Andy Warhol and Paul Robert Magocsi: From Pennsylvania and New Jersey to Toronto

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My journey to eventually become a colleague of Professor Paul Robert Magocsi in reality began as far back as 1971. Growing up in Yorkshire in northern England, an industrial area surrounded by beautiful countryside not too dissimilar to Pennsylvania, I was a big fan of the rock star David Bowie. I purchased all his albums – which I still have and play. "Hunky Dory," released in 1971, included a peculiar song about somebody I had never heard of, Andy Warhol, one of David Bowie's greatest inspirations. I have never liked modern art, although the pop art of Andy Warhol was to some degree to my taste, and I loved his attitude captured in one of his famous quotes "Art is what you can get away with."

Andy Warhol – in a similar manner to Paul Robert Magosci – was ahead of his time and an inspiration to many others. When Andy Warhol said "In the future everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes," he could have been talking about reality television and the rise of online social networking, blogging, and Internet celebrity. Meanwhile, Magocsi's scholarly work has been innovative and has led the field of Ukrainian studies especially in Ukrainian history.¹

I always loved quotes by Oscar Wilde and began to appreciate how similarly incisive were Andy Warhol's. In the 1971 song, David Bowie sings "Andy Warhol looks a scream Hang him on my wall, oh oh, oh oh." I did eventually hang an Andy Warhol on my wall decades later when my wife, Oksana, bought me one of his famous quotes which she presumably believed fitted my personality well: "But I always say, one's company, two's a crowd, three's a party."

I eventually visited the Andy Warhol museum in Pittsburgh in 2015 which was hugely impressive, as was the tour of Ukrainian, Rusyn and eastern European religious, community and cultural life in that city. I bought another of his quotes in the museum that more anything encapsulates the virtual nature of Ukrainian and Russian politics. It goes like this: "I don't know where the artificial stops and the real starts." The two quotes sit side-by-side on a wall in my home office and when the virtual nature of Ukrainian politics

becomes too much, I know there is always the possibility of diverting to a long, late lunch with Magocsi.

Before my wife and I moved to Toronto in spring 2001, we had not yet met Paul Robert Magocsi, although we had, of course, heard of him as an academic scholar. I have always been interested in nationality problems in the USSR, Ukraine and Europe more generally and therefore had read his major work *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus'*, 1848-1948 (Harvard University Press, 1978). I had forgotten about this until recently when sorting through my old files I found my copious notes on the book which clearly must have left an impression on me. I had also collected books on the Transcarpathian crisis in 1938-1939 and travelogues from the time which reflected my interest in the region (books I have since donated to the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto).

Integrating can always be difficult for newcomers to any country. Britain had only one wave of emigration from Ukraine that came after World War II until a large new group of Ukrainians, economic refugees, arrived. Most of the Ukrainian immigrants to Britain were from the Galician Division of the German Waffen SS, as well as Gasterbeiter slave labourers, such as my father, and soldiers from the Polish Anders army. With many men and few Ukrainian women, most Ukrainian immigrants who were Catholics from western Ukraine married other Catholic immigrants – Italians, Austrians and Bavarian Germans. My mother, for example, is Italian from the village of Colle San Magno near Roccasecca, the birthplace of St. Thomas Aquinas, a theologian, philosopher, priest, and saint who lived from 1225-1274. At eight years old she witnessed the 1943 battle of Monte Casino monastery, only a few kilometres away, which hosts a large graveyard to the citizens of interwar Poland who died fighting Nazism. We would pay our respects at the cemetery when visiting my mother's family in the summer months.

Canada has experienced many waves of immigration from Ukraine, and it is not unusual that these different groups do not always integrate, particularly as some who came in the late nineteenth century were leftwing and even Communist. New emigrants from independent Ukraine who have arrived since the 1990s are economic refugees, rather than political which was the case after World War II, and they also in many cases feel ostracised by members of the older refugee community. Coldness to newcomers is surprising in Canada which is not only a country of immigrants but also, outside Quebec, a country of multiculturalism which implies tolerance.

I do not recall the first time we met, but both being outsiders could have been what brought Magocsi and me together in our pursuit of Ukrainian studies. We also have similar interests in Mediterranean cultures. Bob had grown up in an Italian town in New Jersey which was "90 percent Calabrian," as he has explained, while my mother is Italian, and we both are fans of the HBO television series, *The Sopranos*, which is set in New Jersey and devoted to exploring Italian-American crime families.

I gradually came to understand why there was coolness by the Ukrainian community towards Magocsi after learning the story of how he had been appointed the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto in 1980. The Ukrainian community had assumed that by raising funds they would be the ones who could choose the Chair of Ukrainian Studies, and their preference was Orest Subtelny. Magocsi's appointment was in fact met by coolness from two sides, the Ukrainian community and the University of Toronto which 35 years ago was a far more WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) university than it is today. The history and political science departments initially did not want the Chair of Ukrainian Studies in their departments. The Ukrainian community, displeased with who was appointed, never donated the full amount of financial resources, leaving the Chair of Ukrainian Studies underfunded and under threat of closure until as late as 2010 when a major donation of \$2 million from the late John Yaremko was received.

The timing of the donation was both fortuitous and a sign of how the Ukrainian-Canadian reception of Magocsi was slowly changing. It was truly unbelievable that bitterness could be harboured for nearly three decades over an appointment that the Ukrainian community did not like—a bitterness which did not produce anything positive as the appointment could not be changed. This was especially surprising in view of the fact that students who attended Magocsi's undergraduate and graduate classes were very positive about his teaching; he alone of professors I know prepares easy-to-read computer-typed pages of comments on student essays while professors usually hand write comments on essays.

But more importantly the coolness was surprising because of Magocsi's extraordinary productivity in academic scholarship which is greater than any other Western historian of Ukraine. With a miniscule staff compared to Ukrainian research centres at Columbia, Harvard and Alberta universities, he has nevertheless managed to produce an extraordinary volume of highbrow scholarly work. It took many decades for the Ukrainian diaspora to

recognise his contribution to Ukrainian studies because they instead tended to focus on his scholarly and popular work on Rusyns.

Conversations with Magocsi about nationalism and interethnic relations inevitably touched on Transcarpathia and my informal "research" (often conducted over those long, late lunches) was integrated into an article I published in 2005 in the journal *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* entitled "The Rusyn Question in Ukraine: Sorting Out Fact from Fiction." One of the main problems in political science scholarship on Ukrainian regions was the over-focus on Lviv-Kyiv-Donetsk with a lack of attention to other important regions such as Transcarpathia, Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv. This often led to exaggerated claims by pro-Ukrainian and pro-Rusyn scholars. With the lack of survey data on Transcarpathia and few political science studies, there is still a lack of research into national identity into this strategically important and intellectually interesting region that was ukrainianised (not russified, as was the case in eastern Ukraine) by Soviet power after World War II.

A strong work ethic is something I learnt to respect from my Galician father who came to Britain after World War II without a penny to his name and managed to successfully raise a family and help build a thriving Ukrainian community in my hometown of Halifax. But, productivity and hard work is only one aspect of Magocsi's scholarship; the other is ingenuity in developing new ideas and integrating Ukrainian studies into mainstream Western academic frameworks.

Orest Subtelny and Paul Robert Magocsi, two Americans working in Toronto-based universities, published the two main Western histories of Ukraine which I compared in a review published in the journal *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* in 2000, that is, before I moved to Canada.³ I was surprised to find that I was one of only a few who understood at this early stage how their approaches to history were both scholarly and interesting but at the same time different. Orest Subtelny published the first edition of his *Ukraine*. *A History* four years before Ukraine became an independent state in 1988 and the approach he used is similar to that of the doyen of Ukrainian history, Mykhaylo Hrushevsky, in presenting a history of a stateless people (rather than a state). The first edition of Magocsi's *A History of Ukraine* was published six years after Ukraine became an independent state in 1996 and his approach is similar to that taken by Western histories of nation-states that are territorially based and inclusive. A history of Britain, for example, includes

Celts, Danes, Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Normans. In between the first and second editions of his *History of Ukraine*, he published a widely welcomed Illustrated History. A History of Ukraine. The Land and its Peoples, the second edition of his history published in 2010,⁵ added the second subtitle to stress that the book deals with everybody living on the territory of Ukraine, both non-Ukrainians and Ukrainians. This interest in the "little people" of Ukraine drew him to be interested in Jews and Crimean Tatars, as well as, of course, Rusyns. With a multitude of historical developments taking place since 2010 (Viktor Yanukovych's shortened presidency, the Euromaidan revolution, Russia's annexation of the Crimea and Vladimir Putin's hybrid war into eastern Ukraine), we will hopefully not have to wait for a third edition as long as the fifteen years between the first and second. This is especially the case in view of Magocsi's long interest in nation building. Example: he wrote that "Perhaps Putin more than anyone else has transformed hundreds of thousands of formerly passive citizens of Ukraine into patriots committed to defend their native country—Ukraine." Indeed, Ukraine's nation building spread from western Ukraine in the late 1980s to central Ukraine during the Orange Revolution and integrated eastern and southern Ukraine during and after the Euromaidan and Russia's new imperialism. The Ukrainian state that emerges from these fundamental changes in national identity will be more tolerant and inclusive of its regional differences and therefore more open to the historical framework proposed by Magocsi.

Magocsi's approach to the study of Ukrainian history also challenged the traditional Russian imperial framework that had been copied whole-heartedly by Western historians. It is indeed intellectually unnerving that while Magocsi has remained committed to his support for inclusiveness and multiculturalism,⁷ his colleagues in the field of Russian history espouse similar values publicly while at the same time copying the Russian imperialist position that denies Ukrainians and Belarusians any past or future history.⁸ Parodying Russian imperialist views has two consequences that lead to poor and nationalistic scholarship. The first is that, in Magocsi's words, "In this scenario, there is simply no place for a distinct Ukraine, unless that concept is understood as simply the 'Little Russian' component of the one and indivisible world of Mother Russia." Historians (such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn) and politicians (such as Vladimir Putin), in using an imperial Russian framework, view Ukrainians and Russians as "one people" and believe that Ukraine should remain closely bound to Mother Russia, thereby agreeing

with leftwing anti-American scholars and commentators who blame the West for enlarging NATO and the EU into Russia's supposedly rightful sphere of influence.

The second consequence is the view often heard that nothing untoward was undertaken by Vladimir Putin because the Crimea was supposedly "returning" to its "rightful place where it had always been." Magocsi writes that it might be useful to remember a few basic historical facts:

Crimea was annexed to what was then the Russian Empire in 1783 and remained part of that empire and its Soviet successor state until 1954; that is, for 170 years. Since 1954, Crimea has been part of Ukraine; that is, for 60 years. But the longest period of rule in Crimea was from the mid-fifteenth to late eighteenth centuries; that is, roughly 330 years, when it was part of the Crimean Khanate. The Crimean Khanate was ruled by the ancestors of the Crimean Tatars as a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire.⁹

I had always had an interest in nation building which was the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation that was published in 1988 as the book *Ukraine*. *State and Nation Building*. This field of scholarly enquiry was also a common area of interest with Magocsi whose scholarly interest in nation building in Transcarpathia¹⁰ had expanded after his appointment to the Chair of Ukrainian Studies into scholarly interest in nation building in Galicia¹¹ and Ukraine more broadly including Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians. Magocsi and I have understood the centrality of schools and textbooks to nation building which encouraged me to collect Ukrainian school textbooks on history since the 1990s. My large collection of Ukrainian school textbooks on history has contributed to some scholarly articles in the journal *Nationality Papers* on the rewriting of history in Ukraine, but they are still waiting to be used in a research project wholly devoted to the subject.¹²

In 2009 two strategically important developments happened:

Firstly, I brokered a meeting between Liberal Party MP Borys Wrzesniewski and Magocsi. Wrzesniewski had led the Ukrainian Students club at the University of Toronto in 1980 and had therefore been in the forefront of opposition to Magocsi's appointment. Nevertheless, despite not having met for over two decades and Magocsi wondering whether it was a good idea at all, the meeting went so well that it lasted longer than usual. Wrzesniewski's family foundation gave a donation to the translation into

Polish and publication in Poland of Magocsi's seminal *A History of Ukraine*. *The Land and its Peoples*. Wrzesniewski's interest in the Crimea, where his wife is from, also produced fruitful collaboration between them that led to the publication of *This Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars* in 2014, the same year Russia illegally annexed the autonomous Crimean republic. The book is one of the first to present a history of Crimean Tatars who have given it a rapturous reception. As with both editions of *A History of Ukraine*, the *This Blessed Land* was translated into and published in Ukrainian and Russian which will give it an additional readership in Ukraine, Russia and Eurasia.

Secondly, in 2009 I organised a panel at Toronto's St. Vladimir Institute of leading scholars George Grabowicz and Serhiy Plokhy (Chairs of Literature and History at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University), Alexander Motyl (Rutgers University), Dominique Arel (University of Ottawa) and myself in honour of Magocsi. The well-attended symposium played a major role in warming the relationship with Magocsi on the part of the Ukrainian community, and a leading Toronto-based Ukrainian activist said to me during the event "Somebody should have taken this initiative long ago." The five scholarly papers and Magocsi's response was published in 2011 in the journal *Nationalities Papers* with the title "The Scholar, Historian and Public Advocate. The Academic Contributions of Paul Robert Magocsi." 13

Around the same time, I began to write a contemporary history of Ukraine which was initially to be published by the University of Toronto Press (the publisher also of Subtelny's and Magocsi's histories of Ukraine), and I signed a contract in 2012. Magocsi assisted my scholarly project by advising the approach I should take of combining three narratives with nine thematic chapters that would survey Ukraine from 1953 when Soviet leader Joseph Stalin died and he believed contemporary history began. A reference written by him assisted me in being invited as a Visiting Scholar at the Slavic Research Centre at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan, where the first draft of the book was completed.

Magocsi sought to find a compromise with the University of Toronto after its lawyers decided to cancel my book contract when they were threatened by US lawyers working on behalf of Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov. Canada, like Britain, has poor libel laws that defend those making accusations of "libel" rather than the authors. Unfortunately, his intervention

did not lead to the University of Toronto Press reversing its decision, and *Ukraine. Democratization, Corruption and the New Russian Imperialism* was published in June 2015 by the US publishing house Praeger, instead. The sad affair with the University of Toronto Press was similar to that faced by Karen Dawisha whose book contract on corruption and criminality among Russia's leaders was cancelled by Cambridge University Press forcing her to publish in the US where authors' rights are more protected.

The timing of the St. Vladimir Institute symposium was fortuitous for two important reasons. The publication appeared in time for the thirtieth anniversary of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies which held a banquet to celebrate three decades of productive work at the University of Toronto's prestigious Faculty Club.

The second factor was that the Ukrainian community, including radical nationalists, was beginning to seek allies against two threats that had appeared independently but around the same time. The first came from Western historians such as Per Anders Rudling and John Paul Himka who began to write revisionist studies of Ukrainian nationalism in the 1930s and during World War II. Although these revisionist studies produced a lot of criticism, the Ukrainian community in Canada and the US did not invest in research projects (which if they had materialised could have been hosted by the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto) to provide alternative published accounts. The second threat came from the election of Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine whose Minister of Education, Dmytro Tabachnyk, returned to Soviet-era denunciations of Ukrainian nationalism in the past as "fascists" and used the same contemptuous label of "fascists" for the contemporary opposition. One of the most surprising new alliances that emerged from these threats was that of Magocsi and Oleh Romanyshyn, the editor of the Ukrainian-Canadian Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN) newspaper Homin Ukrainy. Magocsi has maintained a centrist and therefore objective historical approach to Ukrainian nationalism by writing about this contentious question without either aligning with "ideologically driven" revisionists or with nationalist apologists. 14

It had taken a long time—over three decades—but history had indeed come full circle.

Magocsi will be the first to tell you that his life's work is not yet completed and there is much more that needs to be accomplished. Anybody who knows him understands he is a man on a mission. His approach to Ukrai-

nian history will undoubtedly prove the test of time because by being inclusive and civic-territorial he presents Ukraine in a modern history that is as respectful of Ukrainian identity, language and culture as it is of national minorities living in Ukraine.

Magocsi will be as respectful of national minorities who themselves respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and European choice but not towards those who threaten Ukraine's sovereignty and independence. The Russian threat to Ukraine and Moscow's new-old chauvinism towards Ukrainians have not gone unnoticed, and Magocsi has both condemned Moscow's policies and placed them within a historic context of being typical for Russian imperialism. This is coupled with his strong opposition to Russia's annexation of the Crimea and Ukraine's fight against Russia's invasion of the Donbas region. In Magocsi's keynote address at the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Programme Model Ukraine Conference at Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv on 29 November 2014, he presented strongly critical views of Russian policies towards Ukraine that some in Ukraine and in the Ukrainian diaspora might be surprised to read, but they would not have been if they had been paying greater attention to his scholarly work on Ukraine. Speaking to alumni of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Programme, he asked "And what has been the position of Russia in all of this?" saying out aloud "Many Western commentators seemed surprised by the boldness, some would even say recklessness, of Russian President Vladimir Putin." Magocsi continued that "Actually, there should never have been the slightest surprise. He has been acting—and quite successfully—in a manner established by a long line of rulers stretching from medieval Muscovy, through the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and now the Russian Federation. That manner is determined by historic Muscovite-Russian geopolitical goals and deepseated cultural beliefs."

Russian leaders such as Vladimir Putin have "ideological goals, which are based on long established cultural traditions inculcated in him and in all Russians." This has included the following, according to Magocsi:

Since at least the fifteenth century, Muscovy, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union have wanted to regain the lands that they felt rightfully belonged to them. Initially, this was known as the Gathering of the Russian Lands (*sobiranie zemel' russkikh*) which included the heritage of medieval Kievan Rus'. And of all of Russia's so-called great leaders, this goal was finally achieved by Joseph Stalin in 1945.

The sphere that Russian ideologists claim to have been part of the Kievan inheritance includes much of European Russia, all of Belarus, throw in the Baltic states as well, and certainly all of Ukraine up to and beyond the Carpathians in the west and to the shores of the Black Sea in the south. (No matter that the Baltic northeastern and Black Sea southern fringes of this area were never part of Kievan Rus!).

Magocsi continues:

This view of the "Russian world" is deeply embedded in the mind-set of every Russian. Yes, a Russian is quick to point out, we love Belarus and Belarusans; yes, we love "Little Russia" and "Little Russians." How can we not love them? Belarusans and "Little Russians" are an integral part of our very body and soul. They not only speak the same basic variants of East Slavic languages, they are all Eastern Christians, a faith expressed best through the one and only "true" Orthodox faith. In this scenario, there is simply no place for a distinct Ukraine, unless that concept is understood as simply the "Little Russian" component of the one and indivisible world of Mother Russia.

Magocsi also warned that Ukrainian inaction on the Rusyn question in Transcarpathia was being exploited by Russia in its curious alliance with the nationalist populist regime in Hungary. With Ukrainian territorial integrity under threat from Russia in the east and south, there is an urgent need to reform Ukraine's still Soviet territorial-administrative system by giving greater power to its regions and local councils.

In the case of Transcarpathia, different Ukrainian presidents had already made two steps forward and one step back. President Leonid Kravchuk had agreed to the holding of a referendum on local self-government, President Leonid Kuchma had taken Ukraine into the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Rights, President Viktor Yushchenko had permitted the Transcarpathian oblast council to recognise a Rusyn nationality and Rusyn symbols and in 2012 under President Viktor Yanukovych Ukraine's language law listed Rusyn as one of the country's official languages. All of these steps by Ukraine's four presidents remain in force.

Nevertheless, Paul Robert Magocsi believes:

Following the collapse of Communist rule and the Soviet Union, it turned out that Carpatho-Rusyns still existed not only in Ukraine's Transcarpathian region, but also in immediately neighbouring Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. Since 1989, each of those member countries of the European Union has recognised Rusyns/ Carpatho-Rusyns as a distinct nationality. By contrast, independent Ukraine has been reluctant to act on the national identity question. Most central government and intellectual circles in Ukraine hold to the late nineteenth-century view of Ukrainian national ideologists (and for that matter Soviet Marxist ideologists as well) that there never was, is, nor will be a distinct Carpatho-Rusyn nationality. And anyone who holds such views is either unenlightened or a separatist opposed to Ukraine.

Ukraine has two unresolved issues, that of the 1991 referendum on local self-government and the issue of recognition of Carpatho-Rusyns as a distinct nationality at the national level. Ukrainian surveys and polls show that separatism has no support in Transcarpathia. Magocsi points out that "The worldwide Carpatho-Rusyn movement has never been interested in creating a separate state; it is opposed to changing international borders; and it has always supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine and, and most importantly, its eventual inclusion in the European Union."

Transcarpathians are not separatist or pro-Russian but are pro-Ukrainian and pro-European. Emerging from the Euromaidan revolution and territorial imperialism and war with Russia will be a new Ukraine that needs to be built on the same inclusive foundations as those found in the Europe into which Ukrainians, Rusyns and Magocsi himself seek to integrate Ukraine and in "doing the right thing and doing it now will show that the leadership in Kyiv is firmly committed to making their country a European Ukraine, not a Eurasian Little Russia," he told the Ukrainian Catholic University audience, because "Ukraine has created the Rusyn question, and Ukraine can resolve the Rusyn question."

Andy Warhol quipped "They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself." Magocsi is in favour of a European Ukraine not a Eurasian Little Russia and towards this end he has been innovating scholarly Ukrainian studies throughout his academic career through an approach to Ukrainian history and national minorities that combines respect, tolerance and inclusiveness. His ideas and writings should be a well-developed framework for the emergence of new European Ukrainian nationality policies in the coming years ahead.

Endnotes

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- 5 Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) and *A History of Ukraine. The Land and its Peoples, 2nd Revised Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).
- 6 Paul Robert Magocsi, 'European Ukraine or Eurasian Little Russia?' Keynote address at the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Programme Model Ukraine Conference, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine, 29 November 2014. The keynote address was published as Paul Robert Magocsi, 'European Ukraine or Eurasian Little Russia?' New Eastern Europe, 10 March 2015. http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1520-european-ukraine-or-eurasian-little-russia
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- 8 See T.Kuzio, 'History and National Identity Among the Eastern Slavs. Towards a New Framework'. *National Identities*, vol.3, no.2 (July 2001), pp.109-132.
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- 12 T. Kuzio, 'History, Memory and Nation Building in the Post-Soviet Colonial Space', *Nationalities Papers*, vol.30, no.2 (June 2002), pp.241-264, 'Nation-State Building and the Re-Writing of History in Ukraine: The Legacy of Kyiv Rus', *Nationalities Papers*, vol.33, no.1 (March 2005), pp.30-58 and 'National Identity and History Writing in Ukraine', *Nationalities Papers*, vol.34, no.3 (September 2006), pp.407-427.
- 13 Guest Editor Taras Kuzio, 'Special Section: The Scholar, Historian and Public Advocate: The Academic Contributions of Paul Robert Magocsi,' *Nationalities Papers*, vol.39, no.1 (January 2011), pp.95-134. http://www.taraskuzio.net/Guest%20Edited%20Journals.html
- 14 Alexander J. Motyl has pursued a similar centrist and objective study of Ukrainian nationalism. See his 'The Ukrainian Nationalist Movement and the Jews: Theoretical Reflections on Nationalism, Fascism, Rationality, Primordialism, and History,' *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol.26 (December 2013).