ATTEMPTS AT THE "NATIONALIZATION" OF RUSSIAN AND SOVIET HISTORY IN THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT SLAVIC STATES

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No people want to remain without their own history, yet no national history is possible without its own myths. Soviet historiography insisted on the existence in the past of a strong, common "Ancient Russian people" and an "Ancient Russian State" (*Drevnerusskoe gosudarstvo*). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, three newly independent Slavic states found that they did not need the fragmented histories of a ruined empire, but their own glorified and undivided histories providing a spiritual path to the future. This was absolutely impossible without the creation of new myths.

How can this process be studied correctly? What kind of theories and documents should be given preference?

First of all, it's very important to understand that the very term "nationalization" has a double meaning in the Russian mentality, implying not only state-citizenship, but also an ethnic context. According to the latter meaning, it is the nationalization (ethnization) of history that best provides a key to understanding the modern identification process in post-Soviet Slavic states.

Unusual events, such as the disintegration of the Soviet empire, require a non-traditional complex of sources. Usually history is "rewriting," but not necessarily by professional historians, who only carry out orders – not only from above, but also (especially in revolutionary times) from below. As a historian of revolutions, I prefer to use non-official documents from many origins. But first of all the contradictory, emotionally tense and absurd-looking events and evidence of the "nationalization of history" must be studied without attempts to judge, blame or teach. Unfortunately, Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian historians are now very often split by their political preferences

and remain nationalistic, not scientific, in their intentions. I will try to avoid any manifestation of nationalism and remain neutral in order to better understand the essence of the process.

1. THE REVOLUTIONARY DIVISION OF A COMMON HERITAGE: SOME THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The Soviet ideology was ambiguous: it displayed both international-communist and imperial-messianic elements. Accordingly, the "consciousness" of *homo-sovieticus* was usually divided, being both "internationalist" and "patriotic" at the same time. There were too many nationalistic feelings – not only those of the great-power type,[1] but also "separatist" – under the official Soviet rhetoric. For persons of such a mentality, the collapse of the Soviet Union was not a tragedy but a chance for better self-identification.

Many scholars well understood that the Soviet system was a deeply traditionalist one. They were waiting for new or renewed nationalist inspirations that would automatically replace the Marxist-Leninist ideology, allowing former communist rulers to become leaders of free and independent nations. Such a prophecy came true in part.

The greatest difficulties would originate from the "chaos in mentality," connected with the main factor of human identification not destroyed by the communists, the national (ethnic) one. What happened was not a pure political revolution, but a prolonged and complex "crisis of empire,"[2] comparable to the Rus-

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1 A. Yanov, *The New Russian Right: Right-Wing Ideologies in the Contemporary USSR* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1978); J. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983); S. Carter, *Russian Nationalism. Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); E. Kulavig, *Russisk nationalisme: 1986-1992* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1995); Y.M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2000).

2 V.P. Buldakov, "Revolution or Crisis of Empire," *Bulletin of Aberdeen Center for Soviet and East European Studies* 4 (June 1993); Idem, "Imperstvo i rossiiskaia revoliutsionnost'," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 1-2

sian revolution of 1917-1921 or "Time of Troubles" in the 17th century.[3] The situation was worsened by "archaization" or primitivization of the mentality and social stress, producing psychopathological changes in the behaviour of masses. The "revenge of the past"[4] was terrible, especially for the Slavic peoples of the former Soviet empire. Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians were not ready for civilized divorce.

The Communist empire (like most modernizing states) viewed itself both as a creator and a distributor of resources, and as a promoter of new values. In international isolation, the Stalinist regime tried to physically eliminate national elite groups and impose new ones from the center. Ultimately, however, the modernization process itself creates new elites whose cooperation is necessary for governance.

This way was typical of the 20th century. The legitimizing ideologies of developing countries often promote new values which normally include elements of uniform legal codes, egalitarianism, secularization, the creation of disciplined workforces, and the very idea that the state itself deserves man's highest loyalty. For these reasons also, the modernizing state is a threat to traditional national elites. Likewise, the spread of the bureaucratic apparatus into new areas of social life and into pe-

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(1997); Idem, "Krakh SSSR ili krizis gosudarstvennosti," *Rossiia v usloviiakh transformatsii. Istoriko-politologicheskii seminar. Materialy*, No. 18-19 (Moskva, 2000), pp. 37-40.

3 As a rule, this approach has been usually realized by Western historians [See: T. Hasegawa, "Perestroika in Historical Perspective: Revaluations," in T. Ito, ed., *The World Confronts Perestroika: The Challenge to East Asia* (Sapporo: SRC, 1991); D.V. Threadgold, "Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Revolution of 1991," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 25:3 (1994); S. Kotkin, "1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks," *Journal of Modern History* 70:2 (1998); R.V. Daniels, "The Process of Revolution in Russia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 46:3 (May/June 1999)], but steadily ignored by post-Soviet authors, too greatly impressed by modern Russian "reforms."

4 R.G. Suny, *Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

ripheral regions, and the inculcation of its power by the new state ideology all serve to undermine the traditional power structure and traditional elites.

This process, therefore, involves a dual struggle for control of resources and values between bureaucratic groups and political organizations at the center, on the one hand, and between central and local elites, on the other. Local elites are of two types: controllers of material resources and controllers of communication – intellectuals, writers, journalists, and the avid consumers of their writings, namely the intelligentsia.

This dual struggle for influence at the center and for control over the periphery takes on added significance when competitive elites are ethnically or linguistically different. The ability to mobilize large numbers of people around symbols and values of high emotional potential is a major resource for political parties in their struggle against the controllers of the bureaucracy, instruments of violence, land, and wealth. When elites in conflict come from different cultural, linguistic, or religious groups, the symbolic resources used to mobilize people tends to emphasize these differences.[5]

Soviet historiography never admitted the separate historical existence of the "peoples of Russia," rather, it insisted that the Bolsheviks had transformed these peoples into a "new historical community" – the so-called Soviet people. Now, the non-Russian nationalities are trying to destroy these historical ties, which they view as a dead end. This is the "usual" revolutionary process, inspired, as a rule, by state and social, rather than purely ethnic discords from the Soviet past.[6] The fact that there has been a vast spectrum of complex ethno-fantasies and ethnophobias is also not surprising.[7]

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5 P.R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi, Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 302-303.

6 The same situation existed in 1917-1921. See: V.P. Buldakov, "Krizis imperii i revoliutsionnyi natsionalizm nachala XX v.," *Voprosy istorii* 1 (2000); Idem, "Krizis imperii i osobennost' mezhetnicheskikh konfliktov v Rossii v svete arkhaizatsii massovogo soznaniia," *Problemy istorii i istoricheskogo soznaniia* (Tomsk, 2001).

7 See: V.P. Buldakov, "Imperskie etnofobii," *Rodina* 7 (1995).

In the mid-1990s, many scholars pointed out that the identification processes in the newly independent Slavic states had been too slow. Many people were taken with Gorbachev's idea of being linked up to a "world civilization" and were waiting for "internationalist" Western support. Additional factors include the internal contradictions within post-Soviet societies and the absence of feelings of solidarity – the latter usually requires a sense of external menace.[8] Such fear, as Soviet propagandist tradition demonstrates, may be cultivated. Recently, the sense of external threat has increased, not diminished.[9]

At present there is a vast literature on the problems of national identification in the former Soviet peoples. In 1999, a collection of essays devoted especially to the "nationalization" of a common Russian-Soviet history was published in Moscow. In the Introduction titled "Our Past" and "Other's Past" (*"Svoe" i "chuzhoe proshloe"*), editors K. Eimermacher and G. Bordiugov tried to analyse the current state of ethnic mobilization. They pointed out that the current "rewriting of history" tends to make "our" history "older" and more "civilized."[10] This statement is banal rather than original. Unfortunately, the articles devoted to the Slavic peoples are particularly weak. Some authors tend to laugh at the most naive attempts at "nationalization" of the past (this term was introduced in this book by S. Iskhakov).

In history, national identity rarely manifests itself in a pure and complete theoretical form. Nationalism offers the cornerstone of a personal identity rooted in images and passions sometimes very distant from reality.[11] Ethnic identity entails a search

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8 "Mezhdunarodnyi proekt 'Uregulirovanie etnicheskikh konfliktov v postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh,'" *Biulleten'* 4 (January 1995), p. 6.

9 A. Malashenko, "Ksenofobii v postsovetskom obshchestve (vmesto vvedeniia)," [http://pubs.carnegie.ru/books/1999/04am-gv/default.asp?n=02introduction.asp].

10 *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh* (Moskva, 1999), pp. 13-16.

11 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1996).

for an image constructed by symbols. As a rule it is a spontaneous but highly emotional process.[12] Modern scholars have pointed out that the former Soviet peoples have attempted to identify themselves in primordial terms;[13] this process deliberately sets peoples apart and exacerbates interethnic tensions.[14] This primordial identification is part of the sub-conscious of the modern Slav. It also seems to be characteristic of all Slavic states that emphasize ethnic segregation and this primitive nationalism appears as a reaction to Soviet "internationalist" education. The "natural" desire for political and cultural self-expression was too long suppressed by the Communist rulers and, thus, the inevitable negative reaction to old discredited myths has surfaced.[15] Modern transformation not occasionally took place according to syncretic consciousness, in which the new idol must immediately occupy the place of the old one.

The apocalyptic mood, wide spread throughout the CIS, must also be taken into consideration. In 1993, the disintegration of the USSR was considered a "national catastrophe" by 36.4 % of Russians and by 28 % of Ukrainians.[16]

Recently, the primordial scenario in the CIS has been corrected by the globalization process. At this time, no one in the former Soviet Union, particularly ex-communists, sees themselves in purely primordial terms. Rather, every "politically conscious" autochthonic Slav would like to have not only a na-

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12 See: J.F. Stack, Jr., ed., *The Primordial Challenge: Ethnicity in the Contemporary World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1986).

13 V. Shnirel'man, "Tsennost' proshlogo: etnotsentristskie mify, identichnost' i etnopolitika," [http://publ.carnegie.ru/books/2000/10am/default.asp?n=01vs.asp].

14 V.P. Buldakov, "Prava cheloveka ili prava liudei?" *Rossiia v usloviiakh transformatsii. Istoriko-politologicheskii seminar*, No. 10 (Moskva, 2001).

15 See: *Natsional'naia pravaia prezhde i teper': istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki* (St. Peterburg, 1993).

16 I. Isakova, "Russian-Ukrainian Relations: In Search of Optimum," in T. Ito and S. Tabata, eds., *Between Disintegration and Reintegration: Former Socialist Countries and the World since 1989* (Sapporo: SRC, 1994), p. 78.

tional, but also a European identity. The nationalization of the past is employed to produce such manifestations.

As a rule, the national identities of the former Soviet Union are complicated and multi-layered. They include government attempts to create a new, quasi-national identity acceptable to the bureaucracy, a patriotic intelligentsia, shocked by the decline in its own status, the desire to restore "great power" status to Russia and the use of this mood as imitative patriotism ("back to Soviet Union") by the communist opposition, and the chauvinism of a population suffering great economic hardships.

To analyse the current identification process one must pay attention to the collective fears for the future that often exacerbate ethnic conflict.[17] How is the modern "nationalization" of history connected with this tendency? Do modern historians recognize the danger of this latent aggressive nationalism?

Surely most people passively tend to treat the idea of nation as a possibility to view in ethnic terms the "citizen's" own power. At present, radical nationalist feelings mostly influence the young generation and the authorities first, before the common people. In this connection, the mainstream of the nationalization of history progresses via schools. Thus, the most reliable source for studying the effectiveness of these attempts is textbooks. However, no free market of independently written textbooks currently exists.

As a rule, textbooks are written by leading scholars and university professors, and the ministries of education try to control their content. Textbooks thus written are greatly influenced by political agendas. However, the young generation, on its side, now prefers the blockbuster version of the past. As a result the current rewriting of native history is not so much a purposeful as a mostly spontaneous process[18] with its own peculiarities in each Slavic country.

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17 M.E. Brown, O.R. Cote, Jr., S.M. Linn-Jones, S.E. Miller, eds., *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), p. 126.

18 V.P. Buldakov, "Mozhno li ugadat' vektor dvizheniia, nakhodias' v tsentre vodovorota?" *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 6 (1996). The proposals by leading historians to pay attention during the education process to the infor-

2. RUSSIA: THE CORRECTION OF THE GREAT-POWER IMAGE OF THE PAST

The history of Russia written during the Soviet period was not the story of the country and its peoples, but mostly a narrative about a powerful state and its rulers. The great myth officially eulogizing the Bolsheviks and latently admiring the tsars who united the "Russian" lands and fortified an undivided state has been greatly weakened but not overthrown. Now, not the Bolsheviks, but the tsars, have become the symbols of Russian power. The latter seem not to have been lost forever, only damaged. The imperial mentality and psychology has been a continuous strand in modern Russia.[19]

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia formally lost the genuine roots of its statehood, which remained in Ukraine. The very source of the Russian state seems to have been annexed by a "foreign" power. This situation may be interpreted as a historiographical collapse. Of course, it is possible to reduce the tension by the "discovery" of a new ancient Russian "capital" in Novgorod, now once again officially referred to as the Great (*Velikii*) Novgorod. This city can also serve as the symbol of the old Russian (quasi-parliamentarian) democracy. But the mass consciousness ignores such ideological transformations.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many former Soviet historians, particularly "historians" of the CPSU, transformed themselves into historians of the traditional Russian state and "patriotic" defenders of the Fatherland. They promoted a great wave of xenophobia, ethno-phobia, and anti-Semitism. The old internationalist dogma was replaced by Russian nationalism. They did not rediscover national history, but the possibility of identifying themselves with the new rulers. Such chameleon-

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mation, to getting pupils "from the side," is not accidental: "The interview with academician A.O. Chubar'ian," *Rodina* 6 (2002), pp. 8, 10.

19 V.P. Buldakov, "The Imperial Mentality and Psychology in the USSR and Its Consequences," in J. Morison, ed., *Ethnic and National Issues in Russian and East European History* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 2000), pp. 230-259.

like historians can have a great, although non-articulated, influence, not only on society, but on other historians.

Traditionalists represent another kind of Great-Russian "patriots." In the 1980s and 1990s, they were inspired by the idea of Russophobia.[20] At present, former communist party historians and traditionalists, exhausted by the enduring polemics, try to cooperate ideologically against the common enemy – the democrats and Westernizers in the fields of politics and history. The theory of national-bolshevism pretends to provide a new emphasis on imperial Russian power[21] – in a hidden way, of course. In addition, academic means for eulogizing the Russian empire also exist.[22]

The creation of a myth cannot come as an order from above. Its appearance must be stimulated from below. This influence may be very destructive because of the reanimation of the most primitive social prejudices and feelings. In Moscow in October 1992, 17.8 % of respondents believed in a worldwide Zionists conspiracy, while 25 % did not exclude this kind of possibility.[23] This tendency has not decreased,[24] and new conspiratorial theories and hysterias have continued to appear.[25] It is not surprising that the old traditional syncretic consciousness has been awakened, as this was the part of total revolutionary "archaization" of the mentality. As part of that tendency, recent polls show that the Russian population now trust the clergy rather than bureaucrats.

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20 R. Horvath, "The Spectre of Russophobia," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 25:2 (1998), pp. 199-222.

21 A. Dugin, "Metafizika natsional-bol'shevizma," [http://elem 2000/virtualave/net/8 natbol.htm].

22 See: L.B. Alaev, "Imperia: Fenomen ili etap razvitiia?" *Voprosy istorii* 4-5 (2000).

23 R.J., Brym, A. Degtiarev, "Anti-Semitism in Moscow: Results of an October 1992 Survey," *Slavic Review* 52:1 (1993), pp. 4-6.

24 See: A. Gorianin, "Pletetsia li zagovor protiv Rossii," *Russkaia mysl'* (April 4, 1996).

25 M. Hagemeister, "Mif o zagovore protiv Rossii," *Mify i mifologiia v sovremennoi Rossii* (Moskva, 2000), p. 92.

Some publicists argue that Orthodox Christianity may become a new ideology and "civil religion" could fill the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of Marxism-Leninism. It is true that the state and church need each other. But Putin, like El'tsin, has tried to use the Russian Orthodox Church only to strengthen his own power. The Church, facing internal challenges and external competition, wants to strengthen its position in society. Citizens, for their part, really need religion to provide a new sense of faith. But they feel that the aims of governmental authorities and the values of society are often at odds. The Russian Orthodox Church has too many internal problems that need to be resolved through reforms for it to become a "civil religion." Further, cooperation between civil and spiritual authorities cannot be beneficial to the national identification of modern Russia because the Church remains a housemaid of the state.[26] Thus, some radical publicists, in their attempts at identification, prefer a pagan, pre-Christian legacy.

Nevertheless, some scholars reinforce the idea of the unity of the church and state in modern Russia, idealizing their cooperation in past. Recently, the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences has held a series of conferences devoted to this topic. This testifies to the preservation of the ideocratic view of Russian history as a whole.

In August of 1996, President El'tsin suddenly declared that democratic Russia needed a "national idea." In response, a flow of words poured from publicists and scholars.[27] But the result was discouraging. Appeals to restore conciliarism (*sobornost'*) and follow the principles of "Orthodoxy, autocracy, populism" (*Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost')* prevailed. However, no one remembered the Holy Rus', and the historical fate of Russia was characterized as "unhappy," "ill-starred," "sorrowful," "oppressed," and "tattered."[28] This was not a search for a

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26 See: N.K. Gvosdev, "The New Party Card? Orthodoxy and the Search for Post-Soviet Russian Identity," *Problems of Post-Communism* (November/December, 2000), pp. 29-38.

27 See: *Rossiia v poiskakh natsional'noi idei. Analiz pressy* (Moskva, 1997).

28 *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (October 31, December 5, 1996); *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (November 19, December 24, 1996); *Moskovskie novosti* (October 15, 1996).

national idea but an outcry without any historical background. Instead of providing an image of a strong and peaceful power, it presented a portrait of a weak and irritable one.

At present, two "positive" scenarios have emerged. Ex-communist authors have proposed the restoration of the "arch-typical dimension" of the national idea, including the full spectrum of human values.[29] Liberal publicists, on the other hand, have tried to present an optimistic picture of the Russian past through a comparison with West Europe. In contrast to ex-communist scholars who blame Western propaganda for creating an inferiority complex in Russians, liberal authors pointed out the internal origin of this complex as connected with the masochistic psychology of the Russian intelligentsia.[30]

It is useless to await a correction of the Russian past via direct propaganda. The mainstream of this "renewed" Russian history came from "king's stories" and other popular works. Monarchical feelings, openly supported by El'tsin[31] and widespread throughout pulp literature, have now become a part of academic historiography. It has thrown the mass historical consciousness backward and made the process of national identification more difficult.

The theme of empire in history may be a good indicator of the modern identification process in Russia. The interest in this topic is great,[32] but ambiguous, as is the whole of public opinion. Some pro-communist publicists and politicians have pointed out that all (now more than 100![33]) textbooks are non-patriotic.[34] In contrast, liberal analysts pointed out that the emphasis

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29 H. Kozin, "Identifikatsionnyi krizis Rossii," *Svobodnaia mysl'* 21:5 (2002), p. 54.

30 A.B. Gorianin, *Mify o Rossii i dukh natsii* (Moskva, 2002).

31 A.B. Evans, "Yel'tsin and Russian Nationalism," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 21:1 (1994), pp. 29-43.

32 L.S. Gatagova, "Imperiia: identifikatsiia problemy," *Istoricheskie issledovaniia v Rossii: tendentsii poslednikh let* (Moskva, 1996), pp. 332-353.

33 68 textbooks from this number had been approved by the Ministry of Education. See: *Rodina* 6 (2002), p. 8.

34 A. Tarasov, "Obnovlenie gumanitarnogo obrazovaniia: molodym 'promyvaiut mozgi' i naviazyvaiut novuiu ideologiiu," *Svobodnaia mysl'* 1 (2000).

on empire in textbooks prevailed over the affirmation of ideas of tolerance and non-violence. The author of the survey blamed the governmental authorities for replacing liberal values and for eulogizing for a strong state as the main achievement of Russian history.[35]

In reality, most of the textbooks in question are obsolete.[36] Their authors, in accordance with Soviet-internationalist customs, prefer to connect the theme of empire with the non-Russian peoples, not with state government policy as a whole. Recently, the great differences in the approaches of these authors have been revealed. In a textbook written under the auspices of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, A.N. Sakharov emphasized the impracticability of the Russian empire and autocracy.[37] In reality, the very term empire was seldom used in this textbook.[38] It is interesting to note that in another textbook, also written under an arrangement with the same A.N. Sakharov, any hint of the oppression of non-Russian peoples was excluded. Thus, the non-Russians preserve their own culture, traditions, and customs.[39] As a rule, monarchist tendencies in textbooks are attacked in the liberal press.[40]

Nevertheless, the problem of the non-Russian peoples seems to be played down in the textbooks.[41] As a result, representa-

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35 "Revoliutsiia i grazhdanskaia voina v novykh shkol'nykh uchebnikakh po istorii," [http://gw.yspu.yar.ru/vestnik/uchenue_praktikam/3_3].

36 "The Interview with academician A.O. Chubar'ian," p. 8.

37 L.A. Berezhnaia, "Tema imperii v vuzovskikh uchebnikakh po istorii Rossii," [http://www.empires.ru/textbook/seminars_ru/id/433178.html].

38 See: A.N. Sakharova, ed., *Istoriia Rossii s nachala XVIII do kontsa XIX veka* (Moskva, 1996), p. 106.

39 A.N. Bokhanov, *Istoriia Rossii (XIX – nachalo XX veka). Uchebnik dlia 8-9 klassov* (Moskva, 1998), pp. 7-9.

40 S. Kirillova, "Figura v protsesse restavratsii. Shkol'nikov uchat liubvi k tsariam," *Moskovskie novosti* 43 (1999).

41 See: L.I. Semennikova, *Rossiia v mirovom soobshchestve tsivilizatsii* (Moskva, 1998), pp. 183-185; A.A. Danilov, L.G. Kosulina, *Istoriia Rossii. XX vek. Uchebnik dlia 9 klassa obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii* (Moskva, 2001), pp. 249-250; O.V. Volobuev, V.V. Zhuravlev, A.P. Nenarokov, A.T. Stepanishchev, *Istoriia Rossii. XX vek. Uchebnik dlia 9 klassa obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchebnykh zavedenii* (Moskva, 2001).

tives of 20 republics and national districts (*natsional'nye okruga*) expressed their dissatisfaction, saying that the historical existence of the minorities had been ignored.[42]

In describing the sources of the crisis in Russian civilization, the author of the textbook has shown the defects in the national politics of the empire.[43] As a result, he was greatly criticized in the "patriotic" press. In June 2000, the Assembly of Peoples of Russia tried to persuade President Putin to protect the rights and liberties of non-Russian citizens.[44] Yet Putin seems to have only one "national" idea: "Russia will either be a great power or she will not exist at all."[45] This idea is absolutely destructive in a culturological sense.

In October 2000, the Government of Russian Federation approved a National program of education in support of a plan for the "restoration of the status of Russia as a great power in the world community" – but only "the spheres of education, culture, science, high technology and economics" are going "to cultivate the patriots of Russia." Independent commentators pointed out that the program had been declarative, and may have prepared the ground for the appearance of a "malignant myth."[46] In 2001, Premier M. Kas'ianov suddenly intruded into a discussion about textbooks on native history, expressing his dissatisfaction with its "old" terminology and topics. It seems that the authorities had decided that the time to control the identification process had come.

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42 J. Matloff, "Istoriiu Chinghiz Khana pishut zanovo. Rossiia peresmatrivaet shkol'nye uchebniki," [http://www.kbst.ru/money/31-03-2000/humanity/4-1.html].

43 I.N. Ionov, *Rossiiskaia tsivilizatsiia i istoki ee krizisa. IX - nachalo XX v. Posobie dlia uchashchikhsia 10-11 klassov* (Moskva, 1994), p. 259.

44 "O natsional'nom samochuvstvii narodov Rossii i sostoianii i perspektivakh gosudarstvennoi natsional'noi politiki," Spetsial'nyi doklad prezidentu Rossiiskoi Federatsii, [http://regions.ng.ru/time/2001-01-30/1_national.html].

45 *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (December 30, 1999).

46 E.V. Dolginova, "V dni vseobshchei garmonizatsii," [http://ps.1september.ru/1999/78/2-1.htm].

It is interesting to note how the Director of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, A.N. Sakharov, reacted to this. In March 2002, in a "nonofficial" meeting between President Putin and "prominent" scholars, he explained that Russia had now entered a period of "post-revolutionary stabilization." In April, in a speech on a TV-1 program, Sakharov added that a stabilization period for a great country with a great history requires a wise ruler. He meant Putin. Such sycophantic authors do not help the search for a new Russian identity. Rather, all the efforts of Soviet historians in the past to lick the boots of the Communist rulers turned out contrary to expectations.

About 100 years ago, the prominent Russian historian V. Kliuchevskii described pre-revolutionary Russia, saying that "The state swelled, as the people grew poor." Now, Western analysts point out that with Putin's ascendancy there is growing evidence that Russia's leadership is set on repeating that historical pattern.[47] Putin's essay on Russia at the turn of the millennium invoked traditional Russian ideas of a strong paternalistic state that guides society and defends it from its enemies.

Once again the whole process of rewriting of Russian history has concentrated on the story of the rulers, not the ruled. The history of culture is on the periphery of its study.[48] It separates human values from the context of historical events[49] and hurts the search for a new Russian identity. As a result, the non-democratic scenario became real, with the political elites' nostalgia for the lost superpower status being reinforced by the mass nostalgia for lost territory.

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47 T.E. Graham, "The Fate of the Russian State," *Demokratizatsiia* 8:3 (2000), p. 371.

48 Iu.S. Riabtsev, "Shkol'naia otechestvennaia istoriia i russkaia kul'tura," *Prepodavanie istorii v shkole* 7 (1997).

49 See: P. Spencer, H. Wollman, "Blood and Sacrifice: Politics versus Culture in the Construction of Nationalism," in K.J. Brehony, N. Rassool, eds., *Nationalisms: Old and New* (Washington, London, New York: MacMillan Press, 1999), pp. 64-87.

3. UKRAINE: THE SEARCH FOR A GLORIFIED ANCESTRY AND WESTERNIZED STATEHOOD

The changes in recent historical writing in Ukraine are even more noticeable. They reflect a range of objectives and a new historical agenda.

Amid the economic chaos and social disorientation present after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the unexpectedly rapid attainment of political independence, Ukrainian historians felt obliged to bolster Ukrainian patriotism to provide the new state with satisfactory historical foundations. They also tried to fill so-called "white spots" and illuminate some aspects of the Ukrainian past that had been neglected or falsified under the Soviet regime. Of course, they also had to catch up with Western historiographical trends,[50] modernize the academic agenda and re-educate the young generation. Nevertheless, national identity remained problematic.[51]

The main peculiarity of the recent "nationalization" of history in Ukraine is results from the fact that the modern historians have a great predecessor in M. Hrushevskii. A vulgarized[52] – not genuine – version of Hrushevskii's scheme now dominates Ukrainian historiography.[53] According to this interpretation, the milestones of the Ukrainian history are Kievan Rus',

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50 S.I. Appatov, V.A. Dubovyk, "Amerykans'ki vcheni pro nezalezhnu Ukraïnu (1989-1992 rr.)," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2 (1995), pp. 51-62; V.Y. Tsybul's'kyi, "Deiaki problemy zovnishn'opolitychnoï diial'nosti uriadu B. Khmel'nyts'koho u zarubyzhnii ystoryografiï (1945-1990 rr.)," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 4 (1995), pp. 77-86.

51 P. Longsworth, "Ukraine: History and Nationality," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78:1 (January, 2000), p. 116.

52 O. Mikhailov, "Etot smutnyi ob"ekt zhelanii," [http://www.dnews.donetsk.ua/40/mir.htm].

53 Modern Ukrainian historians try to persuade themselves of the existence of an uninterrupted continuity and community of pre-Revolutionary, emigrant and current ideas and approaches to the "Ukrainian problem" in the Russian empire from the beginning to the end of the 20th century. See: V.H. Sarbei, " 'Ukraïns'ke pytannia' v Rosiis'kii imperiï ochyma doslidnykiv pochatku i kintsia XX stolittia," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2 (1996), pp. 35-45.

the Duchy of Galitzia-Volyn', the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Cossack Hetmanate of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the Ukrainian Republic of 1917-1920. Interruptions in this continuity have been interpreted as times of suffering under foreign rulers. Modern Ukrainian historiography, as scholars have pointed out, has returned to where it left off in the 1910-1920s.[54] One Western scholar tends to reject the very existence of a separate world-recognized Ukrainian history.[55] However, in the Ukrainian textbooks, the only visible innovation looks like an attempt to reject all Russian history, especially Soviet, and create an image of Ukraine as a Russian colony.[56] It also seems incompatible with arguments concerning the great religious and cultural influence of Ukraine over Russia in the 17th and 18th centuries.[57]

The other part of Hrushevskii's legacy uses the primordialist scenario to search for a modern Ukrainian identity. For the new Ukrainian nationalists, the Russians are not Slavs but Finns or Tatars. They claim that the Ukrainians and their "*mova*" (language) are the oldest in the world.[58] In this connection, some Russian authors have affirmed that the new Ukrainian elite cannot exist without permanently opposing "the pure Slavs-Ukrai-

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54 See: Z.E. Kohut, "History as a Battleground: Russian-Ukrainian Relations and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary Ukraine," F. Starr, ed., *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, London, 1994); V. Vasil'ev, "Ot kievskoi Rusi k nezavisimoi Ukraine: Novye kontseptsii ukrainskoi istorii," *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh* (Moskva, 1999); A. Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Haven, London, 2000).

55 Mark Von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?" *Slavic Review* 54:3 (1995), pp. 658-673.

56 See: F.H. Turchenko, P.P. Panchenko, S.M. Tymchenko, *Noveishaia istoriia Ukraïni*, Vol. 2 (1945-1995), 11 Kl. (Kyïv, 1995), p.186.

57 O.M. Shevchenko, "Ukraïna i Rosiia u svitli relihiino-kul'turnykh vzaemyn druhoï polovyny XVII – XVIII st.," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 1 (1996), pp. 82-88.

58 See: Iu. Lypa, *Pryznachennia Ukraïny* (Lviv, 1991), pp. 39, 119, 127, 164; *Ukrainskii iazyk dlia nachinaiushchikh* (Kyïv, 1992); S. Plachinda, *Slovar' drevneukrainskoi mifologii* (Kyïv, 1993); R.V. Manekin, "Ukraina: natsional'naia samobytnost' i natsionalizm," *Evraziiskii vestnik* 12, [http://www.e-journal.ru/dissst1-12.html].

nians" (who founded the great European state *Kievskaia Rus'*) to "the Finno-Ugrian community" (who founded the Russian empire and repressed the Ukrainians).[59] This is an attempt to simplify the real historiographical process.

Academic Ukrainian historiography has tried to be reliable. The Director of the Institute of History of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, V. A. Smolii, declared "Any textbook must put the principles of historism and objectivity at its foundation..." But after this statement he added: "...National textbooks must be written in accordance with state interests."[60] It is important to note that the textbook for grades 7-8, edited by V. A. Smolii, stated: "Now the history of Ukraine is independent and not to be considered as a subordinate part of the history of the Russian empire... and the totalitarian state, the USSR."[61]

Of course, the Ukrainian rulers would like to construct an ethnocentric history, totally independent of Russia; radical nationalists dream of creating a center of Pan-Slavism in Kiev.[62] This, however, is not possible. Ukrainian society has never been homogeneous and it is now rather dangerous to ignore this.

Most modern theories of nationalism emphasize the complex, multidimensional, rather than primordialist, character of national identities that cannot be reduced to a single element. In Ukraine, many scholars tend to determine national identity on the basis of ethnic and linguistic criteria. There are now three main ethnic groups in Ukraine: Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians (40 % of the population), Russian-speaking Ukrainians (33-34 %), and Russian-speaking Great Russians (20-21 %).[63]

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59 S. Konstantinov, A. Ushakov, "Vospriiatie istorii narodov SSSR v Rossii i istoricheskie obrazy Rossii na postsovetskom prostranstve," *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskom gosydarstvakh* (Moskva, 1999), p. 84.

60 Mikhailov, "Etot smutnyi ob"ekt zhelanii."

61 This was particularly emphasized in a russophilic Crimean newspaper. See: *Krymskaia pravda* (July 14, 1999).

62 S. Sherman, "UNA-UNSO: Ukrainskii variant revolutsii," Gazeta. Ru [http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/5331/pro17.html].

63 Y. Hrytsak, "National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Lviv and Donetsk," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22 (1998), p. 263. Other data exists showing that more than 54% Ukrainians identify them-

History of Ukraine, edited by Smolii and published in 1997, is of particular interest because it was written by leading specialists of the National Academy of Sciences and approved as an educational textbook by the Ministry of Education. The book addresses the issue of the historical legitimacy of the modern Ukraine on almost every possible ground. The initial focus, however, is territorial rather than ethnic; the classical Greek settlements in the Crimea become part of the "history of the Fatherland," along with the Scythianland and the Scyths. Emphasis is placed on historical precedents for national independence: the Khmel'nitskii period is presented as one of national revolution comparable to the contemporaneous English revolution, and as a development that results in Ukrainian Cossack sovereignty. As every nation needs a sacred martyrology, Ukrainian historical sufferings are described in detail, including the collectivization famine. On the other side, the illustrations emphasize mostly Ukrainian medieval symbols and regalia. Some Western scholars have noted this contradiction.[64]

It is interesting that Stalin's dogma of the "reunification of Ukraine with Russia" in 1654 by the Act of *Pereiaslav Rada*, which brought the Khmel'nitskii Cossacks under Russian tutelage, is interpreted in the book as a "confederation alliance directed against the external enemy" in the form of a "nominal protectorate."[65] This is not correct. In reality it was a typical act of submission under medieval law.

Ukrainian scholars well understand their "historical" tasks: the strong modern nation must have powerful forerunners. It is true that contemporary national self-respect usually demands that the nation not be presented as inferior to any other. However, the situation in Ukraine (as in Russia and Belorussia) is a peculiar one. This is the main reason for focusing on the Ukrai-

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selves as Russian-speaking, and 83% of Russians and 71% of Ukrainians read Russian newspapers, while only 35% of Ukrainians and 7% of Russians use the Ukrainian press. See: K. Frolov, "Russkii vopros na Ukraine," [http://www.pravoslavie.ru/analit/rusideo/rusvoprosukr.htm].

64 Longsworth, "Ukraine: History and Nationality," pp. 109-112.

65 *Istoriia Ukrainy* (Kyïv, 1997), p. 92.

nian Cossack, and a Cossack Department now exists in the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences. The Cossack image as brave, exhilarating, and joyful men is very important to the masculine national identity. Two books edited by the same Smolii[66] were devoted to this aim. As Smolii recognized in his Introduction to the first book, the enthusiasm of authors has been great but their theoretical framework has been inadequate. The authors' efforts to present the Cossacks as forerunners of a modern independent Ukrainian state seem naive.

The Cossack myth not only fortified self-respect, it also became a validation of the political independence of Ukrainian society. One book, devoted to the Cossack wars of the late 16th century, provides a good antidote to the national-romantic view of the Cossacks as forerunners of Ukrainian statehood. This author insists that the prospect for an independent Cossack state was destroyed not simply because of hostile outside interventions but by internal discord. Cossack wars are heroic episodes in the history of the Ukrainian people, nothing more.[67] The same conclusion was made by a Russian scholar, who considered the Cossacks as medieval knights in the same spirit as the descriptions by the famous writer N. Gogol'.[68] In reality, the Cossacks seem to be a part of a series of great disturbances and not creators of a national state.

The Cossack myth had been also greeted and amended in accordance with the Crimea question. Russian observers pointed out that the traditionally anti-Tatar character of Cossack mythology has been recently changed, with scholars now emphasizing the examples of their cooperation in the past.[69] In histor-

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66 *Zaporozhs'ke kozatstvo v ukraïns'kii istoriï, kul'tury ta natsyonal'niï samosvidomosty* (Kyïv, Zaporizhzhia, 1997); *Kozats'ki sichi (narysy z istoriï ukraïns'koho kozatstva XVI-XIX st.)* (Kyïv, Zaporizhzhia, 1998).

67 S. Lep'iavko, *Kozats'ki viiny kintsia XVI st. v Ukraïni* (Chernihiv, 1996), pp. 239-240.

68 R.V. Bagdasarov, "Zaporozhskoe rytsarstvo XV-XVIII vekov," *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 3 (1996).

69 I. Torbakov, "Istoricheskaia nauka kak instrument formirovaniia novykh gosudarstv," *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (December 20, 1996).

ical reality, Cossacks did not have the best relations with Poland. Now some authors are trying to argue that the Ukrainian Cossacks were incorporated into the *szlachta.*[70] It was so, but only partly. In any case, this fact may be interpreted first of all as evidence of the socio-cultural plasticity of the Slavic-Eurasian world, but not as an argument for the existence of a stable Cossack state.

In this context, the issue of the "main" national hero became very problematic. An extension of the apologia for Ivan Mazepa (the main antagonist to the "imperialist" Peter the Great)[71] is not profitable politically because of the stigmatisation of the latter as a traitor.[72] Thus historians try to present him as a complex person, as did N. Gogol'.[73] President L. Kuchma, for his part, preferred Bogdan Khmel'nitskii.[74] Accordingly, historians have tried to promote Khmel'nitskii as great politician, diplomat, and military leader, who created a Ukrainian nation.[75] In doing so, they have ignored the fact that historically Khmel'nitskii had close associations with the greatest wave of

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70 N. Iakovenko, *Ukraïns'ka shliakhta z kintsia XIV do seredyny XVII st. (Volyn' i Tsentral'na Ukraïna)* (Kyïv, 1993); Idem, "Early Modern Ukraine between East and West: Projectures of an Idea," in K. Matsuzato, ed., *Regions: A Prism to View the Slavic-Eurasian World: Towards a Conception of "Regionology"* (Sapporo: SRC, 2000); P.M. Sas, *Politychna kul'tura ukraïns'koho suspil'stva (kinets XVI - persha polovyna XVII st.)* (Kyïv, 1998). Such ideas are in contrast with the reasoning of other Ukrainian historians concerning the "liberation movement" against Poland in the late 1700s and early 1800s. See: H.Ia. Serhienko, "Pravoberezhna Ukraïna: vydrodzhennia kozats'koi derzhavnosti i vyzvol'nyi rukh proty nanuvannia Rechi Pospolytoï (80-90-ti rr. XVII – pochatok XVIII st.)," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 3 (1996), pp. 105-118.

71 V. Missan, *Rasskazy po istorii Ukrainy. Uchebnik dlia 5-go klassa* (Kyïv, 1997), p. 195.

72 See: N.I. Kostomarov, *Mazepa* (Moskva, 1992); Yu. Efremov, "Vozvrashchenie Mazepy. Ideologiia predatel'stva," [http://www.voskres.ru/history/mazepa.htm].

73 See: M. Hohol', " 'Rozdumy Mazepy'. Uporiadkuvav Dzyra Ia.I.," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 2 (2002), pp. 76-83.

74 L. Kuchma, "Liudyna nadzvychainoho masshtabu," *Literaturna Ukraïna* (December 28, 1995).

75 See special issue of *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 4 (1995).

anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukrainian history.[76] This was also in contrast to his previous image as a friend of Russia.

The short-lived Ukrainian statehood of 1917-1920 also seems less than persuasive as a historical forerunner or example.[77] The Ukrainian leaders of that time were not prepared for independence, which was not rooted in the mass mind or psychology.[78] The ruling socialists failed to resolve the national question,[79] and were swept away by the half-monarchist, half-Russophile government of hetman P.P. Skoropadskii. As a result, some of them later complained "From Hrushevskii to Skoropadskii, from Naumenko to Vinnichenko, from *ataman* Petliura to *ataman* Zelenyi – no one name is capable of firing the hearts and leaving a bright trace in history behind him."[80] Moreover, the scale of the pogroms carried out by Petliura's warriors[81] may be compared only with those by Khmel'nitskii's Cossaks.

At present, the radical nationalists from L'viv also argue that modern Russia, like the USSR and the tsarist government, is continuing to exploit Ukraine. Russia still possess the "ethnic Ukrainian" lands in the Kursk, Voronezh and Kuban' regions and does not acknowledge old "debts," namely, that the

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76 See: Bogdan Khmel'nitskii, *Letopis' evreia-sovremennika, Natana Khannovera, o sobytiiakh 1648-1652 godov v Malorossii voobshche i o sud'bakh edinovertsev v osobennosti* (Odessa, 1878).

77 See: V. Buldakov, "Semnadtsatyi vek i semnadtsatyi god," *Rodina* 8 (1996), pp. 104-107.

78 O.L. Kopylenko, *"Sto dniv" Tsentral'noï Rady* (Kyżv, 1992); O. Myronenko, *Svitoch ukraïn'koï derzhavnosti: Polityko-pravovyi analiz diial'nosti Tsentral'noï Rady* (Kyïv, 1995); V.F. Verstiuk, *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada. Navchal'nyi posybnyk* (Kyïv, 1997); Y. Nahaevs'kyi, *Istoryia ukraïns'koi derzhavy dvadtsatoho stolittia* (Kyïv, 1998); V.F. Soldatenko, *Ukraïns'ka revoliutsiia: Kontseptsyia ta istoryografiia (1918-1920)* (Kyïv, 1999).

79 See: S. Hol'del'man, *Lysty zhydivs'koho sotsiial-demokrata pro Ukraïnu. Materiialy do istorii ukraïns'ko-zhydivs'kykh vidnosyn za chas revoliutsii* (Viden', 1921).

80 See: V. Andriievs'kyi, *Z mynuloho. Tom 2. Vid Het'mana do Dyrektorii. Chastyna persha. Het'man* (Berlin, 1923).

81 See: S.A. Pavliuchenkov, *Voennyi kommunizm v Rossii: vlast' i massy* (Moskva, 1997), pp. 257-258.

Ukrainians created Russian culture and Soviet industry – just as St. Petersburg had been built by Cossacks hands, so Ukrainian prisoners in Stalin's camps (70 % of its inhabitants) built the mills of Vorkuta and Inta, and the hydro-electric power stations in Siberia. In response, defenders of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine threaten that "Big Ukraine" will soon thrust a new set of rules on "Western Ukraine" and strive for federalization of the state.[82]

The major peculiarity surrounding the modern historiographic situation in Ukraine leads one to be not optimistic for national identification: Ukrainian historians themselves soon overthrow the permanently raised new historical myths. First of all, it seems that the Khmel'nitskii epoch as well as the era of Hrushevskii were only periods of despairing and unsuccessful attempts at identification and not real milestones along the path to national statehood.

In the Ukrainian mass consciousness, the value of independence was fairly high only after the birth of the sovereign state, primarily because of a pragmatic, although unfounded, idea that political independence would immediately lead to material prosperity. The results of recent opinion polls are eloquent: only 15% of Ukrainian citizens would like their country to be in close association with the West, whereas 42% support some sort of integration with the CIS and Russia.[83] Irrespective of this and more dangerous for national identification is the unregulated flow of Russian-language mass culture.[84] Under these circumstances, as polls show, Ukrainians tend to dislike all other nations.[85] Thus, it threatens a final split in the consciousness of the new generation unbalanced by recent textbooks.

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82 V.V. Pomogaev, *Ukrainskii natsionalizm posle vtoroi mirovoi voiny: maski i litso* (Tambov, 2000), pp. 149-155, 190.

83 I. Torbakov, "Apart from Russia or Part of Russia: A Sad Saga of Ukrainian-Russian Relations," *Demokratizatsiia* 9:4 (2001), p. 593.

84 A. Okara, "Bor'ba za Ukrainu. Myshlenie provintsial'nymi kategoriiami vo vneshnei politike gibel'no dlia Rossii," *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (February 17, 1999).

85 Pomogaev, *Ukrainskii natsionalizm posle vtoroi mirovoi voiny*, pp. 170-186.

4. BELORUSSIA: THE GENUINE NATURE LOST IN THE SHADOW OF GREAT NEIGHBOURS

Professional Belorussian historians were not prepared for the "nationalization" of Russian and Soviet history. Thus, an initiative came from so-called national-democrats at the end of 1980s.

In 1991, Belorussians obtained statehood and embarked on creating a national history of their own. This happened thanks to favorable external factors: Russian democrats ideologically killed the communist regime in the Soviet Union, and the attempted military-communist coup failed, resulting in the proclamation of independence in former Soviet republics. The Belorussians acquired a national flag and coat of arms, symbolizing a new historical image – both non-communist and non-Russian. The new historical landmark, which Belorussians received instead of the communist deadlock at a comparatively low cost, has never been appreciated by the Belorussians at its true value. The people, free from communist mythology but still lacking a new mentality, were a shapeless mass, which could be swung either way.

With independence, much discussion centered around the closely interrelated concepts of the Belorussian "national idea," "national interest," and "national identity." In August 1992, an international conference was held on the subject of the formation of "a national consciousness" of the Belorussian masses. Soon afterward, the Academy of Sciences took upon itself the task of providing a "scientifically grounded Belorussian national idea" – the myth, according to Soviet tradition and terminology, must be "scientific." The newspaper "Zviazda" published a series of articles under the heading "We need a vitalising idea that will save Belarus."[86]

The cornerstone in this quest for a new conceptual base for nationhood was sought in the spheres of history and culture. The historically complex multi-confessional image of Belorussian society, located between great historic enemies – Orthodox

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86 *Zviazda* (March 18, 1993).

Russia and Catholic Poland – was now presented in a new light. It was found to possess a distinct mentality characterized by humanistic values, tolerance, the absence of extremism, and peaceful intentions towards its neighbours. Claims were advanced that Belorussian culture was a "synthesis" of Western and Eastern European cultures, without the extremes of Western individualism, on the one hand, or of dogmatic and collectivized Byzantism, on the other.[87] However, public awareness of these qualities was limited. Scholars found that only 5-6 % of the whole population possessed the necessary knowledge of the history of Belorussian national culture.[88] The new coat-of-arms and the national flag, adopted in 1991, harked back to the history of the medieval Duchy of Polotsk and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as well as to the 1918 Belorussian People's (*Narodnaia*) Republic that preceded the establishment of the Belorussian Soviet Republic. The past, it seemed, would become the prologue for a new future.

At the end of 1992 the government officially stressed the role of Belorussian national heritage in the reconstruction of the nation's damaged spirit.[89] Nationally minded historians were going to restore and deepen the national consciousness of the Belorussian people.[90] A draft of the "National conception of historical education in the Republic of Belarus" was prepared to present a new picture of the past, starting with the origin of the Belorussian people. The nation was no longer viewed as a branch of the "Ancient Russian" people, but as a Slavicized mixture of Slavic and Baltic tribes. Teachers of history were advised to replace such terms from pre-revolutionary Belorussia as "Western Rus'." "West-Russian populations," "West-Russian culture"

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87 V. Konan, "Arkhetypy belaruskaha mentalitetu: sproba rekanstruktsii pavodle natsyianal'nai mifalohii i kazachnaha epasu," *Farmyravannie i razvitsyo natsyianalnai samosviadomastsi Belarusi* (Minsk, 1992), p. 21.

88 O. Gaponovich, "Nam iavno ne khvataet svezhego vozdukha kul'tury," *Belaruskaia Dumka* 10 (1993), p. 13.

89 *Zviazda* (December 23, 1993).

90 *Belaruskii histarychny chasopis* 1 (1993), p. 5.

with the terms "Belarus'," "Belarusian people," and "Belarusian culture."[91]

The 1994 Constitution of Belorussia stated in its preamble (repeated in the 1996 version) that the Belorussian people have a "centuries-old history of the development of Belorussian Statehood." Emotional historiography along these new lines gained the support of many publishers. To substantiate this new view of the past and assist in educational efforts, major reference works were published including the 6-volume Encyclopaedia of the History of Belorussia, the 18-volume Belorussian Encyclopaedia, an illustrated chronology of the history of Belorussia, and several other nationally oriented publications.

All these trends have been slowed somewhat as a result of the victory of A. Lukashenko. In addition, the referendum on May 15, 1995 revealed that 83.1% of the population preferred equal rights to the Belorussian and Russian languages.[92] Furthermore, conservative historians and government bureaucrats began to raise their voices against an "extreme nationalistic" interpretation of history. This was soon followed by replacements in institutes, universities, and editorial boards, including that of the Encyclopaedia of the History of Belorussia and the Belorussian Encyclopaedia. In 1999, the government ordered that "seditious material" be eliminated from a textbook on Belorussian history. In particular, the pro-communist bureaucracy denounced the textbook for mentioning the repression of Belorussian national culture by Stalin's regime in the 1930s. The book's authors were accused of "falsification." They were also criticized for "lacking a single official view of the country's history" in line with the demands of President Lukashenko.[93]

Apparently, not everyone fell in line following this criticism. The newly published history textbook, approved by the

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91 Ibid., p. 19.

92 M. Norberg, T. Kuzio, "Postroenie natsii i gosudarstv. Istoricheskoe nasledie i natsional'noe samosoznanie v Belorussii i na Ukraine (sravnitel'nyi analiz)," *Belorussiia i Rossiia: obshchestva i gosudarstva* (Moskva, 1998).

93 V. Zaprudnik, "Belarus: In Search of National Identity (1986-2000)," *Belorussian Review* 13:2 (2001), p. 8.

Ministry of Education, speaks of "mass repression," "Bolshevik terror," and "total Russification" under Stalin.[94] It would appear that the confrontation between officialdom and the nationally-minded elements of Belorussian society is being played out not only in the streets of Minsk, but also in the ministries and other official places.[95] This is greatly in order, as many critics of the modern Belorussian national-democrats in past had been held on suspicion of anti-Soviet nationalism[96] and were accordingly pressed by the communist watchdogs. Nevertheless, in 2000-2001 in Minsk, the handbooks, *Belorussian nationalism* and *The Chronicle of White Rus' (Khronyka Belai Rusi)* were issued.

From time to time, Lukashenko himself has tried to play the role of originator of the Belorussian "national idea." In 1996, the pro-president monthly *Belaruskaia dumka* (Belorussian mind) wrote about the need, "as of fresh air, for a consolidating national idea." The formulation of the latter was announced as "an honorary common obligation of politicians and representatives of the social sciences."[97] But two years later the journal acknowledged that such efforts had failed.[98] This was not surprising. In 1994 there were 220 schools in Minsk that taught in Belorussian. Two years later their number had shrunk to fewer than 20. Russian is the language of instruction in virtually all university departments.[99]

Nevertheless, the search for genuine national roots has continued. In 2001, in a rare Belorussian language speech devoted to the celebration of Independence Day, Lukashenko stated: "We are remembering the Duchies of Polotsk and Turov, the

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94 V.A. Krutalevich, I.A. Yukhno, *Historyia derzhavy i prava Belarusi (1917-1945)* (Minsk, 2000), pp. 193, 228, 229.
95 Zaprudnik, "Belarus: In Search of National Identity," p. 8.
96 In particular, a scholar such as Stashkevich. See: N.S. Stashkevich, *Prigovor revoliutsii: Krushenie antisovetskogo dvizheniia v Belorussii (1917-1925)* (Minsk, 1985).
97 *Belaruskaia Dumka* 1 (1996), p. 19.
98 *Belaruskaia Dumka* 10 (1998), p. 7.
99 J. Maksymiuk, "Language on Trial," *Belorussian Review* 10:3 (1998), p. 2.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Belorussian lands in medieval Poland and then the Russian empire. We have also not lost the memories of our native Soviet Belarus."[100] Scholars in turn have tried to study the very problems thus stated by the President.[101]

Some scholars connected their hopes for a revival of the "national idea" with the rise in the religious feelings of the population. Polls have shown that 47% of the population are believers. Among these, 78% are Orthodox Christians and 9 % are Catholics. The Belorussian Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church is very small. The position of the Belorussian Orthodox Church (BOC) is pro-Russian and, since 1989, it has been an exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. The BOC is headed by an ethnic Russian, Metropolitan Filaret, who has been a potent factor in the cultivation of the "Russian spirit." During the period from 1989 to 1994, the Belorussian language and local traditions gained acceptance in some areas of BOC activity. The Feast of All-Belorussian Saints was established, and translation of the Gospel into Belorussian begun. But the idea of the autocephaly of the BOC was rejected. Lukashenko, who once paradoxically presented himself as an "Orthodox atheist," told Patriarch Aleksii II on a visit to Minsk: "We are an Orthodox country... and we will always be devoted to Orthodoxy."[102] Now Orthodoxy has legally become the first religion in Belorussia.

Certainly, there are great differences between the government and intellectuals in their understanding of the meaning and practical applications of the "national idea" concept. While independent writers advocate full sovereignty and independence for Belorussia, the government has engaged in double-talk, inherited from the Soviet era, which allows officials to speak of Belorussia's "independence" within a union with Russia. Nevertheless, there is also a general consensus that the concept of a national idea should be developed, and some see it as being al-

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100 A. Popov, "Prizrak Soiuza i rozhdenie natsii," [http//www.for-ua.com/analit/2001/09/10/170059.html].

101 See articles in *Vestsy Natsyianal'nai Academii Navuk Belarusi. Seryia gumanitarnykh navuk* (2001-2002).

102 Zaprudnik, "Belarus: In Search of National Identity," p. 8.

ready in motion. According to one optimistic explanation: "Having been born later than other national ideas... and facing hardships in search of historical justification and acceptance for the future, the Belorussian idea nevertheless has been alive and gaining ground. And for the young people who are growing up in an independent state, the ideas of the Belorussian people and the Belorussian state will, obviously, become something so familiar and natural that they will never be lost."[103]

Quite understandably, Lukashenko is attempting to set up in the Belorussian institutions of higher education government-sponsored youth organizations such as "Direct Action." Yet, quite predictably, the Direct Action movement at the universities is doomed. Another attempt has been made to create a "Belorussian Patriotic Youth Union." Indeed, Lukashenko has promised the new leadership benefits such as control over university admissions and dormitory space, future government jobs and financial support. However, the young people of Belorussia are unlikely to have much in common with a backward looking regime. The opposition, meanwhile, has grounds to claim quite simply that "time is on our side" – it has the very future itself on its side, the future of the nation.[104] S. Shushkevich concurred that: "A nation such as Belarus, that has its own language, culture, literature, and traditions, including a legacy of statehood, can hardly be stopped from becoming a legal democratic state with a developed civil society."[105] This, however, seems to be pure rhetoric.

To all appearances, not much has occurred during the last few years. A poll conducted in March 2000 shows that a country consisting of 81% ethnic Belorussians revealed a shocking lack of national self-awareness. The respondents were asked to

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103 V. Nosevich, "Belorus': stanovlenie etnosa i 'natsional'naia ideia'," in D.E. Furman, ed., *Belorussiia i Rossiia: Obshchestva i gosudarstva* (Moskva, 1998), p. 28.

104 M. Packjeu, "Future of the Nation Is with Us," *Belarusian Review* 9:2 (1997), p. 15.

105 S. Shushkevich, "Belarus: Self-Identification and Statehood," *Demokratizatsiia* 8:3 (2000), p. 299.

say whether, according to them, the Belorussians are "a separate self-sustained Belorussian nation, or a branch of the triune Russian nation." Only 49.8 % of the respondents answered that Belorussians constitute a separate nation, while 42.6 % chose the second option. Interestingly, 75.9 % of the same respondents named the Republic of Belorussia, in response to the question of whose citizens they felt themselves to be "in the first place." Russia was named by only 2.2 %, and the non-existent Soviet Union by 12.4%.[106] The population of Belorussia seems to be unsure in expressing its national consciousness because of traditional religious and ethnic tolerance.[107] Some publicists have argued that "Belorussian nationalism speaks Russian."[108] Whether this is true or not, it hurts the national identification process. Some authors have also pointed out the severe consequences of a cultural catastrophe as the main reason for the delayed formation of a Belorussian nation.[109]

Belorussians have not yet decided who they are and which way to follow. They are standing at a crossroads in all senses – national and historical. The society is split up into supporters of Russia-Belorussian integration and those of sovereign development, the Russian-oriented people and the Westernizers. The unclearly identified consciousness of the modern Belorussians has been taken advantage of by populist leaders. In 1999, there were too many peoples satisfied with the situation in Belorussia, by comparison with those in Ukraine.[110] The ruling elite and the opposition both failed because they had no clue where to lead the country and lacked political will.

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106 A. Vardamatski, "Belarus' i svet," *Belarusskaia Perspektiva* 9 (2000), p. 7.

107 O. Bukhovetz, "Evrei v narodnom soznanii (opyt izucheniia na primere Belorussii v XX v.)," *Pravo na svobodu* (Moskva, 2000), pp. 93-94, 97-98, 100.

108 Iu. Drakohrust, "Belorusskii natsionalizm govorit po-russki," [http://bdg.press.net.by/1998/98_01_19.434/16drak.htm].

109 V. Matskevich, "Osobennosti natsional'nykh otnoshenii na fone kul'turnykh katastrof (sozreli li beloruss' do natsii)," [http://www.lebed.com/art58.htm].

110 See: L. Titarenko, "The Walls That Have Yet to Fall. Belarus as a Mirror of CIS Transition," *Demokratizatsiia* 8:2 (2000), p. 236.

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All the Slavic states of the former Soviet Union have adopted ethno-political myths, identifying the state as a homeland of "indigenous" people. These policies rely on the Romantic historicist tradition, claiming that humanity can be divided neatly into nations, and stipulating that culturally – or ethnically – defined nations possess sacred rights. Thus, using this reasoning, national leaders tend to downplay individual human rights and respect for neighboring peoples and minorities. This entails a series of failures in the new understanding of the common past.

Modern attempts at the "nationalization" of Russian and Soviet history in all independent Slavic states seem to be contradictory and archaic. They are provided not so much by professional historians as by new state ideologists, on the one hand, and by spontaneous inspiration from above, on the other. So the identification process is dual: led both by state and ethnicity. This does not conform to the main modern tendency of national identification, which is oriented toward citizenship. Nevertheless, this situation is not uncommon. Observers point out that everywhere – in Croatia, Serbia, Germany, Quebec, and Kurdistan – "the battle between the civic and ethnic nation" is taking place.[111] The victory of the latter means a rise in the traditionalist or neotribalist component in the human beings, which provokes international instability.[112]

As a tool of internal mobilization, ethnic identification seems to be effective only in Ukraine, but even in this country the consequences may be destructive. In Russia, the modern uncertain and pro-imperial "nationalization" of history may provoke the most aggressive feelings among the young. In Belorussia, the identification process now has been transformed into a sense-

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111 M. Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), pp. 5-10, 249.

112 S. Bouler, " 'Ethnic Nationalism': Authenticity, Atavism and Internationalist Instability," in K.J. Brehony and N. Rassool, eds., *Nationalisms: Old and New* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), pp. 51-64.

less and destructive political quarrel. Thus everywhere, attempts at the "nationalization" of the past have been unsuccessful.

No people seeks a destructive or ruined history of "its own," rather the need is for a glorified and sanctified one. The only guarantee of the prosperity of a nation is the rational understanding of its past and present possibilities. The "nationalization" of history is now unnatural in all three Slavic states. No Slavic people has the necessary historical writings to support a new historical identity. Therefore, the main danger lies in a possible split in the consciousness of the younger generation.[113] The real identification process has just began.

The failures in this post-Soviet Slavic identification process were mainly conditioned by a state- and ethical-oriented perception of history firmly established in the mind of the former *homo-sovieticus*. As a result, the old representations, forged from social aggressiveness and ethnic intolerance, undermined the construction of a normal sense of national citizenship. The blood and sacrifices demanded by the victorious ethnic groups mean that barbarism has descended further upon us.

The three independent Slavic states have a common and interactive past. A real modern identification ought to be connected, not with a separate, but with an objectively interpreted triune history.

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113 "Kakim byt' sovremennomu shkol'nomu uchebniku po otechestvennoi istorii," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 3 (2002), p. 27; A. Chubarian, "Uchebnik dlia novogo veka," *Rodina* 6 (2002), pp. 10-11.