

History of Ukraine-Rus', 7, The Cossack Age to 1625. Mykhailo Hrushevsky. Trans. Bohdan Struminski. Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1999. 548 pp. \$119.95. ISBN 1895571286.

As a historian of Russia, I was somewhat hesitant when asked to review the Hrushevsky Translation Project's English translation of Hrushevsky's *Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusy, 7: Kozats'ki chasy-do roku 1625*, originally published in 1909. For Hrushevsky's ten-volume *History of Ukraine-Rus'* is both a history of Ukraine and a monument to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ukrainian nationalism, and a non-Ukrainian entering into that field is bound to "fail" to appreciate the "truth" of the work. Within Miroslav Hroch's three stages in the process of the creation of modern nationalism in eastern Europe—the development of a national consciousness among members of an intelligentsia; the spread of a national awareness among the urban middle classes through predominantly, though not exclusively, print culture; and finally, the unfolding of a mass nationalism movement among "the people"—Hrushevsky stands as the prime example of stage two within Ukraine. A historian today reading the work might find it severely limited in approach. There is very little of social or cultural history, and at times it reads as a long description of various "heroic" battles fought by the Cossacks against the "Turks," Poles, and Russians, as well as the Wallachians, Moldavians, Tatars, and Swedes. But if one engages the work as a study of nineteenth-century national mythmaking, it provides fascinating insight into the creation of modern Ukrainian nationalism.

Hrushevsky's *History* sets for itself the task of challenging nineteenth-century Russian historiography, exemplified best by the lectures of V. O. Kliuchevskii, that linked the history of Kiev-Rus' to later Muscovite and Imperial Russian history. Hrushevsky claimed for Ukraine the history of Kievan Russia, setting this as the first stage of Ukrainian history, followed by the Lithuanian period and then the Cossack era. The latter, for Hrushevsky, was central for the formation of the modern Ukrainian nation. Rather than being simply "bandits" operating on the "border" (*ukraina*) of the Russian state, as the Cossacks were depicted in Russian historiography, Hrushevsky's history of the Cossacks depicted them as the defenders of the emerging Ukrainian national, religious, and cultural tradition: "The [work] will be primarily a history of this new national force [Cossackdom] and, furthermore, a history of its struggle against the hostile Polish regime; of the revival of cultural and national forces; of the efforts to rebuild social and national relations with the assistance of the Cossack forces and under their protection, according to the wishes and ideals of society."

In presenting the Cossacks as the embodiment of a reemerging Ukrainian nation, Hrushevsky had to first address the issue of the continuity of Ukrainian history. A strong tradition had already emerged by the time of his writing that claimed a direct lineage from ninth- and tenth-century Kievan social and political organization to the Cossack formation of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; it is clear that Hrushevsky desired to link the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history of the Cossacks with the Princely era of Kiev-Rus'. However, Hrushevsky was too good a historian to accept the then dominant myths, which lacked any historical basis. Instead, he argued that the organizational forms of self-government of the Kievan period had become extinct "under the oppression of the Lithuanian-Polish regime" in the period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. The beginnings of Cossack social organization had actually, he reasoned, been forged from the life of the steppe, where hunters, and much later peasant farmers, operating outside the boundaries of any state organization, had to defend themselves constantly from attacks by various steppe raiders. The hunter operating in the borderland of the wild steppe by neces-

sity had to be a warrior, and warriors had to band together if they were to survive. Added to this internal social force was the activity of the Polish-Lithuanian state, which in its desire to regulate the Cossacks, actually spurred their development into a sociopolitical force. The government created Cossack officers and other officials and legally separated the Cossacks into a particular social stratum, all in an effort to gain control over them. The Cossacks, however, used these very state structures as vehicles for the organizing and strengthening of their own unofficial order dedicated to resisting the encroachment of Poland on Ukraine. Hrushevsky was quick to point out, nonetheless, that whereas the history of the Cossacks as a sociopolitical organization could be documented only to the late sixteenth century, with roots going back to the fifteenth, the history of Cossackdom as a mode of life was a far different story, one that could indeed be traced back to Kiev-Rus', a story that, following in the same line of reasoning as Kliuchevskii in the latter's *Kurs russkoi istorii*, Hrushevsky described as "an age-old struggle between the sedentary, agricultural way of life and the rapacious, nomadic robber population of the steppes, a struggle that continued for centuries in constantly new and changing forms and variants on the same territory of Ukraine. . . . In the fifteenth century, these old features of Ukrainian border life—free, fearsome, and warlike—acquired the specialized name of 'Cossackdom.'"

The history of Ukraine during the Cossack era thus was primarily influenced by the success of the "agricultural way of life" against the nomadic way of the steppe; that is, the triumph of popular colonization that brought the "uninhabited" steppe under the plough. Rather than the Polish nobility bringing the people to the steppe, it was the "people," who in an effort to escape the despotism of the nobility, fled to the steppe, only to find the Polish magnate in the last decades of the sixteenth century rushing after it "armed with the charter he had requested and obtained from the king, which gave him right to the land where the fugitive had settled and was about to start farming." But just as it appeared that the emigrants in eastern Ukraine had once more fallen into the net of bondage, "the Polish government, to its own surprise, showed that population a way out." This was through the government's Cossack reforms: "The acceptance of the Cossacks into royal service, their liberation from any other usual jurisdiction, and their subordination to the exclusive authority and jurisdiction of their chief were the source of the idea of. . . the Cossack's complete liberation from any tributes, duties, or burdens. . . ." As a consequence of the pressure from the nobility, the Ukrainian Cossacks rapidly increased in numbers as new Cossacks were constantly recruited from the peasants seeking salvation once more. The old warrior Cossacks supported the claim of freedom by the new "peasant" Cossacks, who in turn provided sustenance for the warriors.

But the "knightly warriors" offered more to the creation of the modern Ukrainian nation than protection for the peasantry against the Polish magnates. The Cossacks, Hrushevsky argues, were also central to the defense of the national/religious interests of the Rus' people. The Orthodox church's efforts to resist the attempt by the Polish state to force it into submission to Catholicism through the creation of a "Uniate" church led in 1620 to the consecration of a new Orthodox hierarchy. When the Polish state attempted to suppress this new hierarchy, the Cossacks, particularly those around Kiev, rallied to the armed defense of Orthodoxy: "The circumstances of Ukrainian life at this moment led to the concentration of national interests, national aspirations, and national struggle in the defense of the existence of the Orthodox Church."

Hrushevsky recognized the difficulty of squaring the circle of defense of both the peasantry and the "remnants of the Ukrainian nobility. . . the powerful clerical stratum, and

the higher strata of the burghers.” And he admits that “Cossackdom never managed to articulate any definite protest against the lords’ law in general or any formula for defending the rights of the village or subject peasant population. The Cossacks did not go beyond the demands for certain exemptions from the Polish law for themselves, nor did they go on to a principled negation of the Polish nobiliary regime in general.” But in parallel with Kliuchevskii’s desire to find evidence of the emergence of a truly Russian “national” program at the beginning of the seventeenth century, one that could serve as an example for a liberal opposition to tsardom in the latter half of the nineteenth century, so too did Hrushevsky need to locate an example of an earlier alliance between the Ukrainian intelligentsia and “the people” that could inspire Ukrainian nationalists of the early twentieth century. Neither historian is convincing in this regard.

Hrushevsky completes this volume with a lengthy analysis of the efforts of the Polish state to both use the Cossack Host as a cheap army to fight its wars, particularly against Sweden and Muscovy, and simultaneously to subordinate the Cossacks to the Polish crown, finally leading to an attempt to essentially crush Cossackdom entirely in the Polish-Cossack war of 1625. At the negotiated conclusion of that war, it was evident that Cossackdom had not yet the power to free Ukraine from Polish control, although it did have sufficient strength to limit that dominance. The continued struggle for a free Ukraine would be traced by Hrushevsky in later volumes.

It would be easy, but mistaken, to dismiss Hrushevsky’s efforts to provide a foundation for modern Ukrainian nationalism, and the imagined Ukrainian nation of the twentieth century, in the Cossacks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as yet another example of nineteenth-century ethnic dreaming. For ultimately it was not so important whether these Cossacks actually ever saw themselves as champions of “Ukraine.” Others in another century would. And Hrushevsky has provided us with the best account of Ukrainian national imagining yet written. That Hrushevsky himself might not have been aware that he was creating, rather than analyzing, an “imagined community” is of little importance. No one can fully understand Ukraine today without an appreciation of Hrushevsky’s work. It remains indispensable reading.

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