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Structures of Nineteenth-Century Ukrainian History

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Gathered in this volume are twelve studies on nineteenth-century Ukrainian history, some originally published in collections that are neither indexed in databases, nor easily found in North American libraries. The author, Andreas Kappeler, who hails from Switzerland, is a professor of history at the University of Vienna, who previously taught in Cologne. Many of the pieces in this volume are written using a structuralist and comparativist style that draws on the framework and methods of Czech historian Miroslav Hroch.[1] Using a stock of structuralism that is rare in academia at the moment, it is eye-opening to see how productive this approach can be in the hands of a skilled practitioner.

“Ein ’kleines Volk’ von 25 Millionen: Die Ukrainer um 1900” (pp. 21-35) examines the extent to which Ukraine fits Hroch’s ideal type of a “small people.” In the plain sense, Ukraine, with a population of twenty-five million, was not a small nation, of course. But here the term “small” refers to a particular type of nation—one which, in the past, might have been called “nonhistorical.” Kappeler rejects this term, stating that it is loaded

with Hegelian content. In his analysis, a “small” nation would exhibit three “deficits”: of a tradition of statehood, of a social elite, of a high culture.

Analyzing Ukrainians at the turn of the century against this grid, Kappeler concludes that they were a mixed type, relatively advantaged when compared with nations that conformed more closely to the ideal. Ukrainians had a tradition of at least partial statehood in the form of the Cossack *hetmanate*, which existed on the Left Bank of the Dnipro River from the mid-seventeenth until the late eighteenth centuries. Although included within the boundaries of the Russian state, the *hetmanate* displayed many features of statehood, including the presence of a traditional elite from the Cossack officer class, and a dynamic high culture whose influence was felt far beyond Ukraine.

In spite of these features, the Ukrainian national movement proceeded at a slower pace than many nations of the pure “small” type. Why is this? Kappeler answers this question by referring to other cases for comparison, concluding that: 1) the political context of the Russian empire, particularly the lack of freedom of press

and association, impeded social communication and mobilization; 2) Ukrainians were affected by the pressure of assimilation and attractiveness of Russian culture; and 3) fragmentation and regional heterogeneity of Ukraine's large population played a significant role. With regard to this latter point, Kappeler remarks that the quantitatively large size of Ukraine's population was a cause for the country's qualitative smallness. In the same essay, he continues with a few more typological observations. Divided between the Habsburg monarchy and the Russian empire, Ukrainians were not only a "secessionist" movement, but also a "unificatory" one, like the Germans and Italians.

Two paradigmatically Kappelerian pieces compare the Ukrainian movement in Russia with the one in Austrian Galicia ("Die ukrainische Nationalbewegung im Russischen Reich und in Galizien: Ein Vergleich" [pp. 70-87]), and Ukraine's national movement with the one taking place in Lithuania ("Die ukrainische und litauische Nationalbewegung im Vergleich" [pp. 88-98]).

In the first of these comparisons, Kappeler makes much use of the "Hrochian ABCs," the three stages of a national movement, as distinguished by Hroch: phase "A," the cultural phase (in Paul R. Magocsi's even more descriptive term, this phase is called "heritage-gathering") phase "B," the organizational phase; and phase "C," the political phase. Kappeler argues that the Ukrainian movement in Russia entered stage B, but was pushed back to stage A by the state three times, before finally securing itself once again in stage B during the 1890s. By contrast, the Galician movement in 1890s morphed into phase C.

Less schematically put, the Ukrainian movement in Russian Ukraine was even smaller than the Russian social-revolutionary movement in Ukraine, from 1905-07, and it was still not a mass movement on the eve of World War I. But in Galicia it *was* a mass movement by this time. This pattern seems all the more anomalous when one considers that parts of the Russian Ukraine were industrialized, which should have fostered the development of such a movement.

So why did Galicia take the lead? Kappeler answers that the following factors favored the region: 1) emancipation of the serfs occurred earlier there, in 1848 instead of 1861; 2) there was an earlier diffusion of literacy, and this literacy was in the Ukrainian language; 3) the local Greek Catholic church had a national character; 4) Austria introduced a constitution and basic civil rights in the 1860s.

In his comparison of Lithuanians and Ukrainians, Kappeler points to some striking similarities. Both groups had some tradition of statehood in the past, as well as some vestiges of a national elite. In both cases, the majority of the nation lived in Russia, but there was a minority that lived in a state to the west that had a different, more liberal political constitution than Russia. The Russian state imposed restrictions on publishing in the vernacular language in both cases in 1863. Both nations were agrarian, being composed of about 90 percent peasants.

Among the more important differences that Kappeler identifies is the degree of literacy. According to the 1897 census of the Russian empire 48.4% of ethnic Lithuanians could read (of whom only 17% could read in Russian) but only 18.9% of Ukrainians could read (almost all in Russian). Partially this reflects Orthodoxy's neglect of women's education: 32.4% of the Ukrainian men could read. But it is also important to note that the Lithuanian clergy developed a Lithuanian-language school system in the first half of the nineteenth century, which they retained underground during the decades of repression.

After surveying the history of both national movements over the long nineteenth century, Kappeler draws a number of conclusions, some of which reinforce those he has made in previous studies: 1) Groups with weak social differentiation and mobilization, mainly composed of peasants, have a delay in their national movement as a consequence. 2) The existence of national active clergy (or elementary school teachers) is of great significance for non-dominant ethnic groups. The church's organizational network can be utilized as a link between city and country. 3) On the other hand, the existence of vestiges of a regional nobility was not of much consequence. 4) Of central importance was the degree of literacy, making national communication possible. 5) For national communication the ability to publish was of great significance, hence the importance of the Prussian Lithuanians and Galician Ukrainians who published works that could not be published in Russia.

On the other hand, this comparison of Ukrainians and Lithuanians seems to undercut findings from the comparison of Galician and Russian Ukrainians: the importance of the Russian political context. The autocratic system and prohibitions upon language use affected the Lithuanians as much as it did the Ukrainians. So why were the Lithuanians able to mobilize peasants before 1905 and create a national mass movement, while the Ukrainians were not? Partially this can be accounted for by the

higher level of literacy and a nationally active clergy.

An important precondition for a national mobilization of the peasants lay in the agrarian situation, and when the peasants were emancipated from serfdom. The Lithuanian peasants had an advantage here. This was especially the case in the Suwalkija region, where they became legally free earlier, and had achieved a somewhat higher level of prosperity. The importance of this factor is shown by high number of national patriots from this region.

Another important difference is that confessional. Roman Catholicism did not differentiate Lithuanians from Poles, but it did separate them from the Russians. In contrast, orthodoxy linked Ukrainian peasants with the tsarist state against the Poles and the Jews, an ideological link that the authorities instrumentalized from time to time.

In an era of increasing literacy, language differentiation grew increasingly important. Lithuanian was undeniably a separate language, and rural Lithuanians rarely came in contact with Russians. True, they were attracted to Polish culture and language, but its assimilatory power decreased after the 1863 uprising. Ukrainians were never discriminated against as individuals, as long as they used the Russian language; this was different than the situation for Lithuanians and for Galician Ruthenians, and more like the situation of the Belarusians or of the Occitanians in France and Catalans in Spain.

Another study in this vein is “Die Formierung einer ukrainischen nationalen Elite im Russischen Reich 1860-1914” (pp. 99-122). It undertakes a prosopographic analysis of Ukrainian national activists in the Russian empire, their education, occupations and regional origin. The activists were overwhelmingly members of the intelligentsia, and came disproportionately from three gubernias: Poltava, Kyiv and Chernihiv. The nationally mobilized activists were not only a small segment of the whole polyethnic society of Ukraine, but made up only a small segment of the intelligentsia itself. They were not as a rule a part of the elite, who would have found it difficult to make Ukrainian loyalty a central issue.

The next article, “Mazepisten, Kleinrussen, Chochols: Die Ukrainer in der ethnischen Hierarchie des Russischen Reiches” (pp. 36-53), is less like Hrochian’s study. Here, Kappeler examines the position of Ukrainians from three different hierarchial standpoints.

First he treats the hierarchy of political loyalty/reliability. When they were incorporated into Russia as Cossacks, the Ukrainians were considered unreliable because of their shifting alliances (Poland/Russia/Crimean Tatars/Ottoman empire) and for having a nomadic, turbulent lifestyle: the Cossack hetman, Ivan Mazepa, became emblematic of political disloyalty. But by the mid-eighteenth century the Little Russians were well-integrated, and their loyalty unquestioned. The “Mazepist” label did, however, resurface in the late nineteenth century in connection with the formation of a separatist Ukrainian national movement.

Next, Kappeler looks at the hierarchy of estates. Nationalities who, like the Russians, had a landholding elite were treated as equal (Baltic Germans, Poles, Finnish Swedes, Bessarabian boyars), although some privileges could be taken away for disloyalty (Poles). At a second tier were elites that did not quite correspond to the Russian nobility, e.g., the Left Bank cossacks. They could either achieve nobility status, as the upper layer of the officer class did, or sink down to the status of free peasant. At the bottom of the hierarchy were groups that consisted almost entirely of peasants, e.g., Belarusians or Right-Bank Ukrainians.

Finally Kappeler examines cultural circles. The outer circle was the *inorodtsy*, mainly nomads and Jews, who were marginalized, discriminated against and considered incapable of integrating. Moving inward, the next circle was made up of non-Orthodox Christians. Then came the Orthodox non-Slavs: Georgians, Bessarabian Romanians and missionized, formerly animist indigenous peoples. Orthodox Eastern Slavs formed the inner circle. Although the Ukrainians and Belarusians were more repressed as ethnic groups, individuals faced less discrimination than individuals of other nationalities. The farther away an ethnic group was from the inner circle, the more discrimination it faced, but its ethnic substance was less endangered.

Here, Kappeler also offers judicious reflections on the question of colonialism in the Russian empire. This is particularly noteworthy now, at a time when students of Ukrainian literature are more frequently applying post-colonialist analysis in their work. Kappeler says we must be careful when applying the term “colonialism” to the tsarist empire. Most of the Asian regions of the empire were incontestably colonies, either economic colonies like Turkestan, or settler colonies like Siberia. The ethnic groups living here were situated on the lower rungs of the estate and cultural hierarchy, at a great territorial,

social, cultural and racial distance from the Russian imperial center. On the other hand, the areas in the northwest of the empire—Finland, the Baltic provinces and Poland—were indeed ruled from the center, yet they were economically and culturally more developed than the Russian center and therefore cannot be designated colonies.

An important difference from the colonial empires of the West is that in the estate-structured Russian empire there was no binary division between an imperial Russian upper stratum and non-Russian lower strata. Although the majority of the political and military elite was Russian or Russified, the Russians as a people were not systematically privileged, but on the contrary were sometimes disadvantaged.

Ukraine was not a classical colony of the Russian empire. For this, the relationship lacked the spatial, cultural and racial distance and the legal discrimination of Ukrainians vis-à-vis Russians. Without a doubt, the relation between the Russian center and Ukrainian periphery contained elements of economic dependence and exploitation as well as cultural discrimination. Still, there is too much that speaks against the application of the concept “colony.” For example, the tsarist center treated Ukraine as a part of Mother Russia, and the Ukrainians were not treated worse than the Russians as citizens. Kappeler advises that the term colonialism should be restricted to classical colonialism, which is not applicable to Ukraine.

In his most recent work, a study of the late-nineteenth-century historical journal *Kievskaja starina*, Kappeler departs from the emphases on comparative structures as presented above. Two articles are included in the volume: “Die Kosaken-Aera als zentraler Baustein der Konstruktion einer national-

ukrainischen Geschichte: Das Beispiel der Zeitschrift *Kievskaja Starina 1882-1891*” (pp. 123-35) and “Nationale Kommunikation unter erschwerten Bedingungen: Die Zeitschrift *Kievskaja Starina (1882-1891/1906)* als Organ der ukrainischen Nationalbewegung im Zarenreich” (pp. 136-50).

Kappeler acknowledges the influence of Karl Deutsch, and his work on social communication, in these two articles. He examines the political significance of *Kievskaja starina* upon the intellectual elite. Kappeler is no longer thinking of phase-A as a “cultural phenomena,” as he did in his study of Russian and Galician Ukrainian movements. Now he sees this first phase as an example of “national communication under difficult conditions.” I take this change as an indication that Kappeler is rethinking his subject. His previous contributions to nineteenth-century Ukrainian history stand up well, I believe, even in a poststructuralist climate. However, I look forward to reading more results from this new turn.

Note:

[1]. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985, new edition New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2000).

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