

Zenon E. Kohut, *Making Ukraine. Studies on Political Culture, Historical Narrative, and Identity* (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2011). Pp. xv + 340.

Professor Zenon Kohut is a distinguished historian of early modern Ukraine best known for his definitive account of the destruction of the Cossack Hetmanate in the late eighteenth century, and its incorporation into the unitary Russian state being constructed by Catherine II. Her Enlightened instincts did not extend to tolerating the traditional liberties and autonomy of local elites, be they Baltic German nobles or a Cossack Hetmanate that had—apart from the Mazepa debacle during the Great Northern War—largely served the empire loyally. This collection of essays, written between 1977 and 2006, is most welcome, and gives readers an opportunity to assess Kohut's contribution to Ukrainian historiography in the years before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. Although the essays range widely across the early modern period, the center of gravity of most of them lies in the eighteenth century, and several are devoted to exclusively eighteenth-century topics.

At the heart of all the essays lies the author's concern with demonstrating the legitimacy of the Ukrainian claim to the status of a historical nation and a historical state, so important in the Soviet period and still of relevance today, when Russian cultural and political influence in Ukraine remains powerful. Kohut offers close critical arguments in favor of Ukraine's historical nationhood and statehood, in the tradition of the great Mikhaïlo Hrushevsky. He demonstrates through close critical reading of a range of sources the development of Ukrainian national consciousness beginning in the sixteenth century, and is at his best when offering powerful critiques of works by Russian and Soviet scholars who sought to prove otherwise. As is inevitable in such a collection, several of the essays overlap, and readers become very familiar with such works as the early nineteenth-century

*Istoriia Rusov*, one of the key texts he analyzes. Overall, however, this adds to the coherence of the vision that emerges.

Kohut outlines the emergence of a vision of Ukrainian nationhood that challenged the dominant Great Russian narrative of the supposed common past. He shows how writers and intellectuals from ecclesiastical and lay circles effectively confronted the claims of Great Russians that the inhabitants of “Little Russia” (*Malorossiiia*) merely formed a junior branch—despite the origins of the Russian state in Kyiv/Kiev—of one Russian nation. He endeavors to prove that both the tradition of Kyivan Rus’ and the establishment of the Cossack Hetmanate as a form of state in the wake of the great Cossack rising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1648–54 meant that the Ukrainians are not a new nation, but one with a long tradition of statehood.

All of this is well done, and Kohut marshals his evidence effectively. Yet there is one major problem: Modern Ukrainian identity is complex precisely because it was formed against two Others, not one. Most of the territories that make up modern Ukraine were for over two hundred years part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, then, for two hundred more, of the Kingdom of Poland. Thus they were ruled from Vilnius, Cracow, or Warsaw for longer than they have been ruled from Moscow. Kohut is well aware of this fact, yet shows little interest in Polish-Lithuanian influences on Ukrainian identity. With the exception of his essay on the eighteenth-century *haidamaka* movement and the 1768 *Koliivshchyna* rising, which was centered on Right Bank Ukraine (then in the Kingdom of Poland), he cites virtually no Polish literature, and the literature he does cite is outdated: to present the account of the xenophobic Rawita-Gawroski (1846–1930) as the standard Polish work (274) is a travesty. Since 1945, many Polish scholars—including Zbigniew Wójcik, Władysław Serczyk, Henryk Litwin, and Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel, to name but a few—have written with great sensitivity on the thorny problems of identity and political culture in the Ruthenian and Ukrainian lands. The quality and importance of their work certainly are recognized by scholars working in contemporary Ukraine, particularly by Natalia Iakovenko, whose wonderfully subtle and nuanced work on the Ruthenian *szlachta* [nobility] departs substantially from the simple Manichean visions promulgated from the late nineteenth century, when—overtly and covertly encouraged by the Russians—Poles and Ukrainians fought literally as well as metaphorically for control of the Ukrainian lands and the Ukrainian historical legacy.

In this context, and in contrast to the subtlety of his work on the Ukrainian–Russian historical encounter, Kohut is happy to present simplistic, stereotypical accounts of the long relationship between Polish and Ruthenian culture. Following the pioneering work of Iakovenko, Litwin—and, indeed, Frank Sysyn, another historian of Ukraine now based in Canada—it is no longer possible simply to suggest that if a Ruthenian, Orthodox nobleman converted to Catholicism and used Polish as his first language, he automatically became a Pole. Yet, in an otherwise interesting piece on the political ideas of Hryhorii Poletyka—who, beginning in the 1760s, rejected the Cossack tradition and argued for a noble-led vision of Little Russian autonomy within the Russian empire—Kohut fails even to consider the extent to which Poletyka’s ideas might be derived from a political culture of local noble autonomy forged by the Polish-Lithuanian union. He does not even mention that at the time Poletyka was politically active, and in the very same year as the *Koliivshchyna* in Right Bank Ukraine (1768), discontent on the part of the middling and lesser *szlachta* was to produce the volcanic and anarchic explosion of the Confederation of Bar, which mounted a direct challenge to the Russian domination of

Polish politics and helped produce the crisis that led to the First Partition in 1772. Kohut shows no interest in the Partitions, mentioning them only in passing, and failing to reflect at all on the impact on Ukrainian identity and political culture of the Russian seizure of the Right Bank between 1772 and 1795. This is a great pity, for it means that his picture of eighteenth-century Ukrainian culture and identity remains narrower than it should be.