

Independent Ukraine: Origins and Problems

Geschichte der Ukraine by Frank Golczewski; Ukraine: Gegenwart und Geschichte eines neuen Staates by Guido Hausmann; Andreas Kappeler; Shaping Identity in Eastern Europe and Russia:

Soviet-Russian and Polish Accounts of Ukrainian History, 1914-1991 by Stephen Velychenko

Review by: John A. Armstrong

Contemporary European History, Vol. 3, No. 3, Theme Issue: Race and Violence in Germany- and Europe (Nov., 1994), pp. 331-336

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](http://www.cambridge.org)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081530>

Accessed: 02/10/2014 07:47

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Contemporary European History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Independent Ukraine: Origins and Problems

JOHN A. ARMSTRONG

Frank Golczewski, ed., *Geschichte der Ukraine* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), pp. 315

Guido Hausmann and Andreas Kappeler, eds., *Ukraine: Gegenwart und Geschichte eines neuen Staates* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1993), pp. 402

Stephen Velychenko, *Shaping Identity in Eastern Europe and Russia: Soviet-Russian and Polish Accounts of Ukrainian History, 1914–1991* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 266

As late as 1950, German-language publications provided much the most important materials in Western languages on Ukraine. Professor Hans Koch of the University of Munich and Ivan Mirchuk, a Ukrainian scholar residing in Germany, are just two examples of authors combining a breadth of coverage and meticulous detail then unavailable in English. From that time on, the flood of books and articles published in the United States, Canada and Great Britain rose rapidly. Although some were written by persons (like the present reviewer) of non-Ukrainian origin, most authors were descended from Ukrainian immigrants. By the 1990s the larger part of serious historical and political literature on Ukraine (published outside the USSR) was available only to readers of English. Yet, with the outstanding exception of Orest Subtelny's history,¹ these works were essentially monographic. To grasp the full sweep of Ukrainian national development, the reader had to study at least a half-dozen major works. With the appearance of the symposia under review, this situation has been dramatically reversed: in two large volumes, the reader of German now has better sources of information on Ukraine than the English-language reader can obtain without great effort.

Frank Golczewski, editor of *Geschichte der Ukraine*, is of Ukrainian origin but long part of the community of German specialists on his subject. With the exception of two contributions (one by Subtelny and one by a writer of Polish background), Golczewski's collaborators belong to a new generation of German scholars. As the title suggests, contributions are arranged chronologically, except for the editor's chapters dealing with pre- and post-Second World War emigrations (Golczewski has provided a similar contribution for the Kappeler-Hausmann volume), both

¹ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

significant themes frequently omitted in general discussions. By careful scholarship and meticulous editing, the volume avoids the overlaps and contradictions frequent in symposia, with one glaring exception. In his introduction (p. 14) Golczewski cryptically dismisses the idea that 'Ukraine' is derived from 'borderland' as 'pseudo-etymology'. Just four pages later, Gertrud Pickhan circumstantially relates 'Ukraine' to the numerous East Slavic *okrainy* and *ukrainy* – e.g. the Pskov region. She comments that 'in the medieval topography, consequently, there was only "a" Ukraine, not "the" Ukraine', nor, she adds, did any region bearing such a designation comprise the entire area settled by 'Ukrainians'.

In addition to sound scholarship and eminent lucidity, the volume's producers have served it well by providing six good maps, topical bibliographies and generally adequate notes. However, two omissions should be noted. Antoine Martel's precocious interpretation² of the interaction of Polish with East Slavic writings emanating from Vilnius and Kiev during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which contributed significantly to the evolution of distinct Belarus and Ukrainian patterns should at least be listed in Carsten Kumke's chapter. Possibly the general neglect, in both symposia, of linguistic questions is an over-reaction to the exaggerated role of language in Ukrainian nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s; but it would have been preferable to draw on works such as F. T. Zholko's Soviet-period book³ to at least sketch language development. Zholko's isogloss maps (facing pp. 205–209) and his general map (facing p. 309) based on findings of the 1915 Moscow dialectological commission, are especially valuable.

Golczewski and his contributors skilfully adapt recent Western conceptual frameworks. His introductory section on symbols, such as the yellow-blue colours of the flag now prominent in the Ukrainian Republic, is illuminating (I wish he had explained, though, why dark blue [*synii*] has now replaced the sky blue [*blakytnyi*] favoured by nationalists a half-century ago). More attention to rather strained linguistic symbols such as *maidan* (a village term apparently derived from Persian through Ottoman Turkish) used to designate officially public squares instead of *ploshcha*, similar to the Russian term *ploshchad'*. Most authors have a sophisticated understanding of the significance for the national constitutive myth of heroic models and exemplary episodes in history. It is in this connection that the third book under review, Velychenko's *Shaping Identity*, has its place. The author traces in more detail than either of the German volumes twentieth-century historiographical divergences concerning Ukraine between neo-romantic interwar Polish writing and works emerging in post-war Poland after Communist controls were relaxed, on the one hand, and successive schools of Russian historiography on the other hand. Velychenko might have added that these successive schools – from Tsarist to Brezhnev periods – have left a persistent residue even among contemporary liberal Russian writers. Velychenko's treatment amplifies and substantiates five chapters

² Antoine Martel, 'La langue polonaise dans les pays ruthènes: Ukraine et Russie Blanche, 1569–1667', *Travaux et Mémoires de l'Université de Lille*, Nouvelle Série, Droit et Lettres, No. 20, 1938.

³ Fedot T. Zhilko, *Narysy z dialektologii ukrains'koi movy* [Sketches on the dialectology of the Ukrainian language] (Kiev: Radians'ka Shkola, 1955).

(pp. 18–125) in Golczewski. Among them, Pickhan's treatment of Kievan Rus' stands out as a concise discussion of the implications of the Kiev narrative for independent Ukraine, confronted by Russian efforts (today exemplified by Alexander Solzhenitsyn's writings) to portray it as a late offshoot of a general Russian nation. Pickhan astringently dismisses this controversy (p. 35): 'all efforts to set a national stamp on this [medieval] epoch are scarcely convincing. But this applies *just as much to Russian historiography as to Ukrainian*. In its beginning phase, Rus' represented a 'polyethnic conglomerate.'

In his contribution to the Hausmann-Kappeler volume, Iaroslav Isaievych, director of the Social Science Institute of the L'viv branch of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, continues to emphasise the 'medieval roots of the Ukrainian nation', versus the parallel but opposed Russian claim. Nevertheless, Isaievych (p. 45) recognises that it was the Cossack period that heightened interest in a more remote Kievan 'ancestry'. The next article, by Edmonton Professor Frank Sysyn, supports the thesis (ably advanced by Carsten Kumke and Orest Subtelny in Golczewski's symposium) that Cossack development, first in Poland then in Russia, was the decisive element in the background of the modern Ukrainian nation. The Cossack theme, including good analyses of Polish perspectives, is also most prominent in Velychenko's monograph.

In his own contribution to the symposium he edited, Andreas Kappeler shows how movement towards a modern Ukrainian nation occurred during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike many earlier authors, he clearly describes how this evolution occurred in tandem in Galicia and the Dnieper Ukraine. Most of the rest of the Hausmann-Kappeler volume is by authors of Ukrainian descent, usually writing (for German translation) in English or Russian. These authors – in contrast to the historical emphasis of the Golczewski book – concentrate on recent periods of conscious nationalism. Less than one-quarter of the Hausmann-Kappeler volume is devoted to events before the twentieth century (seen mostly through the lens of historiographical controversy); one-third treats twentieth-century periods up to the accession of Gorbachev; and nearly one-half discusses the post-1985 period. The last portion includes sections that can serve as reference guides for current affairs, particularly Peter Potichnyj's descriptive listing (pp. 202–23) of recent political parties and the appended chronology (pp. 389–94).

Because of their immersion in the dramatic changes in Ukrainian fortunes, these contributors have intimate acquaintance with key topics such as regional diversity with Ukraine. By far the most important is the long evolution of differences between West (especially Galicia) and East Ukraine. Kappeler (pp. 70–6) provides an excellent summary of the divergent impacts of Austrian governance in the former and Imperial Russian rule in the latter. In his subsequent chapter, German Professor Rudolf Mark pursues such divergences into the late twentieth century. His main emphasis (repeated in several other contributions) is on clashing foreign policies of Ukrainian governments set up in L'viv and Kiev following the First World War. In the latter capital, attacks by both White and Red armies led the Directorate headed by Simon Petliura to seek Polish assistance. Conversely,

Warsaw's aspirations to control former Austrian territories with very large Polish minorities was perceived by Galician Ukrainians as the principal threat to their independence. In his magisterial chapter, Bohdan Bociurkiw shows the very different socio-political impact of the West Ukrainian Catholic Church ('Uniate', 'Greek Catholic') and Orthodoxy (divided between Russian-orientated and 'autocephalous' churches). Very recent episodes (none too well treated in either symposium) demonstrate that Galicians have an extraordinary sense of religious distinctiveness, reinforced by the epic of guerrilla resistance at the end of the Second World War (see especially Ernst Lüdemann in Hausmann-Kappeler, p. 176). Initial impetus for defiance of Gorbachev's regime centred on locally popular efforts to regain legal status and property for the Ukrainian Catholic Church, considerably before intellectual dissidents in the Dnieper lands could muster a majority for independence. Such continuing West Ukrainian solidarity – although dangerous to national unity if it spills over into pressure for cultural and linguistic 'purity' – continues to distinguish the L'viv region from the Kiev sphere.

On the other hand, no Ukrainian spokesperson – Eastern or Western – whom I have encountered is even willing to contemplate formal separation of the two regions. Yet it is within the vastly larger 'Great Ukraine' of the East that other regional cleavages may become decisive. From various standpoints, especially common adherence to Orthodoxy, the Volhynia-Polesia region formerly under interwar Poland may be closer to East than to West Ukraine. Significantly, President Leonid Kravchuk and other political figures originated in Volhynia.

A more important East Ukrainian regional division is less easy to define. Essentially the division runs between areas where Russian language and customs are pervasive although not (except in Crimea and a few small districts) predominant, and areas where Ukrainian traditions are stronger. Russian is certainly pervasive in Kiev (except in official signs and pronouncements), but many Russian-speaking Ukrainians there appear eager to be citizens of an independent state. During 1990–1 areas with even larger Russian-speaking minorities – most of the Donbas mining district, the Dnipropetrovsk industrial complex and the Black Sea coast – also strongly opted for independence, but today their alignment is less sure. As some contributors to Hausmann-Kappeler note, the turn of these regions towards independence during the late Soviet period was significantly influenced by penetration (e.g. as mine workers) by West Ukrainians, once they were forcibly incorporated in the USSR (cf. Gerhart Simon, p. 372; and Veronica Wendland in Golczewski, p. 295). Today a major factor in maintaining allegiance to the Ukrainian Republic is its nearly complete domestic tranquillity, in contrast to widespread violence in Russia, and sustained acceptance of minority political participation and cultural preservation. Volodymyr Ievtukh presents a well-documented statistical portrait of the minorities, marred only by an obvious misprint (p. 290) suggesting an increase between 1970 and 1979 of Ukrainians predominantly speaking their own language. One thing is clear: preservation of the Ukrainian Republic's tranquillity, probably its very existence, depends on continuing majority endorsement of equal citizenship for all inhabitants.

Unfortunately, it will not be so simple to attain a second requirement⁴ for independence: economic prosperity. Golczewski's contributors have little to say on this subject because earlier efforts to establish independence did not get far enough to make economics a prime consideration. Six of the Hausmann-Kappeler contributors confront the issue, however. The debate between American James E. Mace and German Stephan Merl over the famine of 1932–3 bears directly on the present economic crisis, in so far as both agree that the hideous impact of famine on the Ukrainian countryside constituted one ground for persistent resentment of the Soviet system. Otherwise, these two chapters appear to be overly long for a survey symposium, for the debaters concentrate on the question of Stalin's intent, which may well be conclusively answered if central archives are quickly opened. Overall, Ukrainian agriculture did recover; but flight from the land and irretrievable loss of draught animals suggest, even to contemporary travellers from Poland (which experienced no such brutal disruption of traditional farming) to Ukraine, that collectivisation still affects output.

As Bohdan Osadczuk-Korab's contribution suggests, a second indirect effect of Soviet economic policies on the Ukrainian future was the nuclear catastrophe at Chernobyl. Not far from Kiev, this incident dramatically revealed the sloppy application of technology, gigantomania, concealment and disregard for human costs that became bywords for Muscovite misrule. During the past two years, however, this public perception has been partially reversed by obvious economic mismanagement by Ukrainian Republic authorities. As Hans-Erich Gramatzki (Hausmann-Kappeler, p. 294) observes, 'There is no political independence without economic independence', and the latter depends, in turn, on monetary independence. But this article appeared too early to envisage the runaway Ukrainian inflation of 1993–4. Still, Gramatzki's 1990 data on production by major industrial sectors and on the extreme lag in agricultural privatisation may be taken as signposts on the road to catastrophe. At one point (p. 369) he asserts that Kiev can be provisioned by *dacha* gardens; when one considers the amount of grain required both for human consumption in the capital and as fodder for suburbanites' small-animal husbandry, the assertion appears very dubious.

In Hausmann and Kappeler (p. 313), Thomas Gärting points out that during the 1980s Ukrainian farms provided 49 per cent of grain and 49 per cent of meat deliveries, at production costs far lower than in Russia and other large republics. Hence, he comments, agriculture could become 'the motor of economic expansion'. Having observed Soviet agriculture (especially in Ukraine) for over four decades, under occasional tutelage by such renowned experts as Otto Schiller, Geroid Robinson, Maurice Hindus and Anatol Mazur, I think that both contemporary German economists understate the obstacles: the reduction of the farm workforce primarily to ageing women, and the lack of draught animals (which also provide fertiliser) to replace tractors and trucks periodically disabled by mechanical neglect

⁴ See John A. Armstrong, 'Nationalism in the Former Soviet Empire', *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 41 (1992), esp. 124–5, and the overly optimistic projection for Ukraine on p. 131.

and petroleum shortages, almost certainly preclude a quick agricultural recovery *unless* American and European agencies concentrate aid in that economic sphere. Moreover, such aid would be questionable unless the Republic regime removes bureaucratic barriers to privatisation. In the Golczewski symposium (pp. 308–9), Wendland warns about a Ukrainian officialdom still drawn almost entirely from the old Soviet apparatus. In Hausmann-Kappeler, Evhen Khmelevskyi reports (p. 322) that only 2,000 Ukrainian farms had been privatised by 1993, compared to 50,000 in Russia and far more, proportionately, in the small republics of Lithuania, Estonia and Armenia. I am therefore compelled to conclude on the sombre note that Ukrainian independence, which for generations appeared to depend on the peasant, is now in jeopardy because *he* has largely disappeared and *she* who remains on the land struggles against tremendous odds. Clearly *her* role in the national future cannot be played successfully without greater domestic political support and more precisely targeted assistance from abroad. None of the volumes reviewed fully anticipated this historic irony. Nevertheless, the two symposia do provide, for those who can read German, an adequate basis for perceiving the underlying problems that have produced the current impasse.