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Synopsis: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Zenon E. Kohut

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Synopsis: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Zenon E. Kohut, ed. Serhii Plochy and Frank E Sysyn (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies P., 2005; pp. 481. N.p.).

Zenon Kohut has unarguable credentials in the study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Eastern Europe. His book *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s-1830s*, published in 1988, has passed the test of time admirably. This volume, prepared by Kohut's colleagues for his anniversary, has gathered an impressive cohort of North-American, West-European and Ukrainian authors. The collection opens with the article by V. Kravchenko on the intellectual life of Kohut, which 'sketches' Kohut into the contemporary agenda of the nationalising Ukrainian historiography to a larger extent than is justified by Kohut's works, especially having in mind his 1970s–1980s publications which owe more to the American historiography than to the Ukrainian immigrant historiography of the time. The book also lists a bibliography of Kohut's works.

The editors have structured the volume in a very simple way—they refrain from any systematic attempts to do it and have placed the articles alphabetically, by the author's surname. However, one can easily single out three groups of articles. First, there are five essays on the early period (up to and including the eighteenth century), among which the most interesting is the article by P. Bushkovich on the close informal ties of the Muscovy court *boyars* with the Cossack *starshyna* of the Hetmanate which had laid the foundation for the later process of the incorporation of the Hetmanate élite into the social and

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political structure of the Russian Empire. Incidentally, Bushkovich's article is the only one dedicated to the eighteenth century, which was Kohut's focus of attention.

Another set of articles is devoted to the long nineteenth century. The article by O. Pelech on the Cyril and Methodius Society poses a very interesting question of how these young men ended up in Kiev and what part they played in the university education system there. Unfortunately, Pelech does not succeed in answering this question quite as interestingly, since he relies on the assumption that the policies of the education minister S. Uvarov were directed toward assimilation (russification) of the Polish élite with the aid of the Ukrainian élite. Among other problems, this is incorrect in the sense that Uvarov did not consider assimilation of the Polish *szlachta* to be a viable goal in the foreseeable future; this line of argument replaces the complex problem of the interaction of different strategies of identification on the borderlands of the empire by the notion that the Ukrainian and Belarussian nations already existed at the time. A little masterpiece in this set of articles is the analysis by Alfred Rieber of the fight in the higher echelons of the imperial bureaucracy over the issue of determining the route and providing funds for the Odessa-Moscow railroad in the 1860s, based on a wealth of sources. Rieber reveals the intricate and contradictory ties between economic feasibility, corruption, strategic security and nation-building projects (the question of how Rieber manages to write the most interesting articles for each of the many collections he contributes to deserves a special study). M. von Hagen, relying mostly on the memoirs of Skoropadsky but keeping the necessary critical distance from this source, traces in great detail the transformation of the Tsar's general into the Ukrainian hetman and the story of his political downfall.

The largest bloc of articles is devoted to historiographical issues. A. Kappeler's article on the German-language historiography of Ukraine covering the twentieth century has already been published in German, but its English version is very welcome. Kappeler does not limit himself to a review of literature but includes an analysis of political interests reflected in the works he reviews. To the list of flawed approaches to Ukraine-related subjects, Kappeler adds the German and Austrian tradition of considering Ukraine as an instrument in the struggle against Poland and/or Russia. The article by D.R. Marples provides a balanced analysis of positions on the assessment of the famine in Ukraine in 1932–3. Marples demonstrates that the academic community is very far from unanimous in the evaluation of the events, including their characterisation as genocide, which was recently proclaimed by the Ukrainian authorities. The article by O. Tolochko, elegant in style and argumentation, shows how the concept of two heirs to the Kiev Rus' (the Rostov-Suzdal and Galician-Volynian principalities), unsupported by historical sources and invented in the eighteenth century by Vasilii Tatishchev, had already acquired the status of 'historical truth' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and was used by Russian and Ukrainian historians in constructing corresponding national historical narratives.

The article by D. Saunders occupies a separate place in this bloc. In his essay, he repeats the two theses he proclaimed a long time ago—that 'Russia was particularly hostile to Ukraine' (p. 403) and that the cause of this was primarily the large size of the Ukrainian population. He adds to it a thesis on continuity of this particular hostility in Soviet policies. All of this sounds rather strange because it is not clear which actors he has in mind when he makes statements about the Russian hostility toward Ukraine. What should have been discussed here is that, from a certain moment, both the authorities and Russian

nationalists in the Romanov empire became hostile to the Ukrainian national movement, since it advanced the Ukrainian nation-building project which was in opposition to the project of the All-Russian nation which was supposed to include Little Russians along with Great Russians and Belarussians. The Little Russians in this scheme of things were not targeted for individual discrimination, unlike many other ethnic groups. It was exactly the recognition of the Ukrainians as a separate nation that marked the revolutionary break of Soviet policy from the policies of Russian nationalism and the Romanov empire. Much has been written by various authors on this and many other shades of this complex picture, but the reader will never learn it from Saunders's article. The review of a rather expansive body of historiographical works that either do not share his theses at all or demonstrate their bias and point out the complexity of the matter is done by Saunders in such a manner that one has to speak of a violation of basic professional ethics. The positions of his opponents are consciously oversimplified and misinterpreted. The casualties of these exercises include not only this reviewer but also A. Kappeler and T. Martin. Suffice it to say that both historians are listed by Saunders as 'generalists' who did not specialise in Ukrainian subjects (p. 401). However, Kappeler authored and edited a number of books on Ukrainian history, while Martin's voluminous book on the 'affirmative action empire' is largely devoted precisely to Ukrainian subjects and is based on careful archival research. As a whole, the collection is of great interest, and many of its articles deserve to be included in reading lists for various courses in East European history.