

THE “IMPERIAL” AND THE “COSSACK” IN THE SEMIOTICS OF EKATERINOSLAV- DNIPROPETROVSK

The Controversies of the Foundation Myth

Andrii Portnov

(Berlin)

Tetiana Portnova

(Dnipropetrovsk)

The starting point for any kind of history—be it national, regional or urban—is never just an abstract question for the literati to discuss. Debates about origins and succession inevitably bear the marks of the political demands of the present. Even the most refined academic discussions are framed, sometimes barely perceptibly but more often than not quite palpably, by the historians’ political inclinations and expectations of certain socio-cultural groups.

In the case of Ekaterinoslav-Dnipropetrovsk, one of the key and still unresolved semiotic challenges has long been the question of the starting point of the city’s history. The city celebrated anniversaries of its birth twice, once in 1887 and again 1976, and this inconsistency between milestone anniversaries does not escape notice. The first centennial anniversary was celebrated in Ekaterinoslav in 1887 on the threshold of the city’s rapid industrial transformation into one of the hubs of iron industry in the Romanovs’ empire. The second bicentennial anniversary—no longer of Ekaterinoslav, but of Dnipropetrovsk, since the city’s name changed in 1926—was associated with Leonid Brezhnev, whose seventieth birthday was celebrated in 1976, and for which reason an appropriate historical date was created so that the bicentenary now took place in 1976 and not in 1987.

Historians point to at least five alternative *starting points* and *places of origin* for Dnipropetrovsk. These alternatives represent two schemes, which we will call “the imperial plot” and “the Cossack plot.” In this paper, we describe and analyse the evolution of both these narratives and show how—already in the post-Soviet period—the Cossack pre-history of the city transformed from an innocent local feature into the main rival of the imperial genealogy.

The City of Potemkin

After the Russo-Turkish wars of 1768–74 and 1787–91 the Russian Empire gained control of the northern section of the Black Sea coast. According to Catherine II’s “Greek project”,¹ the south of the empire was to become a base from which the empire would spread to the Christian lands of the East, to Constantinople, while also competing with Peter the Great’s “northern project”. The southern city of Ekaterinoslav—the Empire’s third capital—was to eclipse both old Moscow and new St. Petersburg.

The construction of a governorate [*guberniia*] intended to honour Catherine (hence the name, Ekaterinoslav, “Catherine’s Glory”) was envisaged as part of the plan to establish the Azov governorate in 1775–76. The site for the town was chosen by governor Vasily Chertkov at the place where the village, Loshakovka, stood on the Kil’chen’ River, at the point of its meeting with the Samara River, a left tributary of the Dnieper. The town was founded in 1777, and the location turned out to be an extremely poor choice: the following spring the marshy outskirts were not only exposed to spring-time flooding but were also a malaria hotbed. Besides, the potential for navigation was misjudged—only small vessels were able to safely land in Ekaterinoslav I, although the plan was to build a big harbour (Egorov 1887).

¹ For details see Zorin 2004: 107–114; Lindner 2007; Thun-Hohenstein 2011.

Grigory Potemkin, the empress’s paramour and the mastermind of the “Ekaterinoslav project,” personally chose a new site for Ekaterinoslav II on the right bank of the Dnieper. This location was home to a Cossack settlement called Polovytsia, whose population then numbered more than 100 courtyards, that is approximately 800 people [Kavun 2011: 31]), between the villages called Novyi Kodak and Staryi Kodak (alternative spellings: Kaidak, Kaidaki).² The few settlers left over from Ekaterinoslav-1 and the provisional administration of Ekaterinoslav-2 were “sheltered” in the Novye Kaidaki village.³

On 9 May 1787, journeying across the “newly acquired” southern lands of the empire in the company of the Austrian emperor Joseph II, Polish king Stanisław August Poniatowski, and French and English ambassadors, Catherine II laid the foundation stone of the Transfiguration Cathedral, “a magnificent church” envisaged by Potemkin “in imitation of the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls” (San Paolo Fuori le Mura).⁴

In addition to a majestic cathedral, Potemkin also planned to build in Ekaterinoslav many edifices “in Greek and Roman style,” facilities to produce woolen clothes and silks, a university, and an academy of music (Bagalei 1889: 45). However, a new war with the Ottoman Empire began in the same year, 1787, and slowed the pace of construction. Potemkin’s death on 5 October 1791 thwarted the plans to make Ekaterinoslav a huge imperial centre. And when Catherine II died on 6 November 1796, her son Paul I, who despised her, took the reins of power and construction of the city was stopped altogether. Thus “a century of tremendous undertakings” (Titov

² All those names go back to the Polish fortress of Kudak built on the lower Dnieper in 1635 to restrain the Zaporozhian Cossacks, but soon seized by them and turned into a Cossack settlement.

³ See Korol’kov 1887: 12. The “township” (*gorodok*) of Novyi Kodak is described in Zuev 1787: 251.

⁴ More details about the laying of the foundation stone of the cathedral and the historiographic confusion about its prototype are found in Polons’ka-Vasylenko 1967.

1849: 114) ended in Ekaterinoslav before it actually began. Paul I renamed the city Novorossiisk, and it was only after his death at the hands of court conspirators that the emperor Alexander I again made the town the administrative centre of a governorate and restored its former name.

Left to its own devices, Ekaterinoslav became a typical provincial town. A public servant visiting it in the early nineteenth century remarked that “the entire town is no bigger and no prettier than a decent borough” (Sumarokov 1803: 68). Another visitor to Ekaterinoslav was moved to romantically reflect on the fragility of all things worldly (Vernet 1816). One of the city’s first historians, Bishop Gavriil (Rozanov), complained that “in the shortest time Ekaterinoslav lost everything: it hoped to shine with gold but turned into a clay jug or the very Polovytsia which it replaced” (Gavriil (Rozanov) 1863: 459). A contemporary researcher notes that the city intended as a southern capital became a genuine “Potemkin village” (Panchenko 2000: 695).

The Centennial in 1887

What sort of place was Ekaterinoslav as it prepared for its centennial celebration? It was a small provincial town, the administrative centre of a governorate in the southern steppe. Its thwarted ambitions to become a capital were evidenced only by the unusually wide Ekaterininsky Avenue, named so in honour of the empress, and by its coat-of-arms, which was established in 1811 and features Catherine the Great’s golden monogram (Vladimirov 1887: 24). Potemkin’s semi-destroyed palace appropriately reflected what had happened to the main locales associated with the grand project of building a capital city. In the 1840s the palace hosted meetings of a local association of noblemen.

In 1830, Bishop Gavriil (Rozanov) laid the foundation stone of the renewed Transfiguration Church because the previous church was “made of wood, painted red and had a dilapidated fencing”

(Korol'kov 1887: 51–52). This church was six times smaller than the one envisaged by Potemkin. Only the fencing around the original foundation was left to remind one of the grandeur of the original, unrealized design. Visitors to Ekaterinoslav described it as a town without special features. Except perhaps travelers from the north, who, like Potemkin and Catherine II long ago, were surprised by the generous southern climate (Belinskii 1956: 291). The author of a guide “to Russia, Poland and Finland” printed in London in 1875 called “the most striking feature of the town” its Jewish population, “which is quartered between the Dnieper and the bazaar, on either side of the floating bridge”, and pointed to “dirt” as “a very prevailing feature throughout the town” (Handbook 1875: 345).

Ekaterinoslav began to develop more quickly in the late 1850s. The city's population grew appreciably: from 20,000 in the mid-nineteenth century to 46,976 by 1885 (Bolebrukh 2001: 79). In 1859 the town opened its first telegraph office, and in 1869 the first water pipes were installed (Lindner 2006; Portnova 2008). However, the town's residents began to really expect changes in the early 1880s when a railroad reached the town; and in 1884, when a railway bridge first spanned the Dnieper. The bridge was an engineering wonder for that time. Previously, the river had been spanned by a wooden pontoon bridge which was dismantled in wintertime and believed to be the longest pontoon bridge in the Russian Empire.

The prospects for the city's industrial development—which were linked to iron ore mining in the vicinity of a local township called Kryvyy Rih—were foregrounded in the centennial celebration initiated by the local nobility. The anniversary milestone was determined to be the year 1787, when Catherine II laid the foundation stone of the Transfiguration Cathedral. This date became not only a reminder of the town's thwarted ambitions to become a capital but also a sign that in its new, industrial reincarnation the town that “was since its birth destined to serve the great purposes of the state” (EfuL, 1887, no. 11, p. 131) would fulfill its mission. The centennial thus triggered the first attempts to reflect on the town's history.

The period of the run-up to the celebration saw the publication of a historical report about “the first one hundred years” (Vladimirov 1887), as well as the release of 25 issues of “The Ekaterinoslav Anniversary Herald” (*Ekaterinoslavskii Iubileinyi Listok*), which according to a local historian “showcased a new, never previously practiced in Russia mode of celebrating an anniversary” (Leonova 2011: 198). Curiously, the “Herald” devoted some of its space to a poem in Ukrainian⁵, spelled with Russian letters, which featured a town “built by the tsarina” and claimed that “where Polovytsia used to be, a place of great glory has raised...” [“скоро там, де Половыця, — Велика слава загула...”] (EIuL, 1887, no. 12, p. 103).

This text is also interesting because it references a Cossack settlement, contrasting its commonness with the “great glory” of Catherine’s project. The commemorative publications did not deny the fact that Ekaterinoslav was built “on the site of a Zaporozhian village Polovytsia” (EIuL, 1887, no. 1, p. 2). But the writers stressed the transformational aspect: the transformation of “an uninhabited land”, “a deserted steppe” (EIuL, 1887, no. 13, pp. 118–119).

In an appeal of the city’s mayor I. Yakovlev to the burghers on the occasion of Ekaterinoslav’s anniversary the town was described as “one of the localities to be populated and to introduce culture and civic consciousness across the entire Novorossiisky region” (EIuL, 1887, no. 12, p. 101). The attractiveness of Catherine’s unrealized project was directly related to the rhetoric of conquest and acculturation in the southern steppe. The aforementioned I. Yakovlev delivered a speech on 9 May 1878 that emphasized that “one hundred years ago on the site where Ekaterinoslav stands there was a barren land surrounded on all sides with the vast and nearly uninhabited expanses of the steppe” (EIuL, 1887, no. 16, p. 145). “The Ekaterinoslav Anniversary Herald” echoed the city’s mayor: “a second Athens

⁵ The restrictions on Ukrainian print were introduced in the Russian Empire by the Valuev Circular of 1863 and the Ems Ukaz (decree) of 1876. These restrictions included the obligation to spell Ukrainian words with the letters of the Russian alphabet. For details, see Saunders 1995; Vulpius 2005; Remy 2007.

should have risen in a wild and nearly uninhabited country” (EIuL, 1887, no. 15, p. 130).

The centennial was celebrated in Ekaterinoslav on 8 and 10 May, and the festivities were typical for the Russian Empire. On the eve of the celebration, on 8 May, a memorial liturgy for all departed local priests, administrators and commoners was performed in every church, prayer house and synagogue. On 9 May, in the morning, a memorial service for Catherine the Great was performed at the Transfiguration Cathedral. At the opening of the city council’s special meeting in Potemkin’s former palace, the mayor delivered a speech and read out a humble address to the emperor, which was “immediately sent to the telegraph office” (PSGE 1887: 220). In the afternoon “a free for all folk festival with music and fireworks” took place in the Potemkin Garden. That day also saw the laying of the foundation stone of a cheap eating house run by a local charity for poor Christians and Jews (EIuL, 1887, no. 15, p. 132). In the evening “at about ten o’clock, on the square near the gymnasium, the public was treated to a magic lantern (*laterna magica*) show with explanations read by M. M. Vladimirov and M. I. Pavlenko; the pictures featured Empress Catherine the Great’s journey, portraits of some of Ekaterinoslav’s governors and archbishops, etc. The crowd responded to the show enthusiastically” (PSGE 1887, 221).

The texts published in the run-up to the celebration often mentioned a fund raising campaign to establish a public library, which would “become an imperishable hub of intellectual and moral curiosity of all the townsfolk” (EIuL, 1887, no. 15, p. 131). However, the fund raising for the library was unsuccessful. Instead, on 10 May 1878, the city saw the opening “of iron facilities [...] built on the town’s land by the Briansky Society” (EIuL, 1887, no. 16, p. 146). The organizers of the centennial celebration were right when they associated the town’s future with “the discovery and exploration of the diverse treasures of the soil” (EIuL, 1887, no. 15, p. 131). In the early twentieth century one of the persons employed at the Briansky plant was a Bolshevik, Hryhorii Petrovsky, who became a deputy of the

Russian Duma in 1912 and was one of the rulers of Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s–1930s. Indeed, it was in honour of Petrovsky that Ekaterinoslav in 1926 was given its new, Soviet name—a portmanteau word fusing the Dnieper’s appellation and the name of the high-ranking Soviet official.

A Closed City During Brezhnev’s Reign

The Soviet Dnipropetrovsk did not differ much from other big industrial cities. Following World War II, a new feature was added to the industrial dimension of this regional centre in the south of Ukraine. In 1944 the construction of a car factory began on the outskirts of Dnipropetrovsk, and German prisoners of war were the first workers on the site. On 9 May 1951, the Soviet Cabinet of Ministers issued a secret directive putting the Ministry of Defense in charge of the factory and converting the facilities into a military plant to produce rockets, in particular, nuclear and hydrogen missile carriers (see more in Portnov, Portnova 2014).

In 1966 the secret plant was named the Southern Machine-Building Plant [*Yuzhny mashinostroitelny zavod* in Russian or *Pivdennyi mashynobudivnyi zavod* in Ukrainian] or, in short, Yuzhmash/Pivdenmash. The manufacturing of rockets at Yuzhmash was the reason why foreigners, including guests from socialist countries, were banned from entering the city, a decision adopted in 1959. It was impossible to close a city as big as Dnipropetrovsk in the same way as the authorities isolated smaller towns with military plants.⁶ Built “from scratch” and with the sole purpose of servicing specific military facilities, these towns were small and completely isolated, and even missing from the maps. Dnipropetrovsk became one of the “semi-closed” cities. Such a status implied a complete ban on official references to the military complex facilities and a ban on foreigners’ entry.

⁶ On the variants of societal ‘closeness’ see Kondratieva, Sokolov 2009, Bohn 2006.

The biggest among Ukraine’s eleven “closed” cities, Dnipropetrovsk, with a population of 917,074 in 1970, had to lead the life of an ordinary large industrial city while maintaining its special secret status. And many of the city’s residents viewed this “relatively closed” status as a privilege—a sign of recognition of Yuzhmash’s special role and the cause of a better supply of food products in local stores, compared to many “open” Soviet cities.

However, the aspect that determined the city’s self-perception in the 1970s was not its closed status but this status’s nearly mythologized connection with the fact that since 1964 the Soviet Communist Party (and, therefore, the Soviet state) was headed by “a man from Dnipropetrovsk”—Leonid Brezhnev. A native of Dniprodzerzhinsk, an industrial town not far from Dnipropetrovsk, Brezhnev since the late 1930s had worked at the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Committee of Ukraine’s Communist Party, serving as its First Secretary from the autumn of 1947 until 1950.

Brezhnev was not involved in the decision-making when the car factory in Dnipropetrovsk was converted into a secret rocket producing plant. That decision was adopted in 1951, when he already worked as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldavia. After leaving Dnipropetrovsk, he visiting the city only briefly and irregularly. However, the fact that he mentioned Dnipropetrovsk in his memoirs left a lasting impression that the city had played an important role in his life (Brezhnev 1979).

Brezhnev’s time in Dnipropetrovsk was only one of the stages in his career crowned with the post of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Yet, it is Dnipropetrovsk that the General Secretary has been often associated with during and after his lifetime, while the city itself was called “the Party’s talent pool (*kuznitsa kadrov*).” The claim that the group of “the highest ranking *nomenklatura* [state officials] during Brezhnev’s reign” had a “disproportionately large” share of appointees from Dnipropetrovsk became almost an article of faith

(Voslenskii 2005). American Sovietologists were fond of reflecting on “Brezhnev’s uniquely overt loyalty to his Dnipropetrovsk roots” (Moses 1976; 1985). Although a gross overstatement, this argument has nonetheless survived both Brezhnev and the Soviet Union.

The Anniversary for the Brezhnev City

Dnipropetrovsk in the 1960s–1970s was characterized by the preponderance of white-collar engineers among its population. According to some exaggerated estimates, blue collar workers, together with engineers employed at Yuzhmash and the Yuzhnoe engineering design centre, as well as their family members, accounted for up to 60% of the city’s population (Zhuk 2010: 21). Besides, many in the city shared the belief that Brezhnev “patronized” it.

Such was the atmosphere in the city in the early 1970s, when the local authorities decided to celebrate the its bicentennial. There was a “technical” problem, however: Ekaterinoslav marked its centennial anniversary in 1887, so there were reasonable fears that Brezhnev might not live until 1987. As a result, the idea came up to “combine” the city’s centennial celebration with Brezhnev’s seventieth anniversary in 1976. In a word, it was vitally important to set a new year of reference from which to count the years of the city’s existence. Or, more precisely, to “age” the city by 11 years, propping up this move with “scholarly” arguments.

In December 1971 official inquiries were sent to the Central Military-Historical Archive of the USSR and the Central State Archive of Ancient Documents. The archives were asked to “advise on the precise year when the city was founded” (DADO, fond 18, opys 38, sprava 109, fol. 18–22). The inquiries were formulated so as to unequivocally point to the desired answer. The letter writers especially stressed the fact that the previously recognized year of the city’s birth, 1787, was chosen “in order to gratify the monarch” whereas “in fact the city had already been in existence by then for more than 10 years” (*ibid.*, fol. 18). The requested documents included all

of Prince Potemkin’s papers which were related to the region and produced in the 1770s and early 1780s—in particular, a copy of the Azov governor Vasily Chertkov’s report to Potemkin, dated April 23, 1776, about the choice of place for building a new capital. It was Chertkov’s report about “the project of building the administrative centre of the governorate—Ekaterinoslav—near the Kil’chen’ River...” (Bolebrukh 2006: 85) that underpinned the shift of the year of the city’s birth and, accordingly, the year of the city’s bicentennial anniversary, which conveniently “coincided” with the General Secretary’s anniversary in 1976.

The writer of a foreword to a collection of documents published in Kiev (Kyiv) in the run-up to the newly appointed anniversary contained the following explanation: “The recently discovered documents show that the city was founded in 1776. The reason for its foundation was the need to reinforce Russia’s southern border (on account of the risk of military incursion of the Ottomans) and to economically develop this area” (Vasil’ev 1976: 5). In the quoted passage Catherine II’s opulent imperial project is replaced with economic and military “need,” although the city’s imperial genealogy is not in the least questioned.

For the same reason we cannot take seriously the remark of the writer of a guide to Dnipropetrovsk published in 1976, who mentioned “the aristocrats’ bourgeois historical scholarship” which, “being in service of the idea of monarchy, forced upon Ekaterinoslav the presumption about the year of its foundation which takes as the reference point the Crimean journey of Catherine the Great, in the course of which, on 9 May 1787, she was present at the laying of the foundation stone of the Transfiguration Cathedral” (Vatchenko, Shevchenko 1976: 6). Apparently, the mentioning of the unrealized project Ekaterinoslav I, that brainchild of Catherine II and Prince Potemkin, did not in the least scale down *the degree of imperialness* of the narrative.

And what happened to Ekaterinoslav’s Cossack roots in the Soviet commemorative narrative? This theme, picked up from the

imperial narrative, was smoothly woven into the Soviet narrative, remaining for the most part a quaint local feature. The reference book on the city's history mentioned the Cossack settlements Polovytsia and Novye Kaidaki "on the site of present-day Dnipropetrovsk" (DDP 1959: 11). The 1970 guide contained a romantic description of Polovytsia: "The white thatched adobe houses buried in the verdure of the gardens by a major meander of the Dnieper—this is how we see the Zaporozhian village Polovytsia, which would become a big city over time" (Vatchenko, Shevchenko 1970: 7). An essay devoted to the anniversary, published in 1976, read: "Ekaterinoslav was built on the site where once stood a Zaporozhian village Polovytsia, mentioned in the official records of the time as a governmental settlement of soldiers. The future town was allocated a 300-square-meter plot of land stretching from the Dnieper to the Sura River and from Starye Kaidaki to Novye Kaidaki" (Borshchevskii 1976: 6). Thus, the old Cossack roots of the place were neither disregarded nor emphasized.

An imperial genealogy slightly ornamented with criticism of "the aristocratic-bourgeois historiography" was preferred to another approach for pragmatic and chronological reasons. Meanwhile, in the postwar Ukrainian Soviet historical narrative the Zaporozhian Cossacks were regarded as an example of a massive grassroots movement for social justice.⁷ Champions of such an approach pointed to the fact that Karl Marx sympathetically mentioned "a Cossack republic" in his notes (Marx 1946: 154).

The Cossack theme had a special local dimension for Dnipropetrovsk if only because most of the fortified Cossack settlements, called *sichs*, were situated on the territory of the present-day Dnipropetrovsk Region. Besides, from 1902 to 1933 the local historical museum was headed by a historian of Zaporozhian Cossacks, Dmytro Yavornytsky, who not only wrote about the regional customs and

⁷ On the postwar Soviet historiography on the Cossacks see Iaremchuk 2009 and Ganzer 2005. Cf. Pelenski 1964.

everyday life of the past but also attempted to emulate the Cossack ‘tradition’ in his own way of life.⁸ In the 1930s professor Yavornytsky avoided persecution but was dismissed from his job as the museum’s director and referenced in the NKVD⁹ files as “a committed Ukrainian nationalist” (Portnov 2011: 25–27). However, after his death in 1940, Yavornytsky was incorporated into the Soviet narrative, the Dnipropetrovsk museum was named after him, and in 1961 his remains were exhumed and re-buried near the museum’s entrance. Yavornytsky’s image as “an ethnographic Zaporozhian” became a quaint local feature which did not challenge either the imperial or the Soviet dimension of the city’s image.

The Imperial History and the Revolutionary History

The celebration of Dnipropetrovsk’s bicentennial, on the whole, did not deviate from the patterns of official celebrations accepted in the USSR in the 1970s. Perhaps the only original feature was reference to the General Secretary’s special ties with Dnipropetrovsk and Dnipropetrovsk’s special ties with the General Secretary. The commemorative publications were graced with Brezhnev’s quotes about “our Dnipropetrovsk” (ZD 1976: 1). Solemn speeches delivered at the celebration, which were published in all of the city’s newspapers, emphasized the General Secretary’s connection with Dnipropetrovsk, the fact that he takes care of the city and the region (DV, 1976, May 22, p. 3).

Despite the opportune coincidence of the anniversaries, Brezhnev did not attend the city’s bicentennial celebration. The key guest featured at the festivities was another high-ranking official from Dnipropetrovsk, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, who read out the Order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on

⁸ Yavornytsky’s bibliography is found in Hapusenko 1969. See also Shubravs’ka 1972.

⁹ NKVD (subsequently KGB), Soviet security police.

awarding Dnipropetrovsk with the Order of Lenin (DV, 1976, May 22, p. 1). It was stressed in Brezhnev's address that "the residents of Dnipropetrovsk have deserved this award with their heroic contribution to the revolutionary struggle, exemplary work, dedicated service to the Motherland and the great cause of communism" (DV, 1976, May 22, p. 1).

The arguments about the vital importance of "revolutionary struggle for establishing the dictatorship of proletariat" (DV, 1976, May 22, p. 1) and Dnipropetrovsk as "one of the biggest centres of the fight against tsarism" (DVBT 1977: 18) were propped up with Lenin's quote about the 1905 Revolution and his phrase that "barricades are being built and blood is being spilled in Ekaterinoslav."¹⁰ The themes most prominently featured at the celebration were revolutionary history and the Soviet Union's achievements.

Within the context of the city's "revolutionary feats" its imperial genealogy was clearly downplayed. The speeches on the occasion of the newly invented anniversary repeatedly emphasized differences between the Soviet times and the period of monarchy. This is how a scholar of ferrous metallurgy, Zot Nekrasov, described these differences in his speech: "Was it ever possible, in a situation of social oppression and total illiteracy, to dream about great scientific and cultural accomplishments, to discover and cultivate talents and capabilities of ordinary people. This is why the accomplishments of the Soviet period are truly wondrous" (DV, 1976, May 22, p. 4).

The ceremonial part of the celebration was standard and carefully thought out fare. It is unlikely that the organizers of the 1976 celebrations studied the experience of the organizers of the 1887 gala, but the ceremonial dimension, even if it was not altogether identical, had stylistic similarities. The city centre was adorned with decorative lighting and posters. The official function took place not in the Potemkin palace (converted by then into a Palace of Students)

¹⁰ See Lenin's quote in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, p. 2. On the Revolution 1905 in the region see Wynn 1992.

but in a newly built Theatre of Opera and Ballet, with speeches fitting to the occasion as well as the ceremony of pinning the Order of Lenin to the city banner. The final part of the gala concert featured a panorama of the plant and the appearance of a big red scoop “with iron streaming down from it without a stop, as the most apt symbol of a steelmakers’ city” (DV, 1976, May 23, p. 4).

Instead of a “magic lantern” show, the festivities featured an extravaganza called “Two Centuries of Struggle and Achievement” staged at the Meteor stadium, which was newly constructed and opened for the first time. It began with the showing of the figures 1776, spread across three hills, followed with the public reading of Catherine the Great’s Edict. The 1887 centennial celebration was evoked by long factory whistles from the Briansky plant, symbolizing “the start of the new era” and “the glorious revolutionary movement of Ekaterinoslav workers” (DV, 1976, May 23, p. 2). Whereas the celebration in 1887 was crowned with the launch of the Briansky plant, the festivities in 1976 featured the unveiling of a Hryhorii Petrovskiy monument, installed near the railway station, in proximity to the plant named after him.

The image of “our industrial Dnipropetrovsk” was cemented with a bilingual (Ukrainian / Russian) book of poetry, “My City of Workers” (MMR 1976). Both Ukrainian and Russian writers featured in the book enthused over “the city of cast iron and steel” and addressed the themes of the 1905 Revolution and the communist underground during World War II. They also praised blast furnaces, open-hearth furnaces, steelworkers, factory whistles, acacias, the Dnieper, bridges across the river and the large avenue (perhaps the lone symbol directly related to Catherine II). In a word, the subject of glorification was the city’s transformation—only the transformation not into an empire’s capital but into a big city of workers.

Post-Soviet Discussions About the City's Foundation: History and Politics

In the late 1980s Dnipropetrovsk became an “open” city and Yuzhmash was no longer a secret plant; in the early 1990s Dnipropetrovsk began to regard Kyiv as the capital (earlier it had been Moscow, not Kyiv). By the early 2000s, the city's population sank below 1,000,000—the mark it had reached practically in the same year as the anniversary, 1976. After the Maidan unrest in 2013–14, the annexation of Crimea and the start of an armed conflict in Donbass, predominantly Russian-speaking Dnipropetrovsk unexpectedly turned into the centre of Ukrainian patriotism and opposition to the separatism, a development viewed by many as a revival of ambitions “to become something akin to a capital city”—“neither the first nor the second city.” How did all these processes affect the foundational myth and its imperial component?

In the early 1990s, Yuri Mytsyk, a historian of Ukrainian Cossacks, published an article proposing to accept 1635, the year when the Polish fortress Kudak was built, as the city's foundation year. Implying the eclipse of Catherinian genealogy, this proposal was predicated on the view that the fortress “gave rise to several settlements which later became districts of the present-day Dnipropetrovsk” (Mytsyk 1997: 153). The Polish fortress Kudak was quickly captured by Cossacks, then re-built and captured again, during Bohdan Khmelnytsky's uprising in 1648–57; in 1711 it was destroyed, in fulfillment of the Treaty of the Pruth; since the 1730s the area was home to a Cossacks' settlement, which in 1775 became a governmental settlement; in the late eighteenth century it was the seat of the provisional administration of Ekaterinoslav, and in 1944 the remnants of the fortress were made over into a granite quarry, which is now located within the city limits.

The proposal to trace the city's roots to an earlier period than previously recognized, linking them to Ukrainian Cossacks rather than the Russian Empire, was cautiously supported by other

Dnipropetrovsk historians. Because there were several Cossack villages in the past, modern historians looking for Dnipropetrovsk’s Cossack roots have been picking one or another to build their theories on. Some historians insisted that “territorially and administratively Ekaterinoslav-Dnipropetrovsk was a successor to Polovytsia” (Moroz 2010: 49). Others emphasized that Polovytsia only “indirectly influenced” the city’s future whereas territorially and administratively Ekaterinoslav-upon-Dnieper was “a successor to the town of Novyi Kaidak” (Repan, Starostin, Kharlan 2008, 249).

However, historians from Dnipropetrovsk State University who wrote a monograph devoted to the city’s history argued that, compared to Kodak, Ekaterinoslav was “an emphatically novel urban organism” in whose history Ekaterinoslav I in 1776–77 was “the starting point in the first materialization of the city as ‘an urbanistic project,’” whereas the laying of the foundation stone of the Transfiguration Cathedral in 1787 “marked the definitive consolidation of this project” (Bolebrukh 2006: 78–79). Advocates of the Catherinian genealogy of Dnipropetrovsk argued that “despite all the twists and turns of the twentieth-century history, there is a real line of succession from Ekaterinoslav to Dnipropetrovsk” whereas there was no succession between Kodak and Ekaterinoslav (Chernov 1998).

The historiographical discussion is far from resolved. Curiously, only Dnipropetrovsk historians, both those working in the city and those who relocated to Kyiv, took part in the polemics. Their discourse is centred around the opposition between the Cossacks and the empire, and not between Europe and Russia. (If desired, Kodak can be represented as the eastern most outpost of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and this state’s erstwhile control over what is now part of Ukraine and Belarus is often held up as an argument in favor of these territories’ “Europeanness”.) The discourse of both parties in the debate is noticeably marked by their political attitudes.

The municipal authorities still hold on to the presumed year of the city’s foundation related to the Brezhnev anniversary, that is,

to 1776. Most likely, they exercise customary caution in matters of symbolism; here it should be noted that in post-Soviet Ukraine decisions on the installation of public monuments, renaming of streets and other similar matters are the purview of local authorities, not the central government in Kyiv.

How can we explain such attachment to the USSR under Brezhnev's rule? Especially in view of the fact that on 25 January 2012, the Dnipropetrovsk city council decided to name after Brezhnev one of the city's small and previously nameless streets on the outskirts of the city. In the same year in September a bronze bas-relief of Brezhnev was mounted on one of the eight concrete steles with portraits of 15 prominent natives of the Dnipropetrovsk Region installed in the city centre in the run-up to the anniversary. The presence of Brezhnev's name in Dnipropetrovsk's place names, a unique feature in post-Soviet Ukraine, emphasizes the region's ambitions and remains *a part of local patriotism*.

Now, after the Maidan unrest in 2013–14, the urban symbols of Dnipropetrovsk continue to include references to Brezhnev and the year 1776. Unlike the Lenin monuments and the Dzerzhinsky memorial plaque, they symbolize the “golden age” of the Brezhnev period in the city's history rather than a nostalgic longing for the Soviet Union.

Between Imperial, Cossack and Soviet Discourses

The centennial anniversary of Ekaterinoslav in 1887 was the festival of an imperial town—a town which, in the context of rapid industrialization, appeared to be finally following the script written for it by Catherine II and Prince Potemkin. The Cossack settlements on the site of the present city—even if it was not built as a capital as was initially envisaged—did not in the least defy or violate the primacy and sweep of the imperial dream. To the contrary, they helped initiate it, for it made little sense nor was it necessary to avoid mentioning Polovytsia or Novyi Kaidak. To do so would have meant to see

an ideological problem in such omission. But the organizers of the anniversary festivities in 1887 did not see the Cossack prehistory as anywhere near threatening.

The bicentennial anniversary of Dnipropetrovsk, deftly rescheduled by the local authorities for 1976, played the imperial motifs off against the Soviet motifs, on the one hand, and remained within the framework of the imperial genealogy, on the other. Even in the Brezhnevian anniversary celebration, which specially amplified the theme of “centuries-long social oppression,” the Cossack theme remained a politically innocuous vignette, a quaint local feature without political weight.

The Cossack prehistory of Ekaterinoslav-Dnipropetrovsk became an incendiary issue in the post-Soviet period, when Ukraine began looking for a national narrative. Until then, the innocent historiographic and cartographic references to Polovytsia and Novyi Kodak offered for the first time a politically important opportunity to have a non-imperial or even anti-imperial genealogy of the city. These references, nevertheless, have yet to prompt any change to the officially accepted date of Dnipropetrovsk’s foundation. That date remains 1776, a time associated with the positive local mythology of Brezhnev’s “talent pool” and “the city with a special status.”

WORKS CITED

- Bagalei, D. I.: 1889, *Kolonizatsiia Novorosiiskogo kraia i pervye shagi ego po puti kul'tury*, Kiev.
- Belinskii, V. G.: 1956, ‘[A Letter to M. V. Belinskaia, June 24, 1846],’ in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow, vol. XII, pp. 289–293.
- Bohn, Thomas M.: 2006, ‘Das sowjetische System der “geschlossenen Städte”: Meldewesen und Wohnungsmangel als Indikatoren sozialer Ungleichheit,’ in: Friedrich Lenger, Klaus Tenfelde (eds.), *Die europäische Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert: Wahrnehmung—Entwicklung—Erosion*, Köln, Weimar, and Wien: Böhlau, pp. 373–386.
- Bolebrukh, A. G. (ed.): 2001, *Dnipropetrovsk. Vikhy istorii*, Dnipropetrovsk: Hrani.

- Bolebrukh, A. G. (ed.): 2006, *Istoriia mista Dnipropetrovska*, Dnipropetrovsk: Hrani.
- Borshchevskii, V. Ia. (ed.): 1976, *Dnepropetrovsku 200. Istoriko-publitsisticheskii ocherk*. Dnipropetrovsk: Promin'.
- Brezhnev, L. I.: 1979, *Malaia zemlia. Vozrozhdenie*, Moscow: Prosveshchenie.
- Chernov, E. A.: 1998, 'Nachalo vremeni "URBIS" v istorii Dnepropetrovska,' *Naddnyprians'kyi istoryko-kraieznavchyi zbirnyk*, Dnipropetrovsk, vol. 1, pp. 110–114.
- DADO = *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Dnipropetrovskoi oblasti (State Archive of the Dnipropetrovsk oblast)*.
- DDP 1959 = *Dnipropetrovsk. Dovidnyk-putivnyk*, 2nd edition, Dnipropetrovsk: Dnipropetrovs'ke knyzhkove vydavnytstvo, 1959.
- DV = *Dnepr vechernii*.
- DVBT 1977 = *Dva veka bor'by i truda: Dokumenty i materialy o prazdnovanii 200-letii Dnepropetrovska*, Dnipropetrovsk: Promin', 1977.
- Egorov, A. I.: 1887, *Ekaterinoslavskoe blukanie (1777–1791)*, Ekaterinoslav.
- ELuL = *Ekaterinoslavskii Iubileinyi Listok*.
- Ganzer, Christian: 2005, *Sowjetisches Erde und ukrainische Nation. Das Museum der Geschichte des Zaporoger Kosakentums auf der Insel Chortycja*, Stuttgart: Ibidem.
- Gavriil [= Rozanov, V. F.]: 1863, 'Prodolzhenie ocherka o Novorosiiskom krae. Period s 1787 po 1837 god,' *Zapiski Imperatorskogo Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, Odessa, vol. V, pp. 420–490.
- Handbook 1875 = *Handbook for Travellers in Russia, Poland, and Finland; including the Crimea, Caucasus, Siberia, and Central Asia*, London: John Murray, 1875.
- Hapusenko, I. M.: 1969, *Dmytro Ivanovych Iavornytskyi*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (= Biobibliohrafiia vchenykh Ukrain'skoi RSR).
- Iaremchuk, Vitalii: 2009, *Mynule Ukrainy v istorychnii nautsi URSS pisliastalins'koi doby*, Ostroh: Ostroz'ska akademiia.
- Kavun, M. E.: 2011, 'Dynamika depopuliatsii slobody Polovytsi v protsesi urbohenezu Katerynoslava (1789–1797): istoryko-demohrafichna rekonstruktsiia,' *Istoriia i kultura Prydniprov'ia: nevidomi ta malovidomi storinky*, Dnipropetrovsk, no. 8, pp. 28–45.

- Kondratieva, T. S., and A. K. Sokolov (eds.): 2009, *Rezhimnye liudi v SSSR*. Moscow: Rosspen.
- Korol'kov, Konstantin: 1887, *Stoletnii iubilei Ekaterinoslava 1787—9 maia—1887*, Ekaterinoslav, vyp. 1.
- Leonova, O. V.: 2011, ‘Pershyi iuvilei Katerynoslava iak istoriohrafichne iavyshche,’ *Istoriia i kultura Prydniprov'ia: nevidomi ta malovidomi storinky*, Dnipropetrovsk, no. 8, pp. 193–201.
- Lindner, Rainer: 2006, *Unternehmer und Stadt in der Ukraine. Industrialisierung und soziale Kommunikation in den Sübprovinzen des Russischen Reiches, 1860–1914*, Konstanz: UvK Verlag.
- Lindner, Rainer: 2007, ‘Die Stadt als Symbol. Ekaterinoslav und die imperiale Integration Neurusslands im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert,’ in: Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (ed.), *Kultur in der Geschichte Russlands. Räume, Medien, Identitäten, Lebenswelten*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 225–243.
- Marx, Karl: 1946, ‘Khronologicheskie vypiski,’ *Arkhiv Marksa i Engelsa*, Moscow, vol. 8.
- MMR 1976 = *Misto moie robotnyche: Virshi pro Dnipropetrovsk*, Dnipropetrovsk: Promin', 1976.
- Moroz, V. S.: 2010, ‘Polovytsia ta ii mistse v urbohenezi m. Dnipropetrovska,’ *Prydniprov'ia: istoryko-kraieznavchi doslidzhennia*, Dnipropetrovsk, vol. 8, pp. 39–51.
- Moses, Joel C.: 1976, ‘Regional Cohorts and Political Mobility in the USSR: The Case of Dnepropetrovsk,’ *Soviet Union*, vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 63–89.
- Moses, Joel C.: 1985, ‘Regionalism in Soviet Politics: Continuity as a Source of Change, 1953–1982,’ *Soviet Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 184–211.
- Mytsyk, Iurii: 1997, ‘Tak vynyklo nashe misto,’ in his *Kozatskyi kraj: Narysy z istorii Dnipropetrovshchyny XV–XVIII stolit*, Dnipropetrovsk: Promin, pp. 128–153.
- Panchenko, A. M.: 2000, ‘“Potemkinskie derevni” kak kulturnyi mif,’ *Iz istorii russkoi kul'tury*, Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, vol. 4: (XVIII—nachalo XIX veka), pp. 685–700.
- Pelenski, Jaroslaw: 1964, ‘Soviet Ukrainian Historiography after World War II,’ *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 375–418.

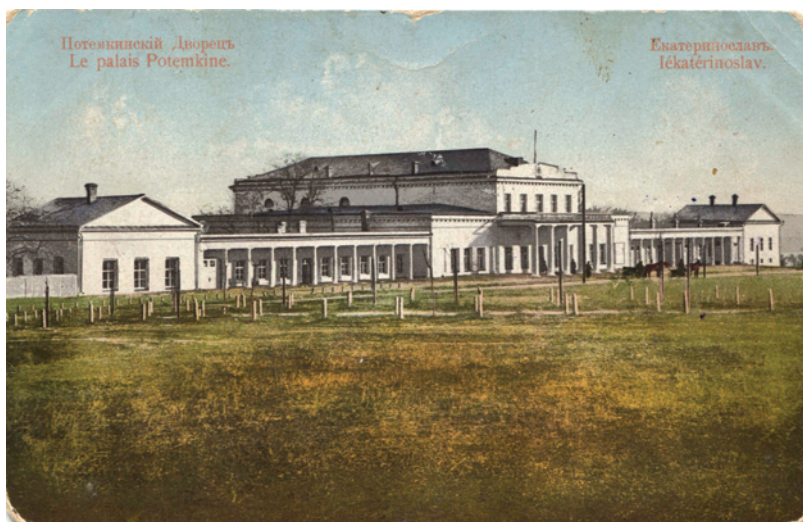
- Polons'ka-Vasylenko, Natalia: 1967, 'Nezdiisnennyi arkhitekturnyi proiekt (Do istorii Katerynoslava),' in her *Zaporizhzhia XVIII stolittia ta ioho spadshyna*, Munich: Dniprova khvyliia, vol. 2, pp. 170–177.
- Portnov, Andriy: 2011, *Istorii istoriykiv: Oblychchia i obrazy ukrains'koi istoriohrafii XX stolittia*. Kiev: Krytyka.
- Portnov, Andriy, and Tetiana Portnova: 2014, 'Stolitsa zastoia? Brezhnevskii mif Dnepropetrovska,' *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, no. 5, pp. 71–81.
- Portnova, Tetiana: 2008, *Mis'ke seredovyschche i modernizatsia: Katerynoslav seredyny XIX—pochatku XX stolit'*, Dnipropetrovsk: Innovatsia.
- PSGE = 'Prazdnestvo stoletia goroda Ekaterinoslava,' *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 1887, vol. 27, pp. 220–221.
- Remy, Johannes: 2007, 'The Valuev Circular and Censorship of Ukrainian Publications in the Russian Empire (1863–1876): Intention and Practice,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 49, no.1/2, pp. 87–110.
- Repan, O., V. Starostin, and O. Kharlan: 2008, *Palimpsest. Korinnia mista: poselennia XVII–XVIII stolit' v istorii Dnipropetrovska*, Kiev: Ukrains'ki propilei.
- Saunders, David: 1995, 'Russia and Ukraine under Alexander II: the Valuev Edict of 1863,' *The International History Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 23–50.
- Shubravs'ka, M. M.: 1972, *D. I. Iavornytskyi: zhyttia, folklorystychno-etnohrafichna dial'nist'*, Kiev: Naukova dumka.
- Sumarokov, P. I.: 1803, *Dosugi krymskogo sud'i ili vtoroe puteshestvie v Tavridu*, Sankt-Petersburg, pt. 1.
- Thun-Hohenstein, Franziska: 2011, '“Wo es ganz plötzlich abbrichts: Rußland / Über dem schwarzen dumpfen Meer”': Russische kulturelle Semantiken des Schwarzmeerraumes,' in Esther Kilchmann, Andreas Pflitsch, Franziska Thun-Hohenstein (eds.), *Topographien pluraler Kulturen: Europa von Osten der gesehen*, Berlin: Kadmos, pp. 75–96.
- Titov, G.: 1849, *Pis'ma iz Ekaterinoslava*, Odessa.
- Vasil'ev, I. V. (ed.): 1976, *Dnepropetrovsku 200 let. 1776–1976: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Kiev: Naukova dumka.
- Vatchenko, A. F., G. I. Shevchenko: 1970, *Dnepropetrovsk: Putevoditel'spravochnik*, Dnipropetrovsk: Promin'.
- Vatchenko, A. F., G. I. Shevchenko: 1976, *Dnepropetrovsk: Putevoditel'spravochnik*, 2nd edition, Dnipropetrovsk: Promin'.

- Vernet, I. F.: 1816, ‘Eshe neskol’ko moikh vospominanii,’ *Ukrainskii vestnik*, pt. 3, July, pp. 173–190.
- Vladimirov, M. M.: 1887, *Pervoe stoletie g. Ekaterinoslava, 1787—9 maia—1887*, Ekaterinoslav.
- Voslenskii, M.: 2005, *Nomenklatura*, Moscow: Zakharov.
- Vulpus, Ricarda: 2005, *Nationalisierung der Religion. Russifizierungspolitik und ukrainische Nationsbildung 1860–1920*, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.
- Wynn, Charters: 1992, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zhuk, Sergei I.: 2010, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985*, Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- ZD 1976 = *Zori Dnepropetrovska: Fotoalbom*, Moscow: Planeta, 1976.
- Zorin, Andrei: 2004, *Kormia dvuglavogo orla... Russkaia literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiii v poslednei treti XVIII—pervoi treti XIX veka*, Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Zuev, Vasilii: 1787, *Puteshestvennye zapiski ot S. Peterburga do Khersona v 1781 i 1782 godu*, St. Petersburg.

Illustrations



Monument to Catherine II in late nineteenth-century Ekaterinoslav (Postcard)



The Potemkin Palace on the eve of the twentieth century (Postcard)



The Transfiguration Cathedral (Present-day photo)



Coat of arms of Ekaterinoslav



The opening of the monument to Hryhorii Petrovsky in 1976



The Memorial Plaque to Leonid Brezhnev on the house where he lived in Dnipropetrovsk



Coat of arms of Soviet Dnipropetrovsk



Coat of arms of post-Soviet Dnipropetrovsk

