.” It is known that he was familiar with the term “world citizen” by Garry Davis (1921–2013), an international peace activist who renounced his American citizenship and in 1948 interrupted the work of the United Nations and made a speech about a world government as a way to stop nationalist wars. Moreover, Vynnychenko thought “to persuade this active and seemingly sincere boy to the ideas of collectocracy as a way to achieve the goal that the ‘world citizen’ so boyishly boldly proclaimed.”²⁶

As is known, desperate attempts of Garry Davis to establish planetary citizenship to achieve “perpetual peace” were unsuccessful. Just as the philosophical treatises of

24 Ibid., 13.

25 Volkovskiy & Samchuk, “Chy mozhlyva ‘filosofia pislia Buchi’, 23.

26 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 345.

Kant and Vynnychenko did not attract the expected attention of the society of the time, they were superficially studied and long forgotten, because the ideas they declared were considered utopian and impossible to implement in practice. However, the emergence of the United Nations, whose charter is based on the key Kantian principles of eternal peace, proves the opposite. There is evidence that Vynnychenko, pinning great hopes on the latter, personally addressed a manifesto to the United Nations, calling on it to control the peaceful coexistence of states worldwide. He was convinced that his idea of a “collectocracy” under the close supervision of the UN would lead to the emergence of new states that would gradually unite into a world federation of free nations – for example, the European Union, which was formed in 1993. According to Vynnychenko, “collectivocracy” is the establishment of the so-called economic democracy, in which a separate enterprise is not state or private property, but is in the hands of the labor collective: workers, technicians, engineers, directors, etc., and the income is distributed equally among them. Under such conditions, everyone is interested in development, and the issues of competition or “pestilence” disappear by themselves. It is worth noting that at the time of Vynnychenko, similar prototypes existed in America. They were experimental and few in number, with “special” relationships within the collective. Another seemingly utopian idea that grew into a “conscious coalition” in the late 1990s was the unification of members of society based on political or ideological beliefs. The prospects of such an association were clearly demonstrated by the “Asian Tigers” (the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, a special province of China) and Japan. Their rapid economic development proves that harmony and prosperity can be achieved through intensive globalization, not through destruction. Popular studies of the philosophical and cultural heritage of the East today have shown that the success of these states lies in their focus on “communitarianism,” a new form of sociality where people gather in small groups of like-minded people. The communitarians’ ideal is an associative self-sufficient community, free from state control and taxation, which should have all the conditions for harmonious development. The Ukrainian establishment, actively discussing the post-war resuscitation of our economy, sees the greatest prospects in building it on the model described above.

A philosophical concept in images

In September 1920, Volodymyr Vynnychenko and his wife left Ukraine forever. At this time, the following entry appears in his Diary: “I shake off all the dust of politics, surround myself with books, and plunge into my real, only business literature. These two months of Calvary even cured me of my bifurcation. Here in socialist Soviet Russia, I bury my 18 years of socialist political activity. I am going as a writer, but as a politician, I want to die with all my heart. Let those who do not need to tear themselves away from better work, who can give themselves completely to it, let those who have not yet

crossed Calvary go to this work.”²⁷ At that time, the writer did not know how difficult it would be to write and publish his works abroad and how difficult relations with the Ukrainian emigration would have. At the end of his life, Vynnychenko felt completely disappointed and “lonely.” “Now my situation is quite clear to me: here, in exile, there is no group with which I can’ work. What is there to work with in our common prison? They are in a “common” cell, and I am in solitary confinement, and that’s the only difference between us. They can create parties, parliaments, governments, crises, programs, they can dabble in some kind of activity, and I don’t have this fun. But who knows what is more useful: their fun or my work alone? It seems that solitary work is better. Many prisoners who want to work in prison for themselves, for the collective, are not stupid, and they try to get solitary confinement.”²⁸ The writer thereby hints that what he has been doing in recent years is not an invention or a game. Vynnychenko, a philosopher, seeks at all costs to convey to humanity, exhausted by wars and totalitarianism, the idea of the practical realization of universal happiness, peace, and goodness on earth. Did the author have any reason to hope for its realization? We doubt it, we say, looking from the future to the past. Vynnychenko wrote: “Happy are those people who can be naive even in old age. Kocha and I are among the lucky ones. We sit for hours again, exerting ourselves, nervous and suffering, and translate an article that should create peace on earth.”²⁹ And in Kant’s treatise “Perpetual peace” we find extremely interesting considerations that philosophers and their philosophies have an obvious impact on society, especially on politicians and rulers. Especially when it comes to issues of war and peace. Agreeing with Plato, the German thinker argues that the state should allow “philosophers to speak freely and publicly about the general maxims of war and peace.”³⁰ Of course, it is not necessary for “kings to philosophize or philosophers to become kings, nations should not allow the class of philosophers to disappear or become silent, but should allow them to speak publicly; this is necessary for both to clarify their activities.”³¹ Unfortunately, Vynnychenko was deprived of this opportunity abroad: “no one forbids me to write here, but I am not allowed to reach my friends-readers there. I am cut off, and isolated, worse than in some barracks or the harshest prison.”³² Even despite constant doubts as to whether his work could bring the desired result, the writer stubbornly promoted his idea of world happiness/concordism/peace in his literary works. The fictional texts of the “mouzenou cycle” are a vivid example of this, and it was on them that the author placed his greatest hopes. “The New Commandment” (1932), “The Eternal Imperative” (1935), which has not yet been

27 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Schodennyk: 1911–1920 [Diary: 1911–1920]* (Edmonton; New York, 1980), 437.

28 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 330.

29 Ibid., 206.

30 Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 106.

31 Ibid., 108.

32 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 334.

published in Ukraine, “Leprosarium”³³ (1938), and “The Word is Yours, Stalin” (1950) are the pain, cry, warning, disappointment, and testament to the humanity of the brilliant Ukrainian Volodymyr Vynnychenko. He, the most popular and readable writer in Ukrainian literature, consciously and systematically turned his mature novels into propaganda novels, in which the revolutionary ideas of “concordism” – eternal happiness (and a world without violence and war is happiness) and collectivism could be fully realized. All of them are thoroughly imbued with Kantian and their ideas of “peace,” “disarmament,” and “world federation.” Researchers call them ideological or political novels, in which social and philosophical issues are in the foreground, and the coordinated actions of the protagonists illustrate the author’s concept of building a new world without war.

In 1932, “The New Commandment,” Vynnychenko’s “apostle of peace,” was published, but it was published 17 (!) years later, and even then, in French. Its main idea is peace based on the socioeconomic and political program of “Concordism.” The writer’s last novel, “The Word is Yours, Stalin,” was written a year before his death, “made... with the greatest objectivity required by the great goal of all people – peace on earth.”³⁴ Both works were written by Vynnychenko in anticipation of the approaching Cold War and the understanding that its beginning, given the level of militarization of the East and West, could be the end of humanity. Jean Rulliot of “The New Commandment” asserts: “Revolution, Jacques, armed, dynamite revolution, is war, a world planetary war. And a planetary war, as you know, means the death of all of us. There will be no winners in this war, only losers. Hundreds of millions of people will be torn apart by atomic bombs, suffocated by gases, poisoned by bacteria. Hundreds of millions of corpses will lie among the ruins of the planet. After such a war, not only will there be no socialism on earth for centuries, but there will be no simple elementary civilization.”³⁵ Therefore, peace issues are urgent and must be addressed immediately. Other characters of the novel, representatives of different political camps, are well aware of that, but they want to do it in their own way. For example, the idea of the capitalist Marquis is as follows: “I think, as do the socialists, that modern society cannot destroy wars. Because it is based on competition, struggle, and enmity, it is a constant, unceasing war. Socialists think that war can be destroyed by the destruction of classes. This is utopia. This is a childish, naive fairy tale. The division into classes was, is, and will be as long as there are people on Earth. The division into classes is a division into smart and stupid, into strong and weak, into hard workers and lazy people. Even children know this. But you have the right to ask me: does this mean that war will never be destroyed? No, it can be destroyed, but not in the way we have been doing it so far.”³⁶ The Marquis’ way is a world dictatorship or monarchy. Something like the empire of

33 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Leprozorij: roman [Leprosarium: a novel]* (Kyiv: Znannia, 2011).

34 Vynnychenko, *Opovidannia*, 97.

35 Vynnychenko, *Nova zapovid*, 35.

36 *Ibid.*, 46.

Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon, where there is always a mass and a leader. “And this, Mr. Stover, is the reason for wars: in wars, the genius of mankind fulfills its destiny. And war, Mr. Stover, can only be destroyed by war, a world war, an all-Earth war, which will give a world monarchy, the only one on the entire planet. Then competition, enmity, and struggle between nations will end. Then war will disappear forever! Everything else is just a useless, childish barrier to the stream coming from above. We should not stop this flow, but help it!”³⁷ This is a rather “non-communist” process that the Soviet Union would never have undertaken.

“The Word is for You, Stalin!” also presents a capitalist-communist confrontation. American workers do not need a war for a socialist paradise on earth, because they “have a good salary, a car, a bathroom, a refrigerator, a comfortable house, social security even without socialism”³⁸ – all the things that every ordinary Russian still does not have, which is why their shameful army in the first months of the war massively exported household items familiar to civilized humanity from Ukraine to their swamps. Mykyta Horyhora, a trade union father, the hero of “The Word...,” could not stand this “impudence.” “What bitches! And fools, I’ll tell you! Fools, because they won’t hide from the war, whether they want to or not, in their bathtubs. It will find them there, too.’ Peace, peace, peace!’ they shout. Yes, they want peace, but neither they nor everyone else who shouts with them knows how to make it. And do we really know? Today I was shouting for it all day long, and I was sincerely shouting, almost breaking down, but do I believe in it? In words, we shout for peace, but in deeds, without shouting, we are all frantically preparing for war. look at our factories. Who are we working for? For peace? For bathtubs? The hell no! Tanks, guns, machine guns, grenades, airplanes, bombs! And they have the same thing over there. And everywhere else in the world. This is how we meet each other...”³⁹ Mykyta’s slogans are all too consistent with the actual peacekeeping rhetoric of the Cold War. Vynnychenko reflects that “when Bevin publicly declares that the Atlantic Pact will ensure world peace for centuries (why not for centuries?), it is clear that burying one’s head in the sand is a very favorite way for democratic leaders to resolve a terrible conflict and that collectocracy will be rejected with derision. The ‘Atlantic Pact’ and the ‘European Union’ are the two dams that have held back the Bolshevik, communist flood for centuries. ‘Armed peace’, meaning constant tension, constant waiting for an explosion, constant guessing: what does the enemy have, how to overtake it, in what way? And the eternal race, the eternal competition in the secret means of death and destruction.”⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant argued that the threat of new armed conflicts will exist until the world has an international mechanism for resolving interstate disputes – the so-called federation of states. Vynnychenko fervently supported this idea of a progressive world order and in his “A Testament to the Liberation Fighters” emphasized: “We will declare

37 Ibid., 35.

38 Vynnychenko, *Opovidannia*, 194.

39 Ibid., 195.

40 Vynnychenko, *Schodennyky. 1943–1951*, 341.

everywhere that we, Ukrainians, are among the sincerest fighters for world peace, for a world federation. But why is that?" Someone may ask us. Our explanation may be quite logical and convincing. Here it is: because we, Ukrainians, see in a world federation the most certain guarantee of our national and state independence, which we so ardently seek and for which we have made so many sacrifices. We know better than the so-called independent states that in the current global situation created by the development of the world economy, there can be no independence properly ensured, and even more so for states that are not independent. Therefore, if we want to have national independence, we must be in the very first and most active ranks of fighters for the realization of the idea of the World Federation of Nations, which will destroy any possibility of one nation imposing its domination on another."⁴¹ Ukrainians, like probably no other nation in the world, still feel the need to create such a new world order as urgent. As practice shows, sovereignty is not a guarantee of a peaceful life. There needs to be a higher authority over states, like the League of Nations for Kant, the United Nations for Vynnychenko. Is NATO for us? Moreover, the writer believed that if the United Nations took on the responsibility of becoming an international supreme controlling body and invited competing societies "to prove the superiority of their way of management through peaceful labor competition,"⁴² the dispute between the East and West would be resolved once and for all. Because as a result of an "international planetary socio-economic match or competition," it would be proved that only a labor collectocracy is the most useful for humanity. As you can see, the key to eternal peace on Earth, presented to us by Vynnychenko, was on the surface. All we had to do was listen, believe, and put it into practice. There would be no dilemma now whether eternal peace would come in real life or only in the cemetery of our history or, sadly, of all humankind.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that we in no way intended to idealize Vynnychenko's personality or his peacemaking views. We should not forget that he was a master of paradoxes and was always perceived ambiguously. We can be guided by the apt remarks of Ukrainian historian Yuriy Shapoval: "Vynnychenko once wrote that Ukrainian history cannot be read without bromine. Although today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become possible to read about our past with 'Martel' and 'Johnny Walker', it seems that no one has learned to look at Vynnychenko himself with a true 'steppe' temperament. Without 'grasping', as he once wrote himself. As before, someone either unconditionally scolds him or praises him just as unconditionally, portrays him as one of the 'fathers of the nation', and covers him with bronze paint. This is not just wrong. It is criminal because the real Vynnychenko did not fit into

41 Vynnychenko, *Zapovit bortsiam*, 84.

42 Vynnychenko, *Opovidannia*, 154.

simple schemes. So, he wanted to be perceived ‘without bromine’. That is how it should be perceived. Without bromine and retouching.”⁴³ We are convinced that the ideas of Kant and Vynnychenko about eternal peace if rethought and reconstructed, can become extremely relevant and necessary not only for Ukraine but for all of humanity. Obviously, today we must once and for all abandon the principle “if you want lasting peace, prepare for war” and replace it with the Kantian formula “if you want peace, prepare for political justice.” If there is even the slightest hope that the voluntary unification of peoples/democratic states into world federations that recognize their freedom and political independence will help stop the cruelty and violence in the world, it would be quite foolish and selfish not to take advantage of it. History shows how recent utopias successfully realize themselves. The example of the “Asian tigers” (Vynnychenko’s “collectocrats”) was a lifesaver for Ukraine’s postwar economy. The Ukraine’s Peace Formula is a guarantee of the existence of independent Ukraine on the political map of the world and a role model that should ensure the full force of international law in the event of new aggression. Implementation of this formula must take place as soon as possible.

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43 Yurii Shapoval, *Vynnychenko bez bromu [Vynnychenko Without Bromine]*, *Den*, March 25, 2011, <https://day.kyiv.ua/article/istoriya-i-ya/vynnychenko-bez-bromu>

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