



## Canadian Slavonic Papers

---

Ukraine or Little Russia? Revisiting an Early Nineteenth-Century Debate

Author(s): Serhii Plokhy

Source: *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, Vol. 48, No. 3/4 (September-December 2006), pp. 335-353

Published by: [Canadian Association of Slavists](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40871115>

Accessed: 10/06/2014 14:45

---

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.



Canadian Association of Slavists and Canadian Slavonic Papers are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

*Serhii Plokhyy*

## Ukraine or Little Russia? Revisiting an Early Nineteenth-Century Debate

**ABSTRACT:** This article contributes to the existing literature on the “History of the Rus’,” at once the most mysterious and the most influential product of Ukrainian Cossack historiography, in three major respects. First, it challenges the dominant historiographic trend that treats the “History” as a manifestation of growing national self-awareness of Ukrainian elites. Second, it contributes to the perennial search for the author of the “History” by claiming that the manuscript was written soon after 1800, effectively locating the work in the realm of nineteenth-century historiography. Third, it attempts to identify the author and title of the work that provoked the “History of the Rus’”—an approach overlooked or deemed impossible of realization by all students of the “History.” More than anything else, however, this article takes the debate out of the Procrustean bed into which it was forced by the national narratives of a later era, both Ukrainian and all-Russian. It emphasizes the simple fact that historians have little control over the use of their narratives.

Few factors are as crucial to the formation of modern national identities as the creation and dissemination of common historical myths that explain the origins of a given ethnic or national group and provide it with a sense of common belonging.<sup>1</sup> The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a period of mass production of national myths, given the high demand for them on the burgeoning European market of ideas. Historical writing was successfully taken over by national projects and turned into a vehicle for the popularization of national mythologies at a time when history was just beginning to establish itself as a scholarly discipline.<sup>2</sup> A shortcut to the production of elaborate mythologies that “proved” the ancient origins of modern nations and provided them with respectable pasts was the forging of ancient documents as well as literary and historical works allegedly lost at some time and now “rediscovered” to the astonishment and approval of a grateful public. More often than not, the authors of such “rediscovered” treasures were in pursuit of literary success and/or

---

<sup>1</sup> On the role of historical myth in the process of modern nation building, see Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 174–208.

<sup>2</sup> See Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore, “Apologias for the Nation-State in Western Europe since 1800,” in idem, *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) 3–14.

money. They did not suspect that they were fulfilling a social demand, serving as agents of history, or acting as builders of as yet nonexistent modern nations.<sup>3</sup>

James Macpherson (1736–1796), a Scottish poet little known in his own right, produced the best-known literary mystification of the era. In the 1760s he published what he claimed to be English translations of poems by a third-century bard named Ossian. These were in fact old Irish ballads of Scottish origin that Macpherson turned into “old Scottish epics,” contributing in the process to the formation of modern Scottish identity. Although the translations were shown to be forgeries soon after Macpherson’s death, his poems appealed to the reading public far beyond Scotland and contributed to the rise of literary romanticism and national movements all over Europe.<sup>4</sup> Soon after the appearance of the first Russian translation of “Ossian,” lovers of literature in the Russian Empire discovered, to their surprise and delight, that they had their own Ossian. His name was Boian, and he was a character in the *Igor Tale*, purportedly a twelfth-century epic poem once lost and now happily rediscovered, proving that the so-called “Russians” had an ancient and glorious literary tradition of their own.<sup>5</sup> The *Tale* described a campaign against the Polovtsians by a twelfth-century prince of Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, a town that was fully incorporated into the Russian Empire only a few decades before the publication of the newly “rediscovered” text in 1800. Apparently the publishers and readers of the *Tale* saw nothing unusual in the fact that their national literature had its beginnings in one of the centres of the Ukrainian Hetmanate, a Cossack state created in the mid-seventeenth century and fully absorbed by the Russian Empire in the 1780s. But the inhabitants of Novhorod-Sivers'kyi and the surrounding area were less than satisfied with the kind of historical mythology produced in imperial capitals. Indeed, they were on the hunt for their own

<sup>3</sup> On the connection between literary and criminal forgery in the Age of Enlightenment, see Paul Baines, *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Burlington: Ashgate, 1999). On the function of historical forgeries in East Central Europe and Ukraine, see Hryhorii Hrabovych, “Slidamy natsional'nykh mistyfikatsii,” *Krytyka* 5.6 (June 2001): 14–23.

<sup>4</sup> See Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition in Scotland,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 15–41, here 17–18. For the impact of Macpherson’s poetry on the rise of the Romantic Movement, see Howard Gaskill, ed., *Reception of Ossian in Europe* (Cardiff: Continuum, 2004). On the reception of Ossian in the Russian Empire, see Iurii Levin, *Ossian v russkoi literature: konets XVIII–pervaia tret' XIX veka* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980). On the invention of historical sources in eighteenth-century Russia, see Aleksei Tolochko, “Istoriia Rossiiskaia” *Vasiliiia Tatishcheva: istochniki i izvestiia* (Moscow and Kyiv: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie and Krytyka, 2005), especially pp. 504–523.

<sup>5</sup> On the *Igor Tale* as a late eighteenth-century text, see Edward L. Keenan, *Josef Dobrovský and the Origins of the Roman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ukrainian Research Institute and Davis Center, 2003).

ancient manuscripts that would help them make sense of their less distant Cossack past. Not surprisingly, they found one.

The manuscript, entitled “History of the Rus’,” began to circulate in the former Hetmanate in the mid-1820s. It traced the history of the local Cossacks, whom the author calls the Rus’, to the era of the Kyivan princes, and from them, via the history of Slavic settlement in Eastern Europe, all the way back to biblical times. As an exercise in mystification, it was a much less ambitious undertaking than either Ossian or the *Igor Tale*. The introduction to the “History of the Rus’” claimed that the manuscript had been produced by generations of monks working at the Orthodox monastery in Mahilioŭ and completed in 1769—a mere fifty-six years before we encounter the first clear evidence of the existence of the work. The anonymous author covered his tracks by claiming that the work had passed through the hands of two highly respected and, by now, safely dead individuals, the Orthodox archbishop of Mahilioŭ, Heorhii Konysh'kyi (1717–1795), and the best-known Ukrainian delegate to Catherine II’s Constitutional Assembly of 1767–1768, Hryhorii Poletyka (1723/25–1784). Konysh'kyi had allegedly given the manuscript to Poletyka, leading readers to assume that it was finally “rediscovered” in Poletyka’s library and thus became available to the public. The “History” was an unqualified success, copied and recopied again and again before it finally saw print in 1846.<sup>6</sup> By that time it had shaped the views of scores of professional and amateur historians, as well as Russian and Ukrainian authors—including Aleksandr Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol’ (Mykola Hohol’) and Taras Shevchenko—about the Ukrainian past. Romantic authors of the era were excited by the discovery of an “ancient” manuscript that went beyond the dry facts presented in the Rus’ chronicles. It narrated the heroic deeds of the Cossacks in images that fired the imagination of the literary public. While the fascination of Russian literary figures with the “History of the Rus’” turned out to be short-lived, it had a spectacular career in Ukrainian historiography and literature, shaping generations of Ukrainian patriots both directly and through the medium of Taras Shevchenko’s works.<sup>7</sup>

Like all influential mystifications, the “History of the Rus’” has inspired a voluminous literature. The most contested question discussed by students of the

---

<sup>6</sup> See *Istoriia Rusov ili Maloi Rossii. Sochinenie Georgiia Konisskogo, Arkhiepiskopa Belorusskogo* (Moscow: Imperatorskoe obshchestvo istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh, 1846; repr. Kyiv: Dzvyn, 1991). For a brief summary of the unknown author’s historical argument, see Stephen Velychenko, *National History as Cultural Process: A Survey of Interpretations of Ukraine’s Past in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian Historical Writing from the Earliest Times to 1914* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992) 156–158.

<sup>7</sup> Although Shevchenko was an admirer of the “History of the Rus’” and popularized its heroic version of the Cossack past, he did not share the anonymous author’s nobiliary bias against the popular masses.

work has been the identity of its author. The first possible author considered (and rejected) was Archbishop Konys'kyi. A more serious candidate emerged in the person of Hryhorii Poletyka, who has been regarded as either the author or a coauthor (together with his son, Vasyl' Poletyka [1765–1845]). Another high-profile candidate was Catherine II's chancellor and a native of the Hetmanate, Prince Oleksander Bezborod'ko (1747–1799). Other candidates have been mentioned in the literature, but only the Poletykas and Bezborod'ko have had a steady following among historians. Opinions on the time of the work's appearance often depend on a given scholar's favoured candidate for authorship. Those supporting the authorship of Poletyka or Bezborod'ko stick to the eighteenth century. Others, who favour the authorship of Vasyl' Poletyka or believe that the manuscript was created in the circle of Nikolai Repnin, the military governor of Little Russia in the years 1816–1834, prefer the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The only point relating to the origins of the manuscript on which historians tend to agree is the unknown author's close association with the Novhorod-Sivers'kyi region of north-eastern Ukraine—a hypothesis advanced by one of the most devoted students of the “History,” Oleksander Ohloblyn.<sup>8</sup>

The name of the author and the time and place of the creation of the “History of the Rus” are not the only questions debated by scholars. The political and cultural identity of the unknown author, whose work has contributed immensely to the process of Ukrainian nation building, remains as obscure today as it was a century and a half ago. The ability of every new generation of students to find in the text ideas consonant with its own seems to explain both the lasting success of the work and the lack of a comprehensive study on the identity of its author. The first generation of Ukrainian national awakeners influenced by the “History” included such luminaries of the national movement as Mykola Kostomarov and Panteleimon Kulish, who had a love-hate relationship with the work. On the one hand, they were inspired by the heroic and colourful images of the Ukrainian past presented by the unknown author; on the other, they regarded the “History” as the product of separatist thinking and nobiliary conservatism, which their populism led them to reject. Mykhailo

---

<sup>8</sup> See Oleksander Ohloblyn, “Where was *Istoriya Rusov* Written?” *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.* 3.2 (1953): 670–695. Hryhorii Poletyka has been regarded as the author of the “History” by Vladimir Ikonnikov, Oleksander Lazarevsky, Mykola Vasylenko, Dmytro Doroshenko, Iaroslav Dzyra, and Hanna Shvydko. Mykhailo Hrushevsky advanced the hypothesis of the coauthorship of Hryhorii and Vasyl Poletyka. The latter was considered the sole author by Vasyl Horlenko, Anatolii Iershov and Illia Borschak. The hypothesis about Bezborodko's authorship was first suggested by Mykhailo Slabchenko and further developed by Pavlo Klepatsky, Andrii Iakovliv and Mykhailo Vozniak. See Oleksander Ohloblyn, “Istoriia Rusov,” *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 6 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984–2001) 2: 360.

Drahomanov, by far the most influential Ukrainian political thinker of the nineteenth century, took it upon himself to defend the unknown author against populist attacks. He saw in the author an early promoter of all that the Ukrainian movement was striving for in the last decades of the nineteenth century: Ukrainian autonomy, constitutionalism, and the federal restructuring of the Russian Empire. Instead of treating him as separatist, Drahomanov saw in the author of the “History” a person who shared the liberal and democratic views of the Russian and Ukrainian Decembrists. Oleksander Hrushevs'kyi, whose brother Mykhailo wrote the first history of Ukraine as a nation, regarded the “History of the Rus” as an account of a people as opposed to the chronicle of a province—an approach consonant with the one later adopted by Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi. Two adherents of the statist school in twentieth-century Ukrainian historiography, Dmytro Doroshenko and Oleksander Ohloblyn, considered the unknown author a forerunner who allegedly paid special attention to the history of the Ukrainian state.<sup>9</sup>

Not surprisingly, the revival of the Ukrainian national movement in the USSR in the late 1980s and the emergence of independent Ukraine in 1991 cast the political and cultural views of the author of the “History of the Rus” in a new light. As the advance of Russification in the Soviet Union threatened the very existence of the Ukrainian nation, some students of the “History” came to see its author as a defender of Ukrainian identity. “The individual who wrote it,” asserted the Ukrainian author and historian Valerii Shevchuk in 1991, “truly burned with great love for his unfortunate and enslaved land. Thus, at a time when everything Ukrainian was being barbarously destroyed, he managed the feat of casting this passionate pamphlet—a historical remembrance—before the eyes of his foolish and indifferent countrymen, who were scrambling, as Taras Shevchenko wrote, for “tin buttons,” who “knew all the ins and outs”; who were grasping for estates and jumping out of their skin to obtain Russian noble rank by any and all means; who had even forgotten their mother tongue.”<sup>10</sup> It would

<sup>9</sup> Ohloblyn, who was by far the most productive and influential student of the monument, also pushed the “nationalization” of the “History” to the limit, claiming that it was “a declaration of the rights of the Ukrainian nation” inspired by the “idea of Ukrainian political sovereignty,” as well as “an act of indictment against Muscovy.” See his introduction to a Ukrainian translation of the work, *Istoriia Rusiv* (New York: Visnyk OOOChSU, 1956) v–xxix. For a survey of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reception of the “History of the Rus” and research on the monument, see Mykhailo Vozniak, *Psevdokonyi i psevdopoetyka (“Istoriia Rusov” u literaturi i nauky)* (Lviv and Kyiv: Ukrainiska Mohylians'ko-Mazepyns'ka Akademiia Nauk, 1938) 5–96. Cf. Volodymyr Kravchenko, *Narysy z ukrains'koi istoriografii epokhy natsional'noho Vidrodzhennia (druha polovyna XVIII—seredyna XIX st.)* (Kharkiv: Osnova, 1996) 101–116.

<sup>10</sup> Valerii Shevchuk, “Nerozhadani taiemnytsi “Istorii Rusiv”” in *Istoriia Rusiv*, trans. into modern Ukrainian by Ivan Drach (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991) 28.

appear that quite a few studies dealing with the “History of the Rus” published in Ukraine in the 1990s and early 2000s adopted Shevchuk’s patriotic interpretation of the work and the goals that its author set himself.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, the “History of the Rus” played a major role in the formation of Ukrainian national identity, but the questions that remain unanswered are whether and to what degree that role corresponded to the aspirations of the unknown author of the “History” and what his political and ethnocultural identity actually was. The present article intends to contribute to the discussion of these questions by taking a closer look at the polemic, largely neglected in historiography, between the author of the “History” and an unnamed opponent concerning the use of the terms “Ukraine” and “Little Russia.” In modern political discourse, the first term is closely associated with the idea of Ukrainian distinctiveness and independence, while the second indicates a belief in the existence of one indivisible Russian culture and nation, of which the Ukrainian people and culture are considered mere branches.<sup>12</sup> Did these terms have the same meaning when the “History” made its appearance, and, if so, what does that say about its author’s political and ethnocultural program?

The passage of the “History of the Rus” that seems most important to our discussion appears in the introduction to the work. It reads as follows: “[I]t must be said with regret that certain absurdities and calumnies have unfortunately been introduced into Little Russian chronicles themselves by their creators, native-born Rus’ians, who have carelessly followed the shameless and malicious Polish and Lithuanian fabulists. Thus, for example, in one textbook vignette, some new land by the Dnieper, here called Ukraine, is brought onto the stage from Ancient Rus’ or present-day Little Russia, and in it Polish kings establish new settlements and organize Ukrainian Cossacks; and until then the land was allegedly empty and uninhabited, and there were no Cossacks in Rus’. But it is apparent that the gentleman writer of such a timid little story has never been anywhere except his school, and in the land that he calls Ukraine he has not seen Rus’ towns, the oldest ones—or at least much older than his Polish kings, namely: Cherkassy, Krylov, Mishurin and old Kodak on the Dnieper River, Chigirin on the Tiasmin, Uman’ on the Ros’, Ladyzhin and Chagarlyk on the Bug, Mogilev, Rashkov and Dubossary on the Dniester, Kamennyi Zaton and Belozersk at the head of the [Dnieper] Estuary. Of these towns, some have been provincial and regional Rus’ towns for many centuries. But for him all this is a

---

<sup>11</sup> For a critical assessment of the latest Ukrainian publications on the topic, see Volodymyr Kravchenko, “Istoriia Rusiv u suchasnykh interpretatsiakh,” in *Synopsis: Essays in Honor of Zenon E. Kohut*, ed. Serhii Ploky and Frank E. Sysyn (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2005) 275–294.

<sup>12</sup> See the entry “Little Russian Mentality” by Bohdan Kravtsiv in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* 3: 166.

desert, and he consigns to nothingness and oblivion the Rus' princes who sailed their great flotillas onto the Black Sea from the Dnieper River, that is, from those very lands, and made war on Greece, Sinope, Trabzon and Constantinople itself with armies from those regions, just as someone hands back Little Russia itself from Polish possession without resistance and voluntarily, and the thirty-four bloody battles that it required, with Rus' armies opposing the Poles and their kings and the levy en masse, are of insufficient merit that this nation and its chieftains be rendered due justice for their exploits and heroism."<sup>13</sup>

What should we make of this statement? Andrei Storozhenko, who was the first to focus attention on this particular passage of the "History" in 1918, treats it as a manifestation of the anonymous author's discontent with the efforts of the Polish authors Jan Potocki and Tadeusz Czacki to treat the Ukrainians as a people separate from the Russians—theories that in Storozhenko's opinion laid the historical foundations for the modern Ukrainian movement.<sup>14</sup> While such a possibility cannot be excluded, in the above extract the author of the "History of the Rus'" does not argue either against Potocki's theory linking Ukrainian origins with those of the Polonians, Derevlians, Tivertsians and Siverians or against Czacki's theory that the Ukrainians were descended from a tribe called "Ukr." Instead, he rejects the notion that credits Polish kings with the establishment of Cossackdom and the settlement of the Dnipro region; he bemoans the view that neglects the Rus' origins of the Cossacks, ignores their long and determined struggle for union with Russia, and undermines the claim of the Rus' nation to its glorious history. It should also be noted that the anonymous author's protest was provoked not by Polish (and Lithuanian) writings per se but by the adoption of the views set forth in those writings by the authors of "Little Russian chronicles." Identifying the writer whose work provoked this polemical outburst on the part of the author of the "History of the Rus'" is an important step toward understanding the nature of the debate and, among other things, can help establish the time frame within which the famous "History" was written. I shall therefore begin my discussion with an attempt to identify the author and title of the work that provoked the polemic—an approach overlooked or deemed impossible of realization by all students of the "History" known to me.

The author of the "History of the Rus'" left some useful clues on where to seek the object of his attack. The mysterious author must have been a professor or teacher in some kind of school, and his allegedly pro-Polish views were apparently set forth in a textbook or other pedagogical work. The teacher-

<sup>13</sup> *Istoriia Rusov ili Maloi Rossii* iii–iv.

<sup>14</sup> See A. V. Storozhenko, "Malaia Rossiia ili Ukraina?" First published in 1918 in the journal *Malaia Rus'*; repr. in *Ukrainskii separatizm v Rossii. Ideologiia natsional'nogo raskola*, comp. M. B. Smolin (Moscow: Zhurnal Moskva, 1998) 280–290, here 287–288.

historian Tadeusz Czacki (1765–1813), mentioned by Storozhenko, might well be considered a candidate for the role. In 1804–1805 he was the founder (and subsequently a professor) of the Volhynian gymnasium, which later became the Kremianets' Lyceum, a springboard of the Polish national revival in the early nineteenth century. He was also a historian and a rather prolific author. But Czacki, a prominent Polish educator, is not known for having written textbooks dealing with “Little Russian” history. His views on Ukrainian origins were most fully expressed in his article “On the Name of Ukraine and the Origin of the Cossacks,” first published in a Warsaw periodical in the autumn of 1801, before the founding of the Volhynian gymnasium. Besides, the “History of the Rus” is silent about the tribe of “Ukr,” the hallmark of Czacki’s theory. More importantly, Czacki can by no means be considered a “native Rus’ian,” as was the mysterious author of the textbook, according to the “History.”<sup>15</sup> Tadeusz Czacki should therefore be eliminated as a possible addressee of the polemical statement quoted above.

In searching for the author of the textbook among professors/teachers of East Slavic origin, it makes sense to begin with schools in north-eastern Ukraine, where most scholars believe the “History of the Rus” to have been written. The town of Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, on which the author of the “History” focuses attention, had its own school from 1789, but none of the teachers at the secular school or (from 1805) the gymnasium is known for having published anything on the history of Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> Still, we know of a published historian who was then employed in neighbouring Chernihiv, which had emerged in the late eighteenth century as not only the administrative but also the intellectual centre of the region. One of the leading historians there was Mikhail Markov (1760–1819), a Great Russian by origin who served as a prosecutor in Novhorod-Sivers'kyi. In 1799 Markov moved to Chernihiv, where he was appointed director of schools in the Little Russian gubernia, and from 1805 he served as director of the Chernihiv gymnasium. He published a number of works on the history of Chernihiv and vicinity, and in 1816–1817 he contributed to the periodical *Ukrainskii vestnik* (Ukrainian Herald), discussing the origins of Rus' history.<sup>17</sup> The problem with Markov’s possible authorship of the textbook that so upset the author of the “History of the Rus” is that although he contributed to

<sup>15</sup> See Tadeusz Czacki, “O nazwisku Ukrainy i początku Kozaków,” *Nowy Pamiętnik Warszawski* (October–December 1801) bk. 4: 32–40. On Czacki and his activities, see Julian Dybiec, *Nie tylko szabłą. Nauka i kultura polska w walce o utrzymanie tożsamości narodowej, 1795–1918* (Cracow: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2004) 75–80, 112–113.

<sup>16</sup> On the secular school and gymnasium in Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, see Oleksander Ohloblyn’s essay on the founding director of both schools, Ivan Khalans'kyi, in Ohloblyn, *Liudy staroi Ukrainy* (Munich: Dniprova khvylia, 1959) 262–269.

<sup>17</sup> On Markov, see Oleh Zhurba, *Stanovlennia ukrains'koi arkhieohrafiï: liudy, idei, instytutstii* (Dnipropetrovs'k: Vydavnytstvo Dnipropetrovs'koho universytetu, 2003) 94–119.

publications dealing with education, he never wrote anything approaching a history textbook, and his eight-page essay ambitiously titled “An Introduction to Little Russian History” (1817) advanced no further than the period of Kyivan Rus'. On top of that, while Markov contributed to *Ukrainskii vestnik* (so titled because it appeared in Kharkiv, the capital of the Sloboda Ukraine gubernia), he avoided Ukrainian terminology in his writings and can hardly be suspected of Polonophilism or Ukrainophilism in the senses implied by Storozhenko.

The school and gymnasium next closest to Novhorod-Sivers'kyi with a published historian on its staff was in Kyiv. The historian in question was Maksym Berlyns'kyi (1764–1848), who lived long enough to chair the organizing committee for the establishment of Kyiv University. Having been born in the vicinity of Putyvl' into the family of an Orthodox priest, Berlyns'kyi could certainly be considered a “native Rus'ian,” a term that the anonymous author of the “History of the Rus” could have applied to Great Russians and Ukrainians alike. He was appointed a teacher at the recently opened secular school (later gymnasium) in Kyiv in 1788, after graduating from the Kyiv Mohyla Academy and training for two years at the teachers' college in St. Petersburg. Berlyns'kyi taught at the Kyiv gymnasium until his retirement in 1834, thereby meeting another qualification—that of a lifelong teacher who had never been anywhere except his school, as specified by the author of the “History.” But probably the most important of his formal qualifications is that his many works on Ukrainian history included a textbook, *Kratkaia rossiiskaia istoriia dlia upotrebleniia iunoshestvu* (Short History of Russia for the Use of Young People, 1800).

Even more interesting in this connection is that the textbook included an essay on Ukrainian history entitled “Primechanie o Malorossii” (Note on Little Russia). It was inserted into a basically Great Russian historical narrative, in the section dealing with the rule of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, and covered the history of Ukraine from the Mongol invasion to the Truce of Andrusovo (1667). Subsequent Ukrainian history was treated within the context of imperial Russia.<sup>18</sup> Thus Berlyns'kyi perfectly matches the image of the mysterious opponent invoked by the author of the “History of the Rus” in the introduction to that work. But does Berlyns'kyi's textbook indeed use “Ukrainian” terminology and include pro-Polish passages, as suggested by the anonymous

<sup>18</sup> See *Kratkaia rossiiskaia istoriia dlia upotrebleniia iunoshestvu, nachinaiushchemu obuchat'sia istorii, prodolzheniia do iskhoda XVIII stoletia, sochinennaia v Kieve uchitelem Maksimom Berlinskim* (Moscow: V tipografii Reshetnikova, 1800) 93–106. On Berlyns'kyi and his writings, see David Saunders, *The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture, 1750–1850* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1985) 209–212; Mykhailo Braichevs'kyi, “Maksym Berlyns'kyi ta ioho ‘Istoriia mista Kyieva,’” in Maksym Berlyns'kyi, *Istoriia mista Kyieva* (Kyiv: Chas, 1991) 5–20; Kravchenko, *Narysy z ukrains'koi istoriohrafii* 80–84.

author? The very first sentence of Berlyns'kyi's "Note on Little Russia" gives a positive answer to this question, since it implies that the original name of that land was indeed Ukraine. It reads: "Ukraine received its name of Little Russia after its union with Russia." According to Berlyns'kyi, King Sigismund I of Poland, "seeing that the Ukrainians engaged in military pursuits, who were known as Cossacks, were accomplishing very brave and valiant exploits... gave them permission to occupy places above and below the town of Kiev and, in 1506, gave them their first leader with the title of hetman, a certain Liaskorons'kyi [Lanckoroński], to whom he granted the towns of Chigirin and Cherkassy as possessions." King Stefan Batory, for his part, "confirmed the Ukrainians' previous privileges in 1576 and gave them new ones; hence the empty lands between the Dnieper, Bar and Kiev were soon settled by them."<sup>19</sup> Thus the author of the "Note on Little Russia" was indeed "guilty as charged" by the author of "History of the Rus'" when it comes to the origins of the name Ukraine, the Polish kings' organization of the Cossack Host, and the settlement of the steppe borderlands.

What might this finding mean for our discussion? First, it appears that Berlyns'kyi was indeed the target of the author of the "History of the Rus'." It also indicates that the "History" could not have been written prior to 1800, the year in which Berlyns'kyi's textbook was published. Nor could it have been written much later than the first decade of the nineteenth century, otherwise the critique of the textbook would have lost its significance to the anonymous author and appeal to the reader. This finding is supported by Oleksander Ohloblyn's research, which places the creation of the original manuscript of the "History of the Rus'" between 1802 and 1805, and Iurii Shevelov's hypothesis that final changes to the text may have been made in 1808–1809.<sup>20</sup> It gives us much better grounds than any previously available to place the monument into a particular time frame and political context. Last but not least, an analysis of Berlyns'kyi's textbook and his other writings can offer a better understanding of the historical and ideological message of the "History" and the nature of the "Ukraine vs. Little Russia" debate initiated by its anonymous author.

A reading of Berlyns'kyi's *Short History of Russia* indicates that he hardly deserved the harsh treatment meted out to him by the author of the "History." Berlyns'kyi was by no means systematic in his use of the terms "Ukraine" and "Ukrainians," which he considered interchangeable with "Little Russia" and "Little Russians." The textbook also shows that he was far from being a Polonophile: for example, he noted with regret that the Time of Troubles did not

<sup>19</sup> Berlinskii, *Kratkaia rossiiskaia istoriia* 93, 96–97, 98–99.

<sup>20</sup> See Ohloblyn's introduction to *Istoriia Rusiv* viii; Iurii Shevelov, "Istoriia Rusov ochyma movoznavtsia," in *Zbirnyk na poshanu prof. d-ra Oleksandra Ohloblyna*, ed. Vasyi Omelchenko (New York: Ukrains'ka Vil'na Akademiia Nauk v SShA, 1977) 465–482.

allow Little Russia to unite with Russia (“our fatherland”) in the early seventeenth century. Berlyns'kyi condemned the Poles for their persecution of Ukrainians on the eve of the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising (1648), allegedly against the wishes of King Władysław IV. He even wrote in that regard: “That was the main reason for the civil war! What the crown affirmed, the Polish nation rejected. And that discord united all the Little Russians against the republic.”<sup>21</sup> Although Berlyns'kyi did not produce colourful descriptions of the Cossack wars with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth prior to the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising, as did the author of the “History of the Rus’,” he noted that Khmel'nyts'kyi “was not the first to take up arms against the Poles, for at various times in the course of fifty years his predecessors had done so, but always in vain.”<sup>22</sup> In general, Berlyns'kyi produced a brief but quite accurate description of the period, especially as compared with the one offered by the author of the “History of the Rus’.” The latter clearly resorted to simplifying and vilifying the arguments of his opponent. But were his suspicions regarding Berlyns'kyi’s Polish leanings completely groundless?

Berlyns'kyi did not identify his sources, leaving us no direct evidence of possible influences on his work. He certainly could not have taken his lead from the above-mentioned article by Tadeusz Czacki on the origins of Ukraine and the Cossacks, for it was published a year later than his own textbook. But this does not mean that he lacked access to other works by Polish authors or had no direct contact with Polish historians. We have no indication that Berlyns'kyi was close to Polish intellectuals or alleged “Polonophiles” in the Russian Empire around 1800, but there is plenty of such evidence pertaining to the later period. The secular school in Kyiv where Berlyns'kyi taught, which later became a gymnasium, belonged to the Vilnius educational district; from 1803 it was headed by the close confidant of Emperor Alexander I and ardent Polish patriot Adam Czartoryski. Not surprisingly, it was to him that Berlyns'kyi sent the manuscript of his new work, entitled “A History of Little Russia” (1803), requesting permission and financial assistance to publish the book. Czartoryski was quite supportive of Berlyns'kyi’s initiative. In a memorandum on the issue he pointed out that there was no published history of Little Russia, endorsed the publication of Berlyns'kyi’s manuscript, and noted that it would have “a great bearing on general Russian history as well.” Also supportive of the project was Czartoryski’s superior at the time, the minister of education, Petro Zavadovs'kyi, to whom the memorandum was addressed. A native of the Hetmanate and a former lover of Catherine II, Zavadovs'kyi began his education at a Jesuit seminary in Orsha and was known for his good relations with Tadeusz Czacki and general sympathy toward the Poles. Acting on Czartoryski’s endorsement,

<sup>21</sup> Berlinskii, *Kratkaia rossiiskaia istoriia* 100.

<sup>22</sup> *Kratkaia rossiiskaia istoriia* 101.

he allocated 500 rubles for Berlyns'kyi's "History," but that was insufficient to cover the costs of publication, and it never appeared in print.<sup>23</sup>

Excerpts from the book were eventually published by another reputed Ukrainian "Polonophile," Vasyl' Anastasevych, who was a secretary to Czartoryski during his years as head of the Vilnius educational district (1803–1817) and a close acquaintance of Czacki and the Polish ethnographer Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (Adam Czarnocki). In 1811, Anastasevych published the first excerpt in his journal *Ulei*, where it appeared several issues after the Russian translation of Tadeusz Czacki's famous article on the origins of Ukraine and Cossackdom. It seems that Anastasevych then took possession of the manuscript, for he published the last known excerpt of the book as late as 1844.<sup>24</sup> Broader circles in the former Hetmanate may well have known Berlyns'kyi's close contacts with "Polonophiles" among the Ukrainian bureaucrats and intellectuals. An episode that may have revealed such contacts was the controversy of 1805 over the language of education in the Kyiv gymnasium, whose director insisted on Russian, while Minister Zavadov'skyi, who, given his background and education, considered Russian and Polish mutually intelligible, favoured the latter. We do not know whether Berlyns'kyi took a position on the issue, but if he did so, he may well have supported Zavadov'skyi, who (as noted above) sought to promote the publication of his history.<sup>25</sup> There were certainly other occasions for former Cossack officeholders of north-eastern Ukraine to learn of Berlyns'kyi's contacts and possible sympathies, which must have been at odds with the traditional anti-Polish sentiments of the region's elites. The author of the "History of the Rus" may well have read back into Berlyns'kyi's textbook what he knew about the author otherwise.

The irony of the situation is that Ukrainian terminology may have entered Berlyns'kyi's textbook and his "History of the City of Kyiv," a work written in

<sup>23</sup> On Berlyns'kyi's attempts to publish the manuscript, see Saunders, *The Ukrainian Impact* 211. In citing this work, Volodymyr Kravchenko (*Narysy z istorii ukrains'koi istoriohrafii* 81) gives a somewhat different title: "Istoricheskoe obozrenie Malorossii."

<sup>24</sup> On Anastasevych, see Saunders, *The Ukrainian Impact* 140–144. The translation of Czacki's article appeared in pt. 1.1 of *Ulei* for 1811. Two of Berlyns'kyi's contributions, "Razdelenie Malorossii na polki" and "O gorode Kieve," appeared in the same year, in pt. 1.3, and pt. 2.8 of the journal respectively. Anastasevych visited Berlyns'kyi in Kyiv in 1811, and afterwards they stayed in touch by correspondence. See excerpts from Berlyns'kyi's private diary in the Volodymyr Vernads'kyi Library, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Kyiv), Manuscript Institute, fond 175, no. 1057, section 2, pp. 1–55.

<sup>25</sup> On the debate over the language of education at the Kyiv gymnasium, see Saunders, *The Ukrainian Impact* 31–32. At some point prior to spring 1817, Berlyns'kyi came into conflict with then director of the Kyiv gymnasium and petitioned the St. Petersburg authorities in that regard. See a letter to Berlyns'kyi from his brother Matvii from St. Petersburg, dated 2 Mar. 1817, in the Volodymyr Vernads'kyi Library, Manuscript Institute, fond 175, no. 1057, section 1, fols. 7–8.

the late eighteenth century, not from Polish but from Ukrainian writings. One of the last eighteenth-century Cossack chroniclers, Petro Symonovs'kyi, the author of “Kratkoe opisanie o kazatskom malorossiiskom narode” (Brief Description of the Cossack Little Russian Nation), was Berlyns'kyi's supervisor and mentor during his first years at the Kyiv school.<sup>26</sup> The major Cossack chronicles of the early eighteenth century, including that of Hryhorii Hrabianka—an important source for Cossack historiography of the later period—were full of references to “Ukraine,” used interchangeably with “Little Russia,” as in Berlyns'kyi's textbook.<sup>27</sup> At the turn of the nineteenth century, Berlyns'kyi was by no means the only Ukrainian author prepared to make a connection between Stefan Batory, the Cossacks, and the name of Ukraine. Similar views were expressed by his contemporary Yakiv Markovych, who published his “Notes on Little Russia” (1798), a historical, geographical, and ethnographic description of his homeland. But Markovych never wrote anything remotely resembling a textbook or taught in any “school” in Russia or Ukraine, which excludes him as a possible object of attack by the author of the “History of the Rus’.”<sup>28</sup>

Even the unknown author of the “History of the Rus’,” who objected to Ukrainian terminology as a sign of Polish intrigue, was unable to keep the term “Ukraine” out of his own work. It penetrated the narrative despite the author's intentions, proclaimed in the programmatic statement included in his introduction. He was overcome by his sources—apocryphal eighteenth-century letters, foreign histories, and Russian official documents of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which were full of Ukrainian terminology. For example, in an apocryphal letter of May 1648 from Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, the term “Little Russian Ukraine” appears four times in a variety of combinations, and there is a reference to “all Ukraine.”<sup>29</sup> The anonymous author also writes of Ukraine when referring to Voltaire's comment on the Ukrainian expedition of Charles XII of Sweden in 1708–1709.<sup>30</sup> There are at least two references in the

<sup>26</sup> *The Ukrainian Impact* 211. On Symonovs'kyi and his writings, see Ohloblyn, *Liudy staroi Ukrainy* 219–36.

<sup>27</sup> On the use of these terms in Cossack historiography of the early eighteenth century, see Frank E. Sysyn, “The Image of Russia and Russian-Ukrainian Relations in Ukrainian Historiography of the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600–1945* (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003) 108–143.

<sup>28</sup> On Markovych's attitude to the issue of the Cossacks and Ukraine, see Oleksii Tolochko, “Kyievo-rus'ka spadshchyna v istorychnii dumtsi Ukrainy pochatku XIX st.” in V. F. Verstiuk, V. M. Horobets', and O. P. Tolochko, *Ukraina i Rosiia v istorychnii retrospektyvi*, vol. 1: *Ukrains'ki proekty v Rosiis'kii imperii* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2004) 250–350, here 303.

<sup>29</sup> See *Istoriia Rusov* 68–74.

<sup>30</sup> *Istoriia Rusov* 208.

text of the “History” to the “Ukrainian line,” the group of Russian forts built by the imperial government to protect Ukrainian and Russian territories from Tatar incursions.<sup>31</sup> Under the influence of his sources, the anonymous author often uses “Ukraine” with reference to the Right Bank of the Dnipro—the territory that he defines as Rus', not Ukraine, in his introduction.<sup>32</sup> In the main text of his work, the anonymous author also writes about “Ukrainian peoples” and “Christians of Ukrainian faith (*veroispovedaniia*).”<sup>33</sup> Whatever his ideological postulates, the author of the “History of the Rus” was unable to divest himself entirely of the tradition established by earlier Ukrainian authors, for whom the term “Ukraine” had no negative connotations and entailed no suggestion of Polish intrigue.

The hostility shown by the author of the “History of the Rus” to the term “Ukraine” marked a clear break with Ukrainian historiographic tradition. Since it occurred in a work that generations of scholars have considered the pinnacle of early modern Cossack historiography, it deserves further discussion. What made such a break possible, and what motives lay behind it? With regard to the first part of the question, one should take account of the new meaning acquired by the term “Ukraine” in official discourse and public consciousness of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In that period, the term began to be associated first and foremost with lands outside the Cossack Hetmanate. Thus the “Ukrainian line” of fortifications was built in the 1730s to the east and south of the Hetmanate. The Sloboda Ukraine gubernia was established in 1765, with its administrative centre in Kharkiv. It kept that name until 1780 and was then restored with different boundaries in 1796; it was renamed the Kharkiv gubernia in 1835. By contrast, the restoration of the Hetmanate’s territorial integrity after its liquidation by Catherine II was associated with the brief existence of the Little Russian gubernia, administered from Chernihiv, between 1796 and 1802.<sup>34</sup> The close association of “Little Russia” with the lands of the former Hetmanate and of “Ukraine” with the territories of Sloboda Ukraine is well attested in a private letter from a prominent Ukrainian intellectual of the period, Hryhorii Skovoroda. In September 1790, he wrote of “my mother, Little Russia,” and “my aunt, Ukraine,”<sup>35</sup> apparently meaning that while he had been born and raised in the Hetmanate, most of his adult life had been spent in neighbouring Sloboda Ukraine. Thus, by the time the “History of the Rus” was written, local elites had largely ceased to associate the name “Ukraine” with the

<sup>31</sup> *Istoriia Rusov* 236, 253.

<sup>32</sup> *Istoriia Rusov* 161, 167, 172, 179.

<sup>33</sup> *Istoriia Rusov* 242, 253.

<sup>34</sup> On the “Ukrainian line” and the names of the gubernias in question, see the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* 2: 451; 3: 165; 5: 398.

<sup>35</sup> See Hryhorii Skovoroda, *Tvory u dvokh tomakh* (Kyiv: Oberehy, 1994) 2: 316.

territory of the Hetmanate, and some authors may well have regarded it as a foreign invention.

Let us now turn to the author's motives for breaking with historiographic tradition. The most obvious of them appears to be his anti-Polish attitude, which he does not attempt to conceal. In Polish historiography the term "Ukraine" preserved its original meaning as first and foremost the land of the Cossacks, giving the author a good opportunity to strike at the Poles. His attack seems to have been well timed. If the author was indeed responding to Berlyns'kyi's textbook, as argued above, then the zeitgeist of his "History" was that of the first decade of the nineteenth century, which was highly conducive to a renewed confrontation with the Poles. The feverish activity of Adam Czartoryski, who was not only presiding over the increasing cultural Polonization of the Vilnius educational district but also, as de facto foreign minister of Russia, preparing to restore the Kingdom of Poland under the auspices of the Russian tsar, provoked a strong negative response from Russian society. Distrust of Poles grew in the second half of the decade, when Polish exiles in the West sided with Napoleon, and the French emperor, perceived by that time as Russia's worst enemy, carved a Polish polity known as the Duchy of Warsaw out of the Prussian part of the former Commonwealth. In 1806–1807 the Poles were submitting proposals to Napoleon to make Podilia, Volhynia and Right-Bank Ukraine part of a future Polish state.<sup>36</sup> The elites of the former Hetmanate could by no means have endorsed the inclusion of the Right Bank (lands that the author of the "History of the Rus'" claimed as ancient Rus' territories) into a future Polish polity under Alexander I or Napoleon. Rising anti-Polish sentiment in the Russian Empire gave the Cossack elites of the former Hetmanate a good opportunity not only to settle historical scores with their traditional enemy but also to take credit for their age-old struggle with Poland.<sup>37</sup> At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Cossack elites needed recognition of their former services to the all-Russian cause more than ever before, as the imperial authorities continued to question

<sup>36</sup> On Czartoryski's activities and efforts to restore Polish statehood in the first decade of the nineteenth century, see Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795–1918* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974) 33–42. On Polish plans for Right-Bank Ukraine in connection with Napoleon's policies in Eastern Europe, see Il'ko Borshchak, *Napoleon i Ukraina* (Lviv: Biblioteka Dila, 1937). Cf. Vadym Adadurov, "Narodzhennia odnoho istorychnoho mitu: problema 'Napoleon i Ukraina' u vysvitlenni Il'ka Borshchaka," *Ukraina moderna* (Kyiv and Lviv) 9 (2005): 212–236, here 227, 233. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for bringing to my attention the impact that Polish plans to reclaim Right-Bank Ukraine may have had on the political agenda of the author of the "History of the Rus'."

<sup>37</sup> On the growth of anti-Polish sentiment in Russian society during that period, see Andrei Zorin, *Kormia dvuglavogo orla... Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiia v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII—pervoi treti XIX veka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001) 157–186.

the nobiliary credentials of most of the lower-ranking Cossack officers.<sup>38</sup> Not surprisingly, in the above-cited extract from the “History,” its author asked rhetorically whether the Cossack wars with the Poles were “of insufficient merit that this nation and its chieftains be rendered due justice for their exploits and heroism.”<sup>39</sup>

Maksym Berlyns'kyi, a priest's son and a schoolteacher, is unlikely to have been ready or willing to perform that function for the Cossack officer elites of the former Hetmanate. His general assessment of the Ukrainian past was damning of those who extolled the heroic deeds of the Cossack nation. “In a word,” he wrote in his article “On the City of Kyiv,” “this people groaned beneath the Polish yoke, made war under Lithuanian banners, occupied itself with the Union under Polish rule and contended for privilege under Russian rule, producing nothing for us except descendants.”<sup>40</sup> As Volodymyr Kravchenko has recently noted, Berlyns'kyi was also quite negative in his assessment of the role of Cossackdom, especially the Cossack officer elite—an attitude that caused him difficulty when an excerpt from his “History of Little Russia” was considered for publication in 1844. On the recommendation of the prominent imperial Russian historian Nikolai Ustrialov, a negative characterization of the Cossacks was removed from the journal publication.<sup>41</sup> It is entirely possible that the anti-Cossack attitudes of Berlyns'kyi, whose writings clearly favoured Ukrainian city dwellers, prevented the publication of his “History” year after year. Ironically, Berlyns'kyi lived long enough to see the publication of the “History of the Rus’,” which contained an attack on his views and was potentially dangerous to the imperial regime, but not long enough to witness the appearance of his own works, such as the “History of Little Russia” and the “History of the City of Kyiv,” which were perfectly loyal to the authorities.

It would appear that Andrei Storozhenko was wrong when he presented (first in 1918 and then in 1924) the unknown opponent of the author of the “History of the Rus’” in the “Ukraine vs. Little Russia” debate as a promoter of Polish-led attempts to establish the Ukrainians’ distinct origins and separate

---

<sup>38</sup> On the struggle for the recognition of Cossack ranks and historical writings produced in order to establish the nobiliary status of the Hetmanate's elite, see Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ukrainian Research Institute, 1988) 248–284.

<sup>39</sup> *Istoriia Rusov* iv.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Kravchenko, *Narysy z ukrains'koi istoriohrafii* 83. The article “O gorode Kieve,” published in *Ulei* in 1811, was an excerpt from Berlyns'kyi's larger study on the “History of the City of Kyiv.” This particular assessment, which would probably have infuriated the author of the “History of the Rus’,” was also apparently less than pleasing to the publishers of Berlyns'kyi's work. According to Kravchenko, it was not included in the 1991 edition of *Istoriia mista Kyieva*.

<sup>41</sup> See Kravchenko, *Narysy z ukrains'koi istoriohrafii* 83–84.

them from their Rus' roots.<sup>42</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the Ukrainian terminology against which the author of the “History” protested was indeed associated with the Polish vision of Ukraine as separate from Russia, and from the 1840s on it served to promote the Ukrainian national idea in the Russian Empire. But it would be wrong to assume that the author of the “History” was combating the Ukrainian or proto-Ukrainian trend represented by Berlyns'kyi's textbook. While the Ukrainian terminology used by Berlyns'kyi implicitly compromised his project of integrating the Cossack elites into the imperial Russian narrative, Berlyns'kyi himself did not threaten the pan-Russian vision of the anonymous author, nor did the historical paradigm employed in his textbook. If anything, Berlyns'kyi's scheme integrated the Cossack past into the imperial Russian narrative more effectively than did the “History of the Rus'.” Berlyns'kyi, who traced all that was good in Kyiv and Ukraine back to the reign of Catherine II, achieved his integration without claiming any special historical rights for the Cossack elites—an attitude directly opposed to that of the anonymous author of the “History.”<sup>43</sup>

This explains how the “History of the Rus” became a major ideological threat to the empire. Given its long-term impact on the historical imagination of generations of Ukrainian activists, that threat can hardly be denied. Despite the “anti-Ukrainian” remarks made in the introduction to the book, the author of the “History of the Rus” filled his narrative with numerous anti-Muscovite statements, which, like the term “Ukraine,” he may have taken over from the earlier Cossack chronicles and historical tradition. He also claimed the Kyivan Rus' past, which had been considered part of Russian history alone, and extended the *courte durée* of previous Cossack historiography, whose narrative was mainly limited to the post-1648 history of Ukraine.<sup>44</sup> By celebrating the glorious past of the Cossack Host, the “History of the Rus” inspired Ukrainians to espouse a historical and national identity distinct from that of Russia.

What conclusions may be drawn from the origins of the “Ukraine vs. Little Russia” debate and its role in the formation of national mythologies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? First, it appears that there are grounds to challenge the dominant historiographic trend, which treats the “History of the Rus” as a manifestation of growing Ukrainian self-awareness. The delimitation

<sup>42</sup> See A. Tsarinnyi [A. Storozhenko], “Ukrainskoe dvizhenie. Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk, preimushchestvenno po lichnym vospominaniyam,” in *Ukrainskii separatizm v Rossii* 133–252, here 142–143.

<sup>43</sup> On Berlyns'kyi's interpretation of the Ukrainian past in his unpublished “History of Little Russia,” see Kravchenko, *Narysy z ukrains'koi istoriohrafii* 84.

<sup>44</sup> On Russian interpretations of Ukrainian history in the first decades of the nineteenth century, including the tendency to claim the history of Kyivan Rus' for Russia alone, see Tolochko, “Kyievo-rus'ka spadshchyna,” 266–309.

of Russian and Ukrainian identity was not among the goals of the anonymous author of the “History of the Rus’.” In all likelihood, as noted above, his immediate goal was to ease the integration of the Cossack elites into the Russian nobility and society at large, as well as to enlist St. Petersburg’s support in fighting Polish “intrigues” in Right-Bank Ukraine, by narrating the heroic deeds of his people. His polemic with Berlyns'kyi and his choice of terminology show that the anonymous author wanted to achieve his goal by playing the Rus' card (the title of his work is most eloquent in that regard). He presented his compatriots as more Rus'ian than the Great Russian themselves, giving former Cossack officeholders a basis to claim equal status with the Great Russian nobility.

If that was indeed the case, how does the “History of the Rus’” fit into the “national mythology” and “national mystification” paradigm? While such mystifications as the *Igor Tale* helped build up pride in the all-Russian nation, tracing the roots of its literary tradition back to the twelfth-century court of the prince of Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, what was the function of the “History of Rus’,” a work actually produced in the vicinity of that ancient town? It may be argued that originally the “History’s” main function was the creation of a subordinate myth, a historical narrative intended to help Little Russians partake in the larger historical myth of the all-Russian nation. That function, however, changed with the passage of time. As Anthony D. Smith has noted, “myths, memories, symbols and values,” if viewed as constituent parts of cultures and identities, “can often be adapted to new circumstances by being accorded new meanings and new functions.”<sup>45</sup> This is what seems to have happened to the collection of heroic stories and images created by the author of the “History.” Produced for one purpose, they were successfully adapted to serve another: instead of helping to integrate the Cossack past into the all-Russian narrative, they served as a basis for the creation of a new national narrative of Ukrainian history.

The role that the “History of the Rus’” has played in the formation of Ukrainian historical identity highlights the simple fact that historians have little control over the use of their narratives. As Eric Hobsbawm warned his fellow historians, “The crops we cultivate in our fields may end up as some version of the opium of the people.”<sup>46</sup> If this metaphor, supplied by one of the last Mohicans of Marxist historiography in the West, can be applied to national ideology, then the reception of the “History of the Rus’” is indeed a case in point. Like the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz, which inspired proponents of the nineteenth-century Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian national movements, the image of the heroic Cossack past produced by the anonymous author of the “History of the Rus’” clearly captured the imagination of his readers, whatever

<sup>45</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* 3.

<sup>46</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Identity History Is Not Enough,” in idem, *On History* (New York: New Press, 1997) 276.

their national ideologies.<sup>47</sup> It inspired both a proponent of all-Russian identity, Nikolai Gogol', and the father of the modern Ukrainian nation, Taras Shevchenko. In the end it was the latter's interpretation that prevailed, turning the anonymous author of the "History," a self-proclaimed enemy of Ukrainian terminology, into the forefather of Ukrainian national historiography.

---

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of the impact of Mickiewicz's poetry on the Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian national revivals, see Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003) 29–43, 281–283.