

*The Cossack state, or hetmanate, was a precursor to modern Ukraine. "Kozak" was a Turkish word meaning freeman or adventurer. The Cossacks banded together and elected a "rada" or council, which in turn chose a leader called a hetman. The Cossacks built fortifications throughout the Dnieper and Don River basins. In 1708, Cossack hetman Ivan Mazepa sided with King Charles XII of Sweden against Peter I's Russia in a bid to create a fully independent Cossack state. But at the Battle of Poltava in 1709, Peter the Great's army defeated the Cossack and Swedish forces. Peter used Cossack prisoners as forced labor to build St. Petersburg. Russia eliminated the hetmanate under Catherine the Great.*





# The Enigma of Ukraine: Culture or Nation State?

## Observations of the Development of a Ukrainian National Idea

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**Ukraine is little studied, known or understood in the West. Some claim she is a part of Russia, others Poland; others deny her a unique cultural status or even deny a unified “Ukrainian” culture. Others know nothing of her at all.**

**F**or the beginner, the very first thing one must know to understand Ukraine is her precarious political position, that is, the delicate condition of her independence as a separate nation. Ukraine is best understood by the fact that she continually struggled for independence throughout her history, surviving numerous attempts at cultural and physical genocide only occasionally referenced in contemporary historiography. Simply put, Ukraine has not been independent as a state for any significant period of time from the 12th century until nearly the present day. It is precisely this notion of national suffering that has been the primary ingredient in the development of Ukrainian nationalism and her self image. The result is that Ukrainian nationalism is the most fierce and pronounced among any in Europe or the world.

For ease of reference, one might break up Ukrainian history into six overlapping periods:

1. Medieval Ukraine: St. Vladimir’s Kievan Rus’;
2. The state of Halich and the development of the Cossack hosts;
3. The rise of nationalism and the liberation of Ukraine;
4. The Austrian era;
5. Independent Ukraine and World War I;
6. World War II and the Soviet enslavement.

This article will do several things. Primarily, it is a defense of Ukrainian nationalism through a brief analysis of key events and periods in her history that establish her as a separate and unique social, cultural, religious and political entity. Some of the

events and personalities this writer has chosen to emphasize themselves are controversial. In this case, it rests upon, first, Ukraine's refusal to reject Western culture and society. This rupture, so powerfully explicated by the Slavophiles of the mid-19th century in Russia, is a powerfully defining set of concepts in the specifically Russian national cause. Secondly, it will show the tenacity of Ukrainian calls for independence, a strong ingredient in making a case for national self-determination. Third and most important, it suggests the existence of an explicit nationalism (at least in practice if not in theory) long before the eighteenth or nineteenth century, when nationalism was said to have been "invented." The idea that nationalism was "invented" sometime after the rancid French Revolution is a self-serving myth of the academic and political establishments in Western societies. Ukraine, among most other places, serves as a means to refute such crude mythology. Therefore, this paper also serves as a defense of the perennialist position in nationalist theory.

## 1. Medieval Ukraine

One might say that a specifically Christian Ukraine came to fruition under the reign of St. Vladimir of Kiev in the late tenth century, though Orthodoxy was nothing new then, as it had been known at the royal court under the regency of Vladimir's mother, St. Olga, and had outposts throughout the region from ancient times. St. Vladimir, after his conversion from paganism to Orthodoxy, maintained peaceful relations with his neighbors, while earlier he was rather arrogant and warlike. The conversion of St. Vladimir was nothing if not heartfelt, for the literature on him is unanimous that his personal behavior as well as his public policy changed radically afterwards. His conversion provided the cultural unity that the lands of Rus' needed that paganism has never been able to provide anywhere. Christianity created a cultural unity out of a disorganized pantheon of household and village gods. No one denies the political and cultural motivations for his conversion, such as the necessity of being treated as part of the Byzantine commonwealth, which provided lucrative trading opportunities as well as a great measure of political legitimacy.

St. Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054) finds himself as one of the most revered kings in medieval Russo-Ukrainian history. Reigning from 1019 to 1054, he maintained peace with nearly all his neighbors as well as enhanced educational opportunities substantially, and increased trade with Byzantium, but was likely most known for his codification of the first formal law of the kingdom, the *Rus'ka Pravda*. This law code outlawed the death penalty and knew no prison system, but did permit blood revenge (i.e. retribution by a family member) in cases of murder, but only as provided by law. Most crimes were dealt with through a complex system of fines, or, at worst, banishment (cf. George Vernadsky's work, below). Yaroslav was a nationalist, refusing the installation of a Greek (Theopemptos) on the metropolitan's throne of Kiev, and instead insisted on a native Slav, fellow nationalist Ilarion. The Chronicle of Nestor says of him:

**He admired church services; liked the clergy, and especially the monks, and he read books day and night. He gathered together many scribes and they translated the Greek books into the Slavic tongue to instruct the faithful.**

Iziaslav I was his successor, and, interestingly enough, explicitly placed Ukraine under the protection of the Pope of Rome while in exile after a barbarian invasion (one of many). He was crowned by the Pope as "*Codex Gertrudianus*" and was replaced on his throne. After this, around the 1070s, Kiev struggled to maintain itself. Barbarian invaders plundered and pillaged and rulers of inferior stock such as Vsevolod (1078-1094) and Sviatopolk (1094-1113) mismanaged the society. This difficulty was only stemmed by the election of the famous St. Vladimir Monomakh (1113-1125)<sup>1</sup> who was consistently popular throughout his reign, and encouraged the use of the popular assemblies (the *viche*) as a means whereby the petty nobility (always a threat to the king, whether in Ukraine or later in Russia) could be controlled. He was a reformer concerning the power of the petty nobility and expelled all those who did not rule consistent with the Ukrainian Slavic-Christian tradition. In fact, he was so popular, that, upon his death, his son, Mstislav (1125-1132) was proclaimed unanimously as ruler of Kiev by the people. Robert Magosci says of him:

**Volodymyr [Vladimir] Monomakh was the last of the three outstanding, charismatic rulers of Kievian Rus' during the era of consolidation. In an effort to strengthen his authority in the city of Kiev and throughout the Rus' realm, Monomakh did away with the practice of charging excessive interest rates and codified the Expanded Version of the Rus' Law of Iraoslav [Yaroslav] the Wise. Also, like Yaroslav the Wise, Monomakh extended his own family ties to Western Europe (his wife was a daughter of the last independent Saxon king in England), and he improved relations with Byzantium, which had worsened in recent decades. All these factors, combined with the peace on the Polovtsian steppe, contributed to make the reign of Volodymyr Monomakh one of the last periods of stability in Kievian Rus' (79-80).**

To further solidify that the Ukrainian nation maintained relations with Rome, Monomakh's grandson, Iziaslav II (1146-1154), called a Ukrainian synod to bring about the election of a Ukrainian monk named Clement to the metropolitanate of Kiev. The Byzantines refused to countenance this, but he was installed anyway "with the Head of St. Clement, the Pope of Rome"; in other words, with the full blessing of the Pope. What is significant is that this was long after the schism and shows that, first, Ukraine desired both relations with East and West, and, second, that the "schism" was not nearly as complete as many have thought.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the metropolitan of Kiev acted as a patriarch, and was never "under" the authority of the Pope of Rome. In the same way, Stepan of Serbia, the "first crowned" (1196-1228) was crowned by the Pope, but neither he nor the bishops in his country ever took orders from West Rome. In this respect, Ukraine was a leader in reconciliation and the unity of two Christian traditions. Nonetheless, as it always was in these times, the allegiance of bishops was primary motivated by political factors rather than theological. Ukrainian Orthodoxy, whether in communion or out of communion with the Roman See, did not alter, in the least, its liturgical or ecclesiastical traditions.

Thus, there is every reason to believe that Ukraine began its existence as a very distinct people. Their Orthodoxy was, as in

ancient times, close to Rome and the West, and this was mirrored by the marriage choices of the royal family. Furthermore, it is clear that Ukraine's monarchical rule was some of the most intelligent and enlightened in all of Europe. It must also be kept in mind that, during its height, Ukraine was the largest unified empire in Europe, maintained a free and prosperous peasantry (serfdom was largely unknown) and carried on a lively trade with most of the world. Royal rule, as always, was strictly limited by popular assemblage and tradition, and the Church maintained its own courts and sources of income. Medieval Rus' clearly expressed, as the Slavophiles were to explain years later, the essence of Russian political and spiritual life.

## 2. The Kingdom of Halich & the Cossacks

Kiev, which became one of the major power centers of Christian Europe, was not to last. Invasions, an excessively decentralized system of rule<sup>3</sup> and (later) incompetent rulership brought her demise. She was razed to the ground numerous times, most notably by Andrew of Vladimir in one of the many wars of succession after Kiev's preeminence had withered. Now, most histories shift the focus out of Ukraine at this time and bring it northward to Moscow by way of Vladimir-Suzdal on the one hand, and Novgorod on the other. Of course, "western Russia" did not cease to exist, her way of life being absorbed—by necessity—into the later empire of Muscovy. Instead, Ukraine's successor state was the kingdom of Halich-Volynia, whose most notable ruler was Roman who reassembled many of the old lands of Ukraine into the new kingdom which in later centuries was to be known as Galicia, or the extreme western part of the country. He was the grandson of Kievan prince Iziaslav II and married into the Byzantine Empire, as had Vladimir centuries earlier. This is a point of extreme importance in discussing Ukrainian history. Western Russia maintained its existence after the demise of the Kievan state, but the successor state of Halich is little known. Even in Magosci's standard work, he jumps from the disintegration of Kievan Rus' to the Mongol invasions without including the political continuity of Ukraine to the West, that is, at Halichnya.

Roman united the provinces of Galicia and Volynia, curbed the power of the oligarchical boyars and remained immensely popular with the rural population (Magosci, 118). Roman was killed in battle with the Poles in 1205, leaving only minor heirs. Eventually, his son Daniel took the throne of Halich (after an intermediate period of corrupt oligarchical rule) to great popular acclaim and actually retook Kiev, a feat of extraordinary significance. He was about to reconsolidate all Ukraine when the Mongol hordes from the Far East descended upon Europe. Daniel, like Roman, was immensely popular with the peasantry and opposed the rule of the oligarchy of boyars, who united to oppose him largely because his popularity was a threat to their privileges. Massive slaughters did the "noble savages" from the East commit, and thousands of white slaves did they take; Daniel's army held out quite a while in Kiev, but it was taken in 1240, and nearly all were killed in the siege.

Once the Mongols penetrated farther west, the Roman Pope of the time, Innocent IV (1243-1254) called a synod in Lyon to



*This icon, "The Vladimir Theotokos," is one of the most visible symbols of Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox statehood and culture. Further, it is an artistic masterwork. It has been credited with saving much of Russia from the Mongols—the invasions of Tamerlane specifically—and it is associated with innumerable miracles since its creation in the 12th century.*

seek Church reunification to assist in fighting the Asiatics. Ukraine, under the great Prince Daniel, eagerly rejoined the Church of Rome after a brief interval of separation. He succeeded in driving out the Mongol hordes in 1256 (though, without help from the West), but retaliation was swift and painful (Magosci, 120). Russia, on the other hand (developing through Vladimir-Suzdal), was little involved with fighting the Mongols and sought their favor rather than offer armed rebellion (which would have likely been of little use anyway).<sup>4</sup> Only Ukraine and the Western kingdoms (it was thought) offered any hope for liberation, and, in the bargain, Halich was granted political legitimacy in the West as the true successor state of Kiev and as a bridge between the

Latin Franks and the Orthodox Slavs. Unfortunately, no crusade was forthcoming despite the urging of the new pope, Alexander IV. Daniel was made a vassal of the Mongols, but, unlike other captive princes, was clearly feared by the Oriental hordes (Magosci, 120).

The Ukrainian population was impoverished by the Tartar invasions. The church union ultimately had little effect on Ukrainian national life, and the alliance with the West produced disappointing results. A rising Poland/Lithuania sought little more than the occupation of Ukraine with the excuse that they were "Orthodox schismatics." Nonetheless, many Ukrainian nationalists make the case that, after the fall of Kiev, most of the west Russian population migrated to Lithuania and made up its long-oppressed Orthodox population. This is largely false history, however, and it is nicely repudiated by W.E.D. Allen (cf. *Ukraine: A History*, below). Given that the church union did not take, the Pope of Rome lost interest in the cause of Ukrainian independence and many Ukrainians looked to Russian Orthodoxy against the Catholics in Poland and elsewhere who seemed to care little for their goodwill.

What this era finds as its most significant element for Ukrainian nationalism was the development of the Cossacks (often transliterated as "Kozaks"), an institution of specifically Ukrainian origin and a powerful source of Ukrainian national distinctiveness. By the end of the fifteenth century, Ukraine was almost entirely occupied by Poland. The Polish nobility was considered particularly rapacious, and this gave rise to a number of "Robin Hood" figures in the collective Ukrainian mind.

Simultaneous to this reaction to the arrogance of the new Polish landlords, a group of Tartars had broken from the "golden horde" and established good relations with the Russians. They continually raided Ukrainian lands and seized many white Christian slaves. This forced the population northward. The resulting empty space became a haven for those fleeing the newly introduced serfdom of Polish landlords. These men began to be called Cossacks, who have been the central feature of Ukrainian nationalism ever since. To protect themselves from the Tartars (among others), they built forts in the area (*sich*), which were deliberately placed in remote locations such as on islands beyond the rapids (*Zaporozhian*) that only the tough freebooters could reach. Their organization was military in nature, and, soon, their function was to raid the lands of the Turks to free Christian slaves and to return much of what was stolen from the Slavs; in this the literature agrees. An exception is Gordon (1983, below) who makes the claim consistently that Cossacks had no national identity at all, and robbed from Slavs and Orthodox as much as Poles and Turks. The idea that a non-European or non-Christian people would enslave Slavs was, to these recently escaped fighters against Polish landlordism, unspeakable.

As Polish oppression became less and less bearable (and forced conversions to Catholicism were regular occurrences), Cos-

sack recruitment soared by the middle of the sixteenth century. Poland began the process of spreading the policy of enserfment of Ukrainians around this time. Cossacks refused to pay taxes or recognize the institution of landlordism. Even their leader, the *hetman* (*ataman*, among the Don Cossacks), was elected, but was absolute only in wartime. Being a Cossack soon became synonymous with the Ukrainian national desire to free itself from Poles, Lithuanians, Tartars and Russians. Cossacks were nationalists in every sense of that word<sup>5</sup> when the notion of nationalism is said not to have yet come into existence. Cossackism was and is one of the most distinctive features of Ukrainian nationhood and is one of the main reasons Ukrainians have always been such an unruly group to dominate—or an unruly group, period.

The Cossacks came into their own during that particularly shameful time in Polish history, that of the Jesuit *Unia* (the forced union of Orthodoxy with Rome) in Ukraine. After the Counterreformation in Rome, the Jesuit order, with orders from the Pope, were charged to make up the irreparable losses from the Protestant Reformation in northern Europe by moving eastward. Using the Polish empire as a willing political base, Ukraino-Polish landlords (that is, Polonized Ukrainians) began to move slowly toward a union with Rome that would provide them with a far greater voice in the Polish legislature, as well as a sense of cultural acceptance. Further, the Polish government, seeking a religio-cultural unity within the empire, with Jesuit assistance, permitted Ukrainian Orthodox to maintain their ancient tradition in full, but merely recognize the Latin dogmatic principle that the Pope of Rome (and only the Pope of Rome) was the head of the Church.

With the approval of a few bishops, and the condemnation of others, the *Unia* was imposed by force on the Ukrainian people under Polish domination. The approach would continue under the Habsburgs. Polish troops were stationed in major cathedrals to ensure the *filioque* (a statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father) was inserted into the creed. In spite of all protestations and assurances to the contrary, in no way was the newly created *Unia* ever an equal to the dominant Latin rite or jurisdiction. Until recently, "Latinization" was the norm both under Poland and Austria, where, slowly, Latin practices crept into the Greek rite. During official processions, the highest Greek Catholic was forced to walk behind the lowest ranking Polish Latin bishop.

The *Unia* as a whole is not merely a relic of history. It is a living entity in global Christian dialogue. Its current laity and clergy are utterly divided as to its mission and purpose. The current Pope of Rome, John Paul II, has, on two occasions, at Balamand, Lebanon and Friesling, Germany, rejected the *Unia* as a means for church unification. In Ukraine, the uniatic movement has recently announced that "it will be a part of a unified Orthodox patriarchate," while others have manifest an intent to adopt the *novus*



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*ordo* Latin rite. Without the Counterreformation mentality behind it, the future of the *Unia* seems unsure and extremely unclear. It divided a nation. It deepened class divisions that were already creating two distinct nations within western Ukraine, and it helped to Polishize the best of the Ukrainian aristocracy. From a theological point of view, it never developed a sense of itself. It is unable to fit an Orthodox mind into a Catholic life, or a Catholic mind into an Orthodox life, the relations between the two are unclear. To this day, it is a point of emotional and occasionally violent tension between the three camps, without, in the least, offering any hope or framework for real Church unity. It was, in the words of the present pope, a “failure.” It was a product of Polish demands and the interests of the landlord class, and has left an embittered legacy.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. The Liberation of Ukraine

It was not long before the Cossacks, militarily experienced and rather wealthy from their raids on Polish estates (so well carried out that the Poles continually negotiated from a position of weakness, or at least, fear), would become the kernel of Ukrainian nationalism and eventual liberation. The main Cossack unit and the institution of Ukrainian unity was the Zaporozhian *sich*, and the military force was called the “Free Cossack Army.” The “registered” Cossack force was a means by which Polish landlords sought to neutralize Cossack military genius by placing them in service of the crown. Unfortunately, the economic privileges of this status created a situation where even the Cossacks themselves developed a landlord class that sought out the acceptance and protection of Poland (and later, Russia). It was not long before Cossackdom was itself divided, and this, among other things, led to the Cossack state becoming gradually weakened.

Ukraine had to wait until 1648 to realize its national aspirations. Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky—to this day one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Ukrainian hero and symbol of national pride—defeated a large Polish force at Zhovti Vody then and began the painstaking liberation of Ukraine from Polish imperialism. The Jews received harsh treatment largely because they had acted as agents for the Polish landlords and nearly monopolized the liquor trade in the region, as well as dominated the banking trade, charging peasants an average of 150 to 200 percent on loans; the literature seems to agree on this. Nevertheless, the complex chronology of Ukrainian foreign policy (concerning the balance of power in the region) at this time with respect to its eventual independence goes something like this:

First, Hetman Khmelnytsky entered into an alliance with the Turks against the Poles in 1650. The Sultan had promised to recognize Ukraine afterwards. Once the Poles counterattacked, Ukraine was abandoned by the Turks, forcing the hetmanate to look to Moscow for assistance. The 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav in theory conceded czarist recognition of Ukraine, as well as a permanent union of Russia and Ukraine, a stipulation still fraught with controversy today. It would seem that Subtelny (1988) rejects the permanence of the union with the argument that the privileges of the Cossacks were (eventually) rejected; Allen seems to accept the treaty as binding, rejecting the nationalist position on the issue. While the Poles then entered into an alliance with



*Shown is a young girl carrying a baby in a street in Poltava, Ukraine in 1942. Ill-clad, they appear to be in desperate straits and probably hungry. Vast numbers of Ukrainians suffered displacement during World War II, but far worse was the deliberate, genocidal starvation of Ukraine by the Soviets in the mid-1930s, in which at the very least 7 million died.*

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## Megadeath in Ukraine

Ukraine is a rich agricultural, industrial and mining country which is so fertile that it has been called the breadbasket of Europe. Yet the communists succeeded in bringing starvation to this land of plenty by the use of force. The Jewish holocaust of 6 million, even if that number were true (which is a number of stories in itself), is small potatoes compared with what was done by the communists (many of them Jewish) of the Soviet Union to the people of Ukraine, where an estimated 9 million persons were deliberately caused to starve to death in 1932-1933. One of Stalin's lieutenants boasted that the mass murder was a great success, because it showed the peasants “who is master here.”

Even before the starvation began, the entire intelligentsia of eastern Ukraine was liquidated by Stalin. The subsequent generation of Ukrainians was forcibly russified, with mass numbers of Russian “settlers” moving in.

There have never, of course, been any reparations, nor any justice meted out to the murderers. After all, the victims were merely Christians.

Though reams of material appear continually about the Jewish holocaust, there is very little reading matter available concerning the genocide in Ukraine. For more on the Ukrainian holocaust, read Lorden, P.J., “The Other Holocaust—The Terror Famine in Ukraine” TBR July, 1996. Also see the exclusive photo spread in TBR January/February, 2002.

Turkey so as to regain their former wealthy and fertile lands, Poland was utterly defeated by the Cossack/Moscow alliance. Afterward, King Charles X of Sweden convinced the Cossacks (who were universally known by this time for their fighting abilities) to join with him against Moscow, for, he argued, Ukraine would only be enserfed again as it had been under the Poles. Warsaw and Krakow were captured by the Cossacks as a result of this alliance.

In 1667, the now famous hetman died of a stroke. The Russians took advantage of this power vacuum by invading Ukraine (as a preemptive strike against the Turks), though Ukrainian national aspirations were well respected under the gentle rule of Czar Alexis and Fedor, the former in particular representing the best of the Russian tradition of royal rule. The hetman's son George was chosen but, at 20, proved too inexperienced. An army elected Ivan Vyhowsky, who also turned out to be a mistake for he entered into an alliance with a revived Polish kingdom against the Russians, going so far as entering into formal political union with the Polish state (the Union of Hadiach). Unsurprisingly, a certain Colonel Bezpaly started a civil war over this anti-national policy which weakened the hetmanate but succeeded in overthrowing the union. The Russians, still weak after the Time of Troubles (ending only in 1613 with the election of Czar Michael Romanov) maintained a presence in Ukraine to act as a buffer against the Poles. Alexis confirmed the "ancient privileges" of the Cossack order. During this time the Cossacks were forced to adopt a more stringent and centralized military rule of the country, betraying their earlier libertarian-style nationalism. Such a situation divided the hetmanate almost beyond repair. A new hetman, Doroshenko, renewed an alliance with the Tartars, but eventually lost the resulting war, forcing Poland and Moscow together in alliance by 1680, and making certain that the liberation of Ukraine would exist only as theory.

Another significant figure in the development of the Ukrainian national idea was Metropolitan St. Petro Mohyla of Kiev (reigned 1632-1647). An Orthodox prelate who sought Western assistance in liturgical development and priestly formation (after all, one could not function in a Polish court without knowing Latin), he believed that only by adopting Western models of organization and education would the Orthodox Church be able to compete intellectually with the Jesuits. Orthodoxy had great initial difficulty with the aggressive polemics of the Jesuits. He, as Metropolitan (he had previously been abbot of the famous Monastery of the Caves), created many schools modeled on the Jesuit schools of Western Europe (Magosci, 189), where Latin was stressed as was the typical Latin program of studies (modified for Orthodoxy). His brilliance assisted Orthodoxy in maintaining itself intellectually against Rome. Regardless, due to his "Latin influence," he is, in spite of his canonization by the Orthodox Church, an object of great contention among "Slavophile" Orthodox. Importantly, the work of Mohyla again stresses the "bridge" identity of the Ukrainian Orthodox and provides another argument for Ukrainian distinctiveness.

A generation later, Hetman Ivan Mazepa was elected on August 4, 1687. This very bright and articulate youngster quickly became a friend of the westernizing Peter the Great, which per-

mitted him a strong hold on power even as he was considered a "young upstart from Poland" by the other candidates for the hetmanate (Magosci, 242). He was considered a loyal friend of Moscow for a while, but soon split from them over numerous issues, an important one being the plan of Czar Peter to send Cossacks to Prussia to have them trained according to Western models. He defected to the Swedes against both the Poles and Russians, but the 18-year-old King Charles X (actually quite competent for his age) was unexpectedly defeated by Moscow, leaving the Ukrainians without their formerly powerful ally. The famous gamble by Mazepa was lost, and from that time on, any anti-Russian policy by the Cossack host was referred to as "Mazeppaism." The Cossacks were then dispersed and, eventually, Empress Catherine II of Moscow would abolish (temporarily) the hetmanate and the Cossack organization. Soon, western Ukraine, that is, the old lands of Halich, was to fall under the domination of a new player, Austria-Hungary, after the first partition in 1772, when Poland ceased to be a threat.

#### 4. The Austrian Era

One of the most interesting features of Ukrainian history, specifically when dealing with her specific nationalist development, is the way Ukrainians benefited from this particular form of imperialism. It almost strikes the student as providential. Ukrainian independence, given the force they were arrayed against, was not a possibility by the nineteenth century, and seemed impossible long before that. Thus, the best anyone could hope for was that a benevolent member of the great powers concert would take Ukraine under her wing and assist in her development. To an extent, the eminently civilized monarchy of Austria-Hungary served precisely this function.

Once the ancient kingdom of Halich was absorbed by Austria, many positive developments occurred. Under Austrian law, all citizens of the empire were legally equal (at least in theory). Serfdom, enforced under both Russia and Poland, was ended in Ukraine (for a time). The Austrians stressed education (in the native Ukrainian language), creating the University of Lviv in 1784 as well as the Barbareum, a Greek Catholic Seminary, opened in 1774, and the Ruthenian Institute in Lviv, opened in 1786. It was because of these institutions that Ukraine experienced her "national renaissance" in the nineteenth century, ironically under the imperial hand of a foreign power. In 1848, for example, Ukrainians refused to rebel against their benevolent overlords, and the Polish national rebellion—no doubt met with a certain glee from Ukrainian circles—failed as a result. Magosci writes:

**Throughout 1848, the Austrian government gave its support to the Ukrainians, both to their efforts to obtain recognition as a nationality and to their attempts to achieve political and cultural rights. In return, the Ukrainian leadership turned a blind eye to the political reaction and repressive measures that at the same time were being carried out by Habsburg authorities against certain other peoples of the empire (408-409).**

At the same time, the Russian empire suppressed all these things in the eastern part of the country that was still under their control. Serfdom was extended and more rigorously enforced, and,



*This painting by Neprintsev depicts partisan soldiers in the Russian countryside. From as early as 1941, thousands of these communist guerrillas operated in the rear of the German army, carrying out sabotage and harassment operations. These groups were linked with the Red Army by radio and airplanes and brought it invaluable, if illegal, support.*

unfortunately, the normally intelligent and nationalist Czar Nicholas I began the unfortunate process of “Russification” in the eastern part of the country though in response to an older “Polonization.” As Nicholas I was maintaining free government in Finland, and offering constitutional ideas to Serbia, he was very worried about losing his useful buffer and important granary. Indeed, Russia’s motivation for keeping a lid on Ukrainian nationalism during the 19th century was economic: Russia could ill-afford to lose her most productive territory. As a result, Russian landlords insisted on serfs performing their duties in terms of agricultural labor in the South, while in the less fertile North, serfdom was reduced to a set of cash payments (*obrok*), and thus the serf was encouraged to engage in crafts and seek other forms of labor in the towns and cities.

It is precisely this process of moderate Westernization that, first, assisted the development of Ukrainian nationalism, making it more educated and articulate, and, second, provided Ukraine with the intellectual tools necessary to fulfill her specific mission

as the bridge-builder between East and West. Robert Magosci fully agrees with his analysis (cf. 397-400). On the other hand, thanks to the very un-Orthodox ecumenism of the “Holy Alliance”—negotiated by the Russians between Protestant Prussia, Orthodox Russia and Catholic Austria, three empires united against revolution, radicalism, Freemasonry and liberalism—the Austrian monarchy and empire were saved from almost sure ruin by the intervention of Russian troops after the debacle of the 1848 revolution(s). The Emperor in Vienna had nearly abdicated in the face of revolution. The Russian Czar invaded the country and reinstalled the Emperor in his rightful place.

It was during this time that the full identity and national consciousness of Ukraine sprung to the fore with a force and, more importantly, an articulation that had heretofore been unknown. The great nationalist poets Franko, Kotlarevsky and Shevchenko were active under the (temporarily) moral rule of the Austrians. In the 1840s, the society of Saints Cyril and Methodius was formed, which had as its aim the dissemination of nation-

alist ideals, one specifically, that all ethnic groupings were morally deserving of their own state and thus had an inherent right of self-determination. Nationalism and the notion of moral self-determination was brought to a fever pitch by the abolition of serfdom in Austria proper in 1848 as well as in Russia as a whole in 1861. Many nationalists the world over, of various political persuasions, believed the time of the “spring of nations” was at hand. One must always remember, however, that, as many of the nationalists active at the time such as Kossuth in Hungary and Mazzini in Italy were Masons and politically Leftist, Ukrainian nationalism was consistently Christian, traditionalist, and was always brushed with the libertarian-militarist paint of the Cossack tradition.

Unfortunately, it was not long before the Austrians began to abuse their power. The benevolent attitude of the Austrians, while assisting the Ukrainian nationalist movement beyond measure, actually came to an end after the death of the brilliant emperor Joseph II in 1790. Afterwards, the Poles in the Imperial Court became more and more brazen in their attacks on Ukrainian nationhood, regardless of the manifest loyalty of the Ukrainian nation at that time. Magosci writes:

**While the Galician-Ukrainian and, to a certain extent, Transcarpathian national movements got off to a promising start after 1772 with help from the Austrian government in the areas of education and church organization, by the first decades of the 19th century these achievements had largely been undermined. In Galicia, the new conservative political and social environment allowed the Polish nobility to regain its former dominant position and encouraged a trend toward assimilation to Polish culture and language among all educated individuals, regardless of their national background. (405)**

The Austrian administration never replaced the basically Polish ruling class in western Ukraine. As a result, the old landlords were still in place and soon began to oppress the peasantry as they had always done. In Vienna, the Poles maintained the full support of the monarchy. Each Polish landlord, assisted by the region's Jews, owned at least one brandy distillery. The use of alcohol to suppress insurrection was well known at the time, as the old saying went: “the ear of the drunkard does not hear the clinking of his fetters.” The Ukrainian nationalist movement, as a result, did two things. First, Ukrainians began to turn to Moscow, and the Russophiles were reborn (particularly in Transcarpathia, at the time under Hungarian domination). Secondly, and a bit paradoxically (for Ukrainians), they launched an anti-alcohol campaign for political reasons. The Austrian era, dealt with here only in the briefest of ways, can never be underestimated in the development of Ukrainian nationalism.

## **5. Independent Ukraine & World War I**

By the beginning of the 20th century, Ukrainian nationalism was at a cultural and intellectual level unheard of in its history. Ukraine, through its painful history, developed a nationalism that should make contemporary nationalists take notice. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War I meant that the normally benevolent and ethical Czar St. Nicholas II needed all parts of the empire to be as docile as possible, and he ordered the paci-

fication of Ukraine for that purpose. Nonetheless, neither Allen or Subtelny agree with the Ukrainian nationalist position that Ukrainian nationhood was unduly harmed during this period. In fact, a disproportionate number of the troops serving under Russian command were Ukrainians.

In 1918, both the Bolsheviks and the Germans invaded the country. They were both vehemently fought by Ukrainian nationalists. The government was taken over by a Cossack coup d'état under the great arch-nationalist Pavlo Skoropadsky (a former czarist general supported by Germany), who ruled the country as an autocrat (certainly necessary under the circumstances), and, thus, one might say, Ukraine was again under a military government instituted by Cossacks. He brought law and order to the country in a short time and was supported by the Orthodox hierarchy, which was the target of land confiscations of the radical “Central Rada” (council) of the left-nationalist movement (Magosci, 489) which was opposed by the more traditionalist elements within Ukrainian nationalism. With further military expeditions (particularly from Bolshevik Russia), the masterful anti-communist nationalist leader wrote:

**... Being of the conviction that other ways would bring a catastrophe to Ukraine, I am calling all who care for its future, closely bound to the future and happiness of all Russians (non-communist), to unite with me in defending Ukraine and Russia. I believe that in this holy and patriotic cause, You, Citizens and Kozaks of Ukraine, together with the rest of the population, will give me full-hearted and avid support.**

In making the above statement, shocking to Ukrainian nationalists, he was worried of a few things. First, he realized that Ukraine, being exhausted by war on several fronts, could not resist any Bolshevik invasion. Importantly, second, he was worried that the nationalist cause would be taken over by leftists, much like in Ireland or Wales. For Skoropadsky, his alliance with the German government was a desperate necessity, given that, as later history proved, life under the Germans would be far preferable than life under the communists. Both Austrian and German troops occupied much of the country, leading to the formation of roving bands of disorganized Ukrainians acting as both self-help societies as well as resistance forces. Furthermore, Ukraine would soon have to deal with a resurgent Poland, one of the results of Versailles.

The Ukrainian socialists, including Simon Petlura, were also interested in independence, but only on their terms, i.e. independence was defined basically as when they seized power. Nothing is more alien to the Cossack tradition than Marxism, or, actually, any Western ideological invention. To this day the Cossack organization(s) is (are) bitterly anti-leftist, and their possible military activity in the future is no doubt cause for alarm among the self-righteous aliens who currently rule the Russian state. Importantly, Skoropadsky was calling upon patriotic Russians to assist in the cause. Being a nationalist, he realized that the old battles between the two Slavic nations were now overthrown by a common need to resist the communist enemy, and, in this case, cooperation with the Germans was important. Germany was, so long as she was in the war, not going to leave the source of much

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of her food. This is one of the most significant things to be taken from this hetman's reign. It was Ukraine, rising above the centuries-old and bitter ethnic rivalry between Russia and Ukraine, that called for unity against the communist and leftist enemy. This shows that for the Ukrainians, nationalism was not merely prejudice (as it has often been called) but a truly enlightened means whereby Slavic Christian civilization might be saved from Marxism (and now liberalism, capitalism and the Trilateral Commission). Unfortunately, for Ukraine, Russia, and for nationalism in general, leftist Ukrainians overthrew this great leader after a short civil war that ended on December 14, 1918. As usual, Ukrainian independence ended in tragedy.

Skoropadsky was an enigmatic figure, usually the butt of ritual denunciations from leftists and Establishment historians. A few negative characteristics were his over-reliance on large landlords who were hardly nationalists (or, more accurately, became whatever is necessary to maintain their holdings). Secondly, in permitting German troops to use Ukrainian grain to continue World War I, he also allowed (but did not sanction) the serious abuses the Germans meted out to the unwilling Ukrainian peasantry, who was already the poorest in Europe. This latter was the cause of his unpopularity, but there was little the hetman could do about it. It was German guarantees that allowed Skoropadsky to remain in power (or, for that matter, the means by which any government could be held together), and that were, more significantly, the only means whereby the far better armed, financed and organized communists could be held in check.

His positive achievements far outweighed these problems however. First of all, his acceptance of the terms of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk<sup>7</sup> meant that Ukraine was now an independent country recognized as such by the world. Second, from previous policies of the Rada, education reform was sweeping and effective, particularly in the process of "reukrainizing" education. Under his hetmanate, Ukrainian scholarly writing increased massively; 16.2 million books were printed in Ukrainian in these two years alone. Several new universities were opened, and older ones were revamped and expanded (Magosci, 491). As Magosci writes: "... the hetmanate deserves credit for significant advances in creating an intellectual and educational infrastructure for a Ukrainian state" (491).

His alliance with the landlords might well have been the cause of this, for it was only this class that had the finances to make such reforms a possibility, as tax collection was not exactly functioning during the chaotic days of the leftist Central Rada. Ukrainian nationalist academic Orest Subtelny (1988) writes this:

The government's achievements in education and in the creation of an infrastructure for scholarly activity were especially impressive. On the elementary school level, several million Ukrainian-language textbooks were prepared and Ukrainian was introduced into most of the schools. About 150 new Ukrainian-language gymnasia, many located in rural areas, were founded. In October, two new Ukrainian universities were created in Kiev and Kamianets-Podilskyi. A national archive and a library of over 1 million volumes was also founded. The high point of this activity was the establishment of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences on 24 November 1918. Thus, in a matter of months, in the area of culture the hetmanate had achievements to its credit that the Ukrainian intelligentsia had dreamed of for generations (357).

**Turn of the 9th century**—Formation of Kyivan Rus, a large and powerful medieval state unifying eastern Slavs from the Baltic to the Black Sea, from the Volga to the Tysa Rivers.

**839**—Mention of Rus' in the Bertynsky chronicles associated with the mission to Ludwig I of the Frankish kingdom.

**840**—Magyars and Khazars attack Kyiv.

**1027**—Construction of Svyata Sofia (St. Sophia) Cathedral.

**1130s**—The Princes (rulers) engage in internecine struggles; fragmentation and decline of Kyivan Rus.

**1187**—The word "Ukraine" (*Ukrayina*) first used to describe Kyiv and Halychyna lands.

**1240**—Kyiv falls to the Mongols.

**14th century**—Ukraine under Polish and Lithuanian rule.

**1475-1774**—Crimea (Krym) under Turkish (Osman) Empire's rule.

**1490**—First mention of Cossacks.

**1576**—Foundation of Ostroh Academy—first university-like school in Eastern Europe.

**1630**—Cossack uprising against Poland.

**1648**—Beginning of liberation of Ukraine from Polish rule headed by Cossack hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky.

**1709**—Battle in Poltava (Ukraine). Russians defeat Swedish-Ukrainian army and execute Cossack troops after the surrender of Swede army.

**1720**—Russians prohibit the use of Ukrainian language.

**1775**—Zaporizka Sich destroyed by Russians.

**1840**—Taras Shevchenko's first publication of *Kobzar*, probably the most popular book in Ukrainian.

**1876**—Total ban of the Ukrainian language in education (books in Ukrainian were removed from school libraries, Ukrainophile teachers were replaced with Russians) and in publishing; a prohibition against the use of the Ukrainian language in theaters and in songs.

**1917**—Revolution in Russia. Ukrainian writer/historian Mykhaylo Hrushevsky becomes the president of newly proclaimed Ukrainian state (Ukrayinska Narodna Respublika). The power of the new government is very weak, Russian czars, communists and Germans try to conquer Ukraine again. Simon Petlura becomes a commander of Ukrainian armed forces. Ukrainian lands are united after Western Ukrainian Republic and Ukrainian republic unite.

**1918**—Austrian empire breaks up. Newly established West-Ukrainian Republic is annexed by Czechoslovakia and Romania.

**1929**—Collectivization starts. All lands that belonged to Ukrainian farmers are taken away and put into large "kolhosps" (cooperative farms.) People who didn't want to give their land away are arrested and murdered.

**1933-1934**—Artificial famine in Ukraine, caused by Stalin's policy. Grain confiscated from peasants; laws enacted that anyone caught taking grain from a field was to be executed. More than 7 million people die as a result.

**1939-1940**—Annexation of Western Ukraine by Soviet Union according to a secret treaty with Nazi Germany.

**1941-1944**—German occupation of Ukraine.

**1943-1944**—After German occupation, Russians return. Massive immigration to the west (England, France, Canada, USA.)

**1945-1947**—Discrimination and murders of Ukrainian population in Poland by Polish army and police.

**1980s**—National movement for the liberation of Ukraine "Rukh" is formed.

**1986**—Nuclear reactor explosion in Chernobyl.

**1991**—Ukrainian independence proclaimed. Elections of Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) and President Leonid Kravchuk.

**1994**—Ukraine signs treaty with NATO.

**1996**—Constitution is proclaimed.

In the west<sup>8</sup> another Ukrainian republic (the West Ukrainian National Republic) was proclaimed in 1918, only to be crushed by the Poles who believed its many nationals living within its borders would not be fairly treated by the nationalist government. Nationalist Poles, unsurprisingly, believed Galicia to be a part of her "ancient patrimony," as many Hungarians believe Ruthenian-Transcarpathia to be. Such was the view of Gen. Joseph Pilsudski, ruling a new Poland born out of the ashes of Versailles from both corpses of monarchical Germany and Austria. Romania, Poland and Soviet Russia invaded and occupied all of Ukraine, and of course, the immensely productive farmland found therein. Kiev was taken on April 25, 1920. Western Ukraine was ceded to Poland in 1923. The Polish occupation government practiced a particularly nasty form of "ethnic cleansing:"

**From the petition of 62 members of the English Parliament to the Secretary of the League of Nations in Geneva it appears that the Poles pursued a policy of extermination in Halichyna; they persecuted men, women and children; they killed innocent people during their "military punishing expeditions" in at least 700 localities. In Galicia prior to the Polish occupation there were 3,662 Ukrainian schools, and in 1925, there were only 1,055 left.**

Out of this the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was born, evolving from the former Ukrainian Military Organization (UWO); the former was to be headed by revolutionary nationalist Stepan Bandera who was assassinated by Soviet NKVD agents in Munich in 1959.

## 6. World War II

Bandera proclaimed Ukrainian independence on the eve of the German preemptive invasion of the USSR. Previously, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact ensured that the Soviets would invade all Ukraine now that Poland was militarily irrelevant and occupied both by Hitler and Stalin. The NKVD, true to form, introduced political tyranny and torture as matters of state policy. Yaroslav Stetsko was proclaimed the first prime minister of yet another "independent" Ukrainian republic. Unfortunately, Hitler reacted unnecessarily roughly and arrested Stetsko in 1941. Further, the military units the Germans formed around the anti-communist Ukrainians (only totaling 1,200 men) were disbanded and its officers sent to German prisons (Magosci, 626). Later, the German civilian authorities set up the Ukrainian National Council (representing Ukrainians formerly under Polish rule), but, after the saintly Metropolitan Sheptytskyi of the Greek Catholic Church protested the German treatment of sympathetic Ukrainians, this organization too was closed (Magosci, 627). A more mistaken policy in Ukraine could not be imagined. Though many positive developments occurred under National Socialist rule, Magosci writes that under Hitler:

**... there occurred a rebirth of Ukrainian national life during the first months of German rule. During the first few months of German occupation, over 100 non-communist newspapers began to appear, new publishing companies and theaters were formed, a society of Ukrainian writers was established, and teachers began to formulate a revised school curriculum that stressed a Ukrainian national message for classes in language, history and cul-**

**ture. In the countryside, peasants began to divide among their families that [which] had belonged to the Soviet collective farms, and others joined to establish voluntary agricultural cooperatives and rural financial institutions (628, Subtleny agrees with this analysis, and he was consulted and cited in Magosci's conclusions on this matter).**

The Soviet agent Erich Koch was appointed by Hitler who then proceeded to eliminate whatever Ukrainian nationalist support Hitler was to have. Koch made a speech to his staff upon his appointment in September of 1941, and said: "Gentlemen, I am known as a brutal dog. Because of this reason I was appointed as Reichskommissar of the Ukraine. Our task is to suck from Ukraine all the goods we can get a hold of, without consideration of the feelings or the property of the Ukrainians. Gentlemen, I am expecting from you the utmost severity towards the native population" (Kamenetsky, 35). He made enemies of an entire nation of what had been enthusiastic friends. Trusting Koch was one of the key errors Hitler made in the second world war and was one of its great tragedies. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army was formed then to fight both the Germans as well as the Soviets. Richard Landwehr writes:

**While the invading German soldiers were greeted by the Ukrainian civilians as liberators, this attitude vanished almost completely once a new civil administration was put in place, under the truly brutal leadership of Gauleiter and Reichskommissar Erich Koch. He treated eastern Ukraine as he saw fit. It is interesting to note that Koch was considered to be a Soviet agent by the head of German military intelligence operations "East" (Richard Gehlen), and that he always had been favorably oriented towards the Soviet government. After the war, Koch disappeared behind the Iron Curtain and was never brought to trial by the Polish or Soviet communist authorities. . . . As of this writing [1985], Koch is said to be alive and well in Poland. At any rate, Koch's neo-terrorist activities completely alienated the people of eastern Ukraine from 1941 to 1943. No paid agent could have done a better job for the Soviets than Erich Koch! (17)**

Regardless, many young Ukrainians joined the SS, the Division *Halichina*, due to Hitler's realizing the errors of Koch and needing native Slavs to administer the territories he recently conquered. Ukrainians did not believe Hitler would win the war, but thought his military "know how" might assist the nationalist cause to bring Stalin down beforehand. The Ukrainian SS divisions were the only possibility of defeating the Soviet menace. As usual it was not to be. The generally pro-leftist United Nations admitted the "Ukrainian Soviet Republic" among its august membership in 1945, and the famous enslavement began, sanctioned by the world body, that only ended, to an extent, in 1990.



The purpose of this essay was not to attempt a history of Ukraine. It was rather an attempt to bring out a few key arguments necessary to establish the moral imperative to self-determination of which Ukraine is still not in full possession. "Self-determination" is not a matter of emotional polemics or shrill demands, but of clear historical and comparative analysis, of which, unfortunately, many nationalists are incapable. Its purpose was to argue for Ukraine's distinctiveness, her nationhood

and to rebut the claims of some of the more extreme national jingoists in Poland, Austria and Russia. Thus, this essay seeks to establish a handful of significant events and personalities that conspired to create and sustain the Ukrainian national idea. The point is not to write rhapsodies to Ukraine nor to take anything away from the objective achievements of Imperial Russia or Poland (which were many), but rather to remind nationalists that the core principle of nationalism is the imperative of cultural and ethnic self-determination. Russian nationalists cannot ask, on the one hand, for national independence from foreign influence and still seek, on the other, the subjugation of the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine. Simultaneously, an "independent" Ukraine will be torn between the demands of Russia on the one hand, and NATO, the European Union and Western capitalism on the other. Therefore, it seems necessary for an Orthodox and Slavic confederation to be established under Russian leadership to, as this author has written many times, combine forces to fight the imperial designs of the most tyrannical overlord of all: American capitalism.

What remains to be discussed is the retooling and rethinking of nationalist politics in the new century. Ukrainian nationalists need to remember that her future does not lie with the West, which views her only as another untapped market and a source for mineral and agricultural goods. Israeli criminals (implicitly sanctioned by the United States) have already proved that they consider Ukraine as nothing more than the breeding ground for its sex slaves. The battles between Orthodox and Greek Catholic

***Many young Ukrainians joined the Waffen-SS. They did not believe Hitler would win the war, but thought his military know how might assist the nationalist cause to bring down dictator Josef Stalin.***

are not matters of religion (at least in this case), but are the residual effects of imperial rivalry between Poland and Austria on the one hand, and Imperial Russia on the other.

As globalization proceeds, being run by the power elite of the Western world, the very existence of nationalism in general is threatened. Both Ukraine and Russia are run by an alien elite, not by native Russians and Ukrainians. These are the issues of concern to nationalists, issues that certainly transcend the battles of five hundred years ago. As it stands, the national interests of Ukraine and Russia, Greek Catholic and Orthodox, are not inimical. Their very existences are at stake. ❖

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#### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Both Monomakh and Yaroslav have recently been canonized as saints by the Orthodox Church.

<sup>2</sup> The schism between Rome and Orthodoxy has no specific date. It was a process rather than an incident. Incidents of intercommunion between Orthodox and Latin reach easily into the 13th century. One might say that from the 8th to the early 13th century, a process of estrangement deepened.

<sup>3</sup> The udel system of rule (often called appanage) was based not on primogeniture, but on the idea that, when the father died, his lands were parceled out to his sons. As the years went past, it is easy to imagine the number of "appanage" princes that came into

being. The drive to unify these petty lands was Andrew's primary goal. St. Vladimir Monomakh and many others attempted to curb the radical tendency to decentralization and anarchy that this system caused. In many ways, Russian centralization was a reaction to this, brought upon by painful experience and military necessity.

<sup>4</sup> The Vladimir-Muscovite plan of accommodation to Mongol rule was an important reason Moscow emerged as powerful as it did after the Horde began to break up during the times of Basil II and Ivan III.

<sup>5</sup> Simply put, the Cossacks' main purpose (in spite of their common excesses) was the defense and liberation of Orthodoxy under Polish rule. This most certainly qualifies as a nationalist movement given that, at the time, "Orthodoxy" was the prime determinant of culture and personal identity for Russians of various stripes.

<sup>6</sup> This author writes from personal and often bitter experience as a former Uniate converted to Orthodoxy.

<sup>7</sup> The peace treaty in 1917 that took Russia out of the war. Unfortunately, Imperial Germany assisted the anti-royal revolutionaries for precisely this purpose.

<sup>8</sup> History created three territorial units of Ukraine: the first on the left bank of the Dnieper River, the second, Galicia, and the third, in Russo-phillic Transcarpathia, where this writer has roots. This latter often disagreed with the nationalism of the western part of the country, and even insisted on its own church structure (the Ruthenian Uniate and Carpatho-Rusyn Orthodox) when many emigrated to America. This division has left many wondering if Ukraine is a unified entity after all.