

THE UNCROWNED KINGS OF RUTHENIA AND JESUITS  
KOSTIANTYN VASYL' OSTROZ'KYJ AGAINST  
PIOTR SKARGA (1577-1608)

The last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was marked not only by intensive cultural changes within the Orthodox Church of the Kyjivan Metropolitanate, but also by active contacts between Eastern Orthodox Ruthenia and Western Christianity and mutual attempts to unite the divided *pax Christiana*. The reformation movement, which at the end of the 1510's had already spread onto the Polish and Lithuanian lands of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), by the 1540's, reached Ruthenian lands, populated basically with Eastern Orthodox Ruthenians, generally influencing the nobles of Western and Central Ruthenia-Ukraine. The Warsaw Confederation (1573) approved of the principle of religious tolerance in the State.

The initiative of Polish Jesuits concerning the dialogue with the Orthodox East about uniting the Churches was based on Counter-Reformation activity. The important role of secular patrons accounted for by the specificity of the Orthodox ecclesiology, on the background of the weak authority of the hierarchies in the Orthodox Church of the Metropolitanate, made a lay person, Prince Kostiantyn Vasyľ Ostroz'kyj (Polish *Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski*), the informal, but only real head of the Church. It was he who was approached by Jesuits with their plans regarding the union.

Kostiantyn Vasyľ Ostroz'kyj was "the most powerful and the richest magnate in the whole kingdom" (according to Orazio Spannocchi, a secretary of the Apostolic Nuncio Alberto Bolognetti)<sup>1</sup> and "the pillar of the Orthodox faith" (according to Orthodox polemicists).<sup>2</sup> Ostroz'kyj belonged to the Princely class, which embodied the political independence of the region in concentrating their control over all the local gentry's corporations by controlling almost all of the administrative posts in Volhynia and Central

<sup>1</sup> E. RYKACZEWSKI, *Relacye nuncyuszów apostolskich*. T. 1. Poznań, 1864, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> Z. KOPYSTENSKIJ, *Palinodia*, in: *Russkaja Istoričeskaja Biblioteka*. T. IV. *Pamjatniki polemičeskoj literatury v Zapadnoj Rusi*, SPb, 1878, col. 1135.