

Mykhailo Hrushevsky

History of Ukraine-Rus'. Vol. 4: Political Relations in the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries

Ed. by Robert Frost, Yaroslav Fedoruk and Frank E. Sysyn with the assistance of Myroslav Yurkevich. Transl. by Andrij Kudla Wynnyckyj. Edmonton, AB, Toronto, ON: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2017. CIV, 470 S., 1 Kte., 1 Abb. = The Hrushevsky Translation Project. ISBN: 978-1-894865-48-7.

As already mentioned in my earlier review of Mykhailo Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus'. Vol. 6: Economic, Cultural, and National Life in the 14th to 17th Centuries* (Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas. jgo.e-reviews 6 (2016), 4, pp. 1–3), this edition is part of a monumental translation project which aims to publish ten volumes (in 11 books) of Hrushevsky's opus magnum in English. The Hrushevsky Translation Project was initiated by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies in Edmonton, Canada, to promote the works of the “father of Ukrainian historiography” among the English-speaking readership. The fourth volume, reviewed here, is devoted to political developments in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, delineated by Hrushevsky as the “times of the people's decline,” or the “transitional Lithuanian-Polish period,” and was first published in 1903 and revised in 1907. The current English translation, based on the second edition, is supplemented by several introductory chapters, a bibliography, a map, genealogical tables, a postscript, and the tables of rulers. The majority of editorial footnotes and genealogical tables were compiled by one of the leading experts in the field of early modern Ukrainian history, YAROSLAV FEDORUK, a senior scholar at the Mykhailo Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archeography and Source Studies in Kyiv.

For the translators and editors of the volume it was apparently important to place this edition in its historical context and provide contemporary historiographical reflections. Two introductory essays describe the social and political milieu as well as personal motives that drove Hrushevsky to publish this volume. The first introductory chapter, “Volume 4 of the ‘History of Ukraine-Rus’”: Between two ‘Ukrainian wings in mighty national flight’”, was written by SVITLANA PANKOVA, director of the Hrushevsky

Memorial Museum in Kyiv. It is devoted to the history of writing, revision, publication, and reception of Hrushevsky's fourth volume. Pankova traces the reasons for Hrushevsky's obvious focus, in this volume, on Ukrainian-Polish antagonisms in the general atmosphere of competing historical narratives in early 20th century Galicia. The general crisis of Ukrainian-Polish cultural and political relations, including ongoing conflicts with Lviv University's Polish-dominated administration, drove Hrushevsky to proceed with the compilation of the volume written from the viewpoint of Ukrainian national history. Pankova admits, however, that these tensions did not affect the scholarly objectivity of Hrushevsky's work (p. XXVI). At the same time, she depicts, in detail, the negative reception of the revised volume by the Polish academic side (p. XLVI). Using Hrushevsky's diary and other personal testimonies of the Ukrainian historian as objects of analysis, Pankova comes to the conclusion that the fourth volume should be considered within the context of the Ukrainian nation-building process, which echoed similar developments in Polish historiography and included the image of a foreign enemy (p. XLVII).

These observations are shared by ROBERT FROST, the author of the second introductory essay to Hrushevsky's fourth volume. Frost, a renowned expert in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Burnett Fletcher Chair of History at the University of Aberdeen, pays particular attention to the fact that Hrushevsky's attempts to construct the image of the Ukrainian people principally as victims of Polish oppression in the 14th–16th centuries (p. LXXII), are based on the desire that Ukrainians and their history should “be treated on equal terms” (p. LVII). He argues that challenging the paternalistic “Polish version of the Ukrainian past was just as important to Hrushevsky as unmaking the Russian imperial version. This task began with volume 4 of his *History*” (p. LXIX). Frost's introductory chapter is easy to read and very instructive as a general overview of the 14th–16th centuries history of the Polish lands and the Great Duchy of Lithuania, as well as of the related historiographical debates. As such it could undoubtedly be used as teaching material for graduate students. Furthermore, Frost deconstructs several ideological pitfalls and shortcomings of Hrushevsky's narrative that result from his endeavour to tell the only Ukrainian version of the story. For instance, Frost underlines the cooperation between Polish, Lithuanian, and Ruthenian elites during the 15th–16th centuries, which is something Hrushevsky apparently ignored. For Frost such “blindness” was determined by Hrushevsky's “populist inclinations and disdain for the role played by the Rus' nobility in the general development of Ukrainian history” (p. LXXXVIII). Despite these meticulous deconstructions, Frost acknowledges that Hrushevsky's volume is testimony to a “formidably learned scholar with [...] a great talent for documentary analysis” (p. LXXI). As such Hrushevsky's attempt in this volume at “bridging the gap between the fall of the Kyivan Rus' and the outbreak of the Cossack revolt” by “unmaking of Polish history” is still worth reading today.

With this appeal, the reader moves to the first chapter of the fourth volume of Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, entitled "Occupation of the Ukrainian Lands by Lithuania and Poland". For Hrushevsky it was important to stress that the period between the decline of the Kyivan Rus' and the rise of Cossackdom was a time of "enservment of the Ukrainian land and the Ukrainian people to the Polish nationality not only in the cultural or political spheres but also in the social and economic ones" (p. 1). Following this line of thinking, Hrushevsky describes the first stage of this transformation as being connected with the "annexation of the Chernihiv, Kyiv, and Podilia" lands by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Ukrainian historian affirms that "the occupation was definitely not a conquest, not an invasion by a foreign power, but rather an annexation, a gathering of the Rus' lands" (p. 67).

Galicia instead remained in an uncertain position. The history of Galicia as well as of other Ruthenian lands at the beginning of the 15th century in the context of the Polish-Hungarian confrontations and the Polish-Lithuanian union negotiations remains in the focus of the second chapter in this volume: "The Ukrainian Lands under Lithuanian and Polish Rule at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century". In the third chapter of the volume, Hrushevsky renders the story of the post-Krėva Union negotiations between the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, concentrating mostly on political events until the early 16th century. Here he pays particular attention to the Ruthenian irritanda and dissatisfaction connected with the legal inequality of the "Lithuanian and Ruthenian nationalities" (p. 124). Hrushevsky testifies with sorrow that attempts, such as that of the Hlynsky rebellion in the 1530s, "to place the Ruthenian element in a position of primacy" (p. 199), ultimately failed. Under the pressure of the Polish influence, the "Rus' aristocracy [...] was even ceasing to constitute any sort of coherent political group" (p. 199).

These tendencies acquired new dynamics under the threat posed by the Crimean Horde, which is the subject of the fourth chapter of Hrushevsky's book. Depicting in detail the growing menace coming from the Black Sea littoral, the Ukrainian historian mostly blames the Polish authorities for the failed defence strategy. Hrushevsky does not forget to place some of the blame also on his contemporary Polish counterparts, who, as historians, mistakenly glorify the merits of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian rulers: These "defenders of culture and civilization" in the "struggle against the East [...] proved incapable even of the kind of warfare against the steppe barbarians that was waged by the pretty and humble Rus' princes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries" (p. 231). For the Ukrainian population, according to Hrushevsky, self-defence was the only way to protect itself. The Cossacks filled the gap left by the official authorities (p. 232).

The fifth and the last chapter of the book is devoted to the processes of the incorporation of the majority of the Ukrainian lands into the territories of the Polish crown in the sixteenth century. The account deals mostly with the political

confrontations on the eve of the Union of Lublin (1569). In Hrushesvky's reading, it was the competition with the Rus' counterparts and reasons of state security which incited Lithuanian magnates to seek the union with Poland that resulted in the annexation of the majority of Ukrainian lands: "And poor, unfortunate Lithuania feared to move or raise its head lest it call down still more misfortunes upon itself" (p. 289).

As aptly described by Robert Frost in the abovementioned introductory essay, such eloquent passages were aimed at counterbalancing the Polish master narrative by introducing the notion of Ukraine as "a nation with history". On the way to constructing this populist version of history, several shortcomings were almost unavoidable. Some of them are indicated in the introductory essays, others are mentioned by LEONII VOITOVYCH in his "Addendum: A Commentary on Volume 4, Chapter 1 of the 'History of Ukraine-Rus'", devoted to the history of the integration of the Rus' lands into Poland by 1340 or 1349. Voitovych objects to this chronological framework by analysing the political activity of Prince Iurii-Boleslav Troidenovych of Galicia-Volhynia in the 14th century.

Situating Hrushevsky's arguments in the context of contemporary historiographical debates about this period is also the purpose of the extended bibliography provided in the volume by one of the leading Kyivan experts in the field, OLENA RUSYNA. The list is quite impressive, it includes the relevant titles in Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, and is thematically structured.

In general, this volume is a must-read, not only for experts in Ukrainian studies, but undoubtedly also for students and all those interested in East European history. It remains a masterpiece of Ukrainian scholarship brilliantly translated into English. Set in the context of contemporary historiographical debates, the fourth volume is a useful tool for reflecting on the major problems of premodern societies, as well as on the issues of historical writing at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.