
This collection of sixteen articles and an afterword by Marc Raeff derives from conferences held in 1994 and 1995, when the collapse of the Soviet Union had “made Ukrainian-Russian relations an international issue of cardinal importance” (vii). It does not, however, contain anything on the years between 1945 and 1991 or on post-Soviet developments. Five of the contributions deal with the early modern period (up to about 1800), six with the imperial period (from about 1800 to 1917), and five with the years between 1917 and the end of World War II. Near the beginning, David A. Frick’s essay on Lazar Baranovych, the seventeenth-century bishop of Chernihiv, brings out the backwardness of Muscovite culture in comparison to that of Ukraine and Poland in the years after part of Ukraine transferred its allegiance to the tsar. Brought up and educated in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Baranovych seems to have found it almost impossible to reduce his cultural level to that of what, from his point of view, was the well-nigh barbaric world in which he now found himself. Yuri Shapoval’s essay near the end of the book on the part played by Moscow-controlled security forces in the “counter-Ukrainization” of the 1920s and 1930s demonstrates that early twentieth-century Ukrainian culture was unable to withstand the Russian steamroller. On the basis of these two essays it might be argued that between the seventeenth and the early twentieth centuries Ukrainian culture went from being powerful and self-reliant in the face of Russian culture to being powerless and ineffectual. In a sense, the two cultures passed each other on up and down escalators. In an
extraordinarily well annotated essay, Olga Andriewsky draws attention to the imbalance in the relationship in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She believes that, whereas Ukrainians “have been obsessed with their neighbours to the north” throughout the period of the book, “Russians . . . have given relatively little thought to the ‘south’” (186). People like Baranovych make one think that in the seventeenth century the boot was in fact on the other foot and that, at that time, Russians knew Ukraine had to be somehow accommodated but Ukrainians did not think the “north” had much to offer. The general point about asymmetry, however, holds up. It needed to be embraced in both Andreas Kappeler’s study of Ukrainians in the ethnic hierarchy of the Russian empire and Paul Bushkovitch’s discussion of Russian national identity and the state between 1500 and 1917. Among many other things, these essays say that Russian tsars were much less troubled by ethnic identity than they were by loyalty to the dynasty and the state, and that therefore Russia cannot be said to have attempted deliberately to repress Ukrainian culture. But the whole point about Ukrainian culture in the centuries covered by this volume is that it was a peasant-oriented, populist, non-state-centered culture. Tsars who emphasized the importance of loyalty to dynasty and state were emphasizing things with which Ukrainians were uncomfortable. They were repressing Ukrainian culture by denying its central principles. As Serhii Yekelchyk makes clear in an essay on nineteenth-century Russian-language history textbooks that explores how ethnically conscious Ukrainians acquired a sense of the Ukrainian past when the history textbooks to which they were exposed tended not to deal with it, Ukrainians looked to folk song and ethnography for the bedrock of their culture, to the world of the peasants, not that of the state. Russian state officials knew this only too well: this was why they banned the use of the Ukrainian language in print in 1863 and 1876—to prevent Ukrainian peasants from being educated in their native language and thus limiting the mobilization of the people who were keeping Ukrainian culture alive. The ten contributions to the volume that have not been mentioned here stimulate no less strong reactions. Each of them is worth a review of its own.

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