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BOOK REVIEWS

The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine, by Serhii Plokhy, London and New York, NY, Basic Books, 2015, 432 pp., $29.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-0465050918

Until the mid-1980s there were no histories of Ukraine in the English language except translated volumes by Mykhaylo Hrushevsky and Dmytro Doroshenko that were very out of date. Ukrainian history was subsumed within "Russian history" in Western universities and academic scholarship.

Since the late 1980s this is no longer the case and we have four editions of Orest Subtelny's *Ukraine. A History*, two editions of Paul R. Magoci's *A History of Ukraine*, Serhy Yekelchyk's *Ukraine. Birth of a Modern Nation*, and a new and welcome addition by Harvard University's Serhii Plokhy.

Ukrainian Studies now has three different approaches to the study of Ukrainian history. Subtelny drew upon Hrushevsky's approach of a history of the Ukrainian people, while Magosci adopted the standard Western framework of history of the state, including everything that took place on Ukrainian territory. Plokhy admits that all historians "pick and choose" what they include and their approaches can differ (XX).

Plokhy also uses the statist approach and has aimed for a wider audience by writing in a highbrow investigative journalistic style with no footnotes. His book covering Ukrainian history over 27 chapters from its beginnings to the present is majestically written and therefore very easy to read, making difficult and complicated periods of Ukrainian history accessible to readers in a wide variety of fields. The downside of not including footnotes means there are no sources for controversial subjects, such as pogroms during the Russian civil war and massacres during World War II. Plokhy writes that Ukrainian and White forces committed 40% and 20%, respectively, of the pogroms, which may surprise readers as the latter with their slogan of "Beat the Jews and Save Russia!" are traditionally blamed for the bulk of them (222). Plokhy blames pogroms committed against Jews because they were derided as both supporters of the Bolsheviks and capitalist exploiters by Russian nationalistic groups defending the true identity of "autocracy-orthodoxy-nationality," the Russian Orthodox Church, workers, and recent migrants from Russia competing for jobs.

Similarly, Plokhy provides no sources for the figures of 15,000–30,000 Ukrainians and 60,000–90,000 Poles killed in Volyn, although – unlike many other scholars – he does not just present it as a one-sided massacre by "Ukrainian nationalists." Plokhy also surprisingly talks of "hundreds of thousands" dying in the 1933 *holodomor* but later talks of "millions" (250, 252–253). Unlike Timothy Snyder, he sidesteps the issue of whether the *holodomor* was a genocide.

In World War II, Stalin and Hitler both needed Ukraine to achieve their goals and, together with Belarus and Poland, Ukraine became part of the bloodlands of Europe. Following four to five million dead in the *holodomor* another seven million died in World War II (including one million Jews). Eighty percent of the "guest workers" in Germany were Ukrainian while seven million Ukrainians fought in the Soviet army (or every fifth or

sixth soldier). In addition, a 100,000-strong Ukrainian nationalist partisan movement, Soviet and Polish partisans fought on Ukrainian territory. Cooperation between the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Nazis ended after the arrest of Stepan Bandera in the summer of 1941, which was followed by arrests and executions of Ukrainian nationalists as OUN launched a partisan war against the Nazi's and Soviets. Plokhy writes that the majority of Ukrainians looked the other way during Nazi crimes against Jews, and when they participated in crimes it was for plunder rather than through anti-Semitism.

Plokhy is at his best when writing about inter-ethnic relations, with relations between Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians receiving a great deal of attention as well as the impact of Russian and Ukrainian nationalisms upon Jews. Plokhy writes that "there was little room for compromise between the Polish and Ukrainian visions of Galicia and Ukrainians and Poles 'were at each other's throats for control over Galicia" (196, 212). The seeds of the massacres undertaken by both sides in the 1940s lay in the "prolonged and bloody Ukrainian-Polish war" (212) of 1918–1919 for control of Lviv and eastern Galicia. Although it is well known that Russians have traditionally refused to recognize Ukraine as a separate people, it is less well known that the National Democrats, one of two major political forces in inter-war Poland, also did not recognize Ukraine and pursued a policy of assimilation, political repression, and encouraging 200,000 Ukrainians to emigrate. Polish colonization, religious, and national discrimination turned Volyn from a hotbed of Russian nationalism prior to 1914 into a center of anti-Polish Ukrainian nationalist and pro-Soviet sentiments.

Ironically, Joseph Stalin resolved the Polish–Ukrainian question in 1944–1947 through expulsions of both nationalities and a new border after which Ukrainians came to dominate western Ukraine. The price was Soviet Ukraine becoming a "Ukrainian-Russian condominium" (286) with Ukrainians acting the younger brothers of Russians. Although Plokhy discusses Trans-Carpathia in the late 1930s, he unfortunately does not analyze how the Soviet regime came down on the side of Ukrainian over local Rusyn identity and thereby was instrumental in Ukrainianizing the region. Plokhy believes that the annexation of western Ukraine had a profound impact upon Soviet Ukraine, which became an "amalgam of the Soviet identity formed in the 1920's and the national identity that had taken shape in inter-war Poland, Romania, and to some extent, Trans-Carpathia" (304). The Soviet component of Ukraine adjusted and became more culturally Ukrainian and self-assertive.

Plokhy undertakes a masterful job in discussing the 1930s and 1940s, which were the two decades of the twentieth century that arguably influenced Ukraine the most, with competition between radical nationalism and national Communism. Russian leaders viewed Ukrainians as the most destabilizing and "most restive and rebellious ethnic minority" (230) with rural Ukrainians viewing the Soviet regime "as little more than a occupation force" (231). Ukrainians in the inter-war era were the largest nationality in Europe with an unresolved nationality question. Ukrainian society was "severely traumatized" by the *holodomor* which crushed "its capability for open resistance to the regime for generations to come" (254). At least until the Mikhail Gorbachev era and subsequently during the Orange and Euromaidan Revolutions.

In the light of the on-going Russo-Ukrainian war, Plokhy's Epilogue is excellent and in lieu of a conclusion. He writes that Russia's conflict with Ukraine has very deep roots, replete with references to history (myths of Sevastopol and "New Russia") and struggles over historical and cultural fault lines (Europe versus the Russian World and Eurasianism). The Donetsk People's Republic is a revival of an analogous pro-Bolshevik entity in the Donbas in 1918 that never wanted to join Soviet Ukraine. Russian leaders define Ukraine as "artificial," deride Ukrainian criticism of Soviet history (such as the *holodomor*),

and blame the West for dividing two "fraternal brothers." Where Moscow sees Russian speakers as "Russians" in "New Russia" eager to embrace the Russian World, Kyiv finds Ukrainians willing to take up arms to defend their country against Russian aggression.

Very few Western scholars have focused on national identity as the root cause of the Russian–Ukrainian war which Plokhy, a native of the Dnipropetrovsk region bordering the Donbas, rightly brings out. Russians have been unable to view Ukraine as anything but a part of Russia since the seventeenth century. Putin repeatedly says Ukrainians and Russians are "one people" with three eastern Slavic peoples equated to branches of the "Russian people." Plokhy, in the same manner as this reviewer, believes that this revival of a Russian imperial identity poses a fundamental challenge to Ukrainian nation building, of which Ukrainian language and culture have been at the center since the mid-nineteenth century, with Russians treating the Ukrainian language and culture as low-class and disposable. Ukrainian claims to independence have always been oriented towards Europe, not Eurasia. Plokhy is also right to point to Ukraine as the battleground of an allegedly spiritually superior Russian world versus a stagnating West with corrupted values, a view which has "deep roots in the Russian culture and intellectual tradition" (352).

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The return of ideology: the search for regime identities in postcommunist Russia and China, by Cheng Chen, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2016, 228 pages, $64.14 (hc), ISBN: 978-0472119936

In her new book *The Return of Ideology* Cheng Chen argues that as a nation makes the transition from Communism to democracy or something else, its regime must construct a new political ideology that can guide policy and provide a sense of mission and national togetherness. This is needed for engendering legitimacy among the populace as well as the support of domestic political and economic elites, and is a precondition for the regime's long-term viability. In the book, Cheng Chen compares the Russian Federation after 1991 and post-Deng China during roughly the same period, and investigates the degree of success of the ideology-building projects in the two great powers.

More specifically, Chen argues that successful ideology-building requires that the regime establish a coherent ideological repertoire which takes into account the domestic ideological heritage and accommodates the surges of nationalism that seem almost destined to occur to fill the ideological void after the downfall of Cold-War type Communism. The Chinese regime was in especially dire need of a new ideology as it had abandoned the Communist ideology in all but the name of the ruling party, instead fully embracing the tenets of market economy. Chen's observation is that whereas creating a new regime ideology thus was complicated enough in China, it has been even more difficult in Russia. In both cases, she argues, national great power aspirations have been largely used as a surrogate for ideology. In both cases, the Golden Ages of the national