

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

Through the turbulent course of history with its kaleidoscopic changes, Ukraine appeared on the geographical and political maps of Europe in the blink of an eye, disappearing from them just as suddenly, only to arise anew with a variety of names, territories and borders. It has experienced a troubled and unique history which is rooted in ancient times; a dramatic, yet sometimes tragic and heroic era; periods of crucial change contrasted with relative stability (which at times has verged on economic and political stagnation) as well as periods of state welfare and centuries of stateless existence. Its own heroes and anti-heroes figure large in the past.

The historical development of civilisation on Ukrainian soil is notable for its richness and variety. Ukraine's involved and complex reconstruction is only possible today if this process is a unity of considerations that are both objective and subjective, social and ethnic, collective and individual in nature. Society's development is not determined by a particular factor, and mankind's evolution has always been affected by a variety of influences: economic, political, ideological, religious, cultural, and more.

During their history that spans more than a millennium, the Ukrainians have passed over a long and difficult road of development. The successive change of archeological cultures, ancient and nomadic proto-civilisations as well as the formation of a quasi-Slavic state all took place on Ukrainian ethnic territory. According to archeological discoveries, the first group of native inhabitants that lived within the historical borders of modern Ukraine, can trace their roots back to Stone Age and the first archeological artifacts left by human activity date back to the Paleolithic period.

Waves of migration, which were typical for Europe during the Stone and Bronze Ages, influenced the ethno-genetic processes to a great extent, especially in such historical regions as: Polissia, Volhynia (Volyn), Podolia (Podillia), the Ukrainian Carpathians, Middle Dnipro Region and Nadporizhzhia. This migration also resulted in the development of specific archeological cultures on the left and right banks of the Dnipro river, coastal lowland of the Black Sea and the Dnister region.

The transition to the Iron Age (1000 years B. C.) was marked not only by evident climatic changes, which to a great extent caused the reduction in the native population over the entire territory of what would become in the future, Ukrainian ethnic territory. The Iron Age also witnessed a significant transformation of the territory's economics and way of life. Important features in the ethnogenesis of the Ukrainians were left by a number of cultures at particular reference points in history, such as Greek colonisers north of the Black Sea coast; nomads from the Eurasian steppe (the Scythian and Sarmatians); Thracian, Teutonic (German) and Baltic proto-cultures. The influence of ancient civilisations broadened the outlook of the native population of ethnic Ukrainian territories and enabled their engagement with European civilisation.

The period from 1000 B. C. – 1000 A. D. heralded the formation of the first groups of ethnic Slavs in the southeast Europe region. The Zarubintsy, Cherniakhiv and Kiev archeological cultures are representative of this development in Ukraine. At the turn of 4th and 5th centuries the confederation of Venedian tribes (which assimilated non-Slavic groups of the population) broke up into several independent tribes of Sklavians and Antes, who in turn, formed new archeological cultures. The first centuries of the Christian era were marked by the transition from the prehistoric period to the advent of the first historical tribes in the south and southwest territories of Ukraine, as well as the formation of late Scythian states on the Crimean steppe and in the Danube delta.

The massive settling of Slavs in the Ukrainian forest-steppe region in the second half of the first millennium was the impetus for the formation of Slavic "ethnic and cultural symbiosis", which would become the genetic core of Ukrainian nationality in the future.

The evolutionary development of Slavic tribal unions led to the establishment of economic, political and social institutions. The rise of the powerful Old Russian state, with its political centre in Kiev, took place in the final 300 years of the first millennium (*Figure 7*). Its golden age fell during the rule of Princes Volodymyr the Great

Fig. 7

STATES ON THE PRESENT TERRITORY OF UKRAINE (1000–1654)



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(Saint) and Yaroslav the Wise. Owing to its military strength and dynastic marriages strengthening the power of the princes, the economic development of Kievan Rus', centralisation in its home and foreign policy, and cultural development following from its adoption of Christianity resulted in it becoming one of the most influential states in eastern Europe at the turn of 10th–11th centuries. However, the period of political, cultural and national development of this ancient Russian state was short-lived. Internal centrifugal processes, as a by-product of the previous development of this poly-ethnic state (which was, for a period of time the empire of the Rurik Dynasty which united different principalities of Slavic tribal unions and other non-Slavic groups) caused the gradual division of Kievan Rus' into 15 independent principalities in the 12th and 13th centuries. Under the prevailing conditions of political fragmentation, the baton founding the nation was taken by the Galych–Volhynian (Galicia – Volyn) state (*Figure 7*).

Further development of the Ukrainian nation included large territories, such as Kiev, Pereiaslav, Chernihiv–Siversk, Galych–Volhynia principalities, and it partly covered present-day areas of Bukovina and Transcarpathia (*Figure 7*). During the 15th–17th centuries the Ukrainians moved on to the south, colonising Slobozhanschina ("Free Ukraine"), and at the beginning of the 18th century settled in coastal regions of the Black Sea and Sea of Azov. Ethnic and social development took place under complicated conditions imposed by the division of Ukrainian territories. The existence of political borders was the reason distinctive features of differing regions of Ukraine were preserved.

Historical development for the Ukrainians in a variety of fields had far from stopped at this stage. During their ethnogenesis, the medieval Ukrainians were enriched by the experience of a social and national liberation movement, which has evolved into the modern Ukrainian nation, with its unique national consciousness, a highly developed sense of spirituality and culture. This complicated and controversial process received new qualitative forms in the following centuries. The primary example was an economic union which took the form of close inner commercial and economic ties that fused the independent regions together, and also resulted in intensive migration between these regions.

During the so called Polish-Lithuanian period, the historical development of the Ukrainians had a specific character. Being part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later incorporated in Rzeczpospolita i.e. the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ukrainians on the one hand were enriched by progressive western European ideas, and on the other received important lessons in the struggle for national identity. The historical evolution of Ukrainians is fundamentally punctuated around this time by the formation of a new social community on the eastern borders: the Cossacks, who created original state form – Zaporozhian Army (Viysko Zaporizhske). In the political and religious fields the unions of Lublin (1569) and Brest (1596) were signed (*Figure 7*).

The time interval of a little over 200 years that historians called the Cossack period, occupies a very important place in the historical development of Ukraine (*Figures 7 and 8*). It was a crucial point in Ukrainian history, when the hitherto slow course of events abruptly accelerated in a cataclysmic manner and influenced the panoply of human activity. The result was a radical turn in Ukrainian history. The reasons that caused the appearance of the Cossack state, were complex and included economic, political, social, military and strategic factors. The Cossacks were the first ethnic community that came to reflect the characteristic features of the Ukrainians as an ethnically independent society. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of the Cossacks in the development of the liberation movement and social struggle of the masses. Over a lengthy period of time, the Cossacks were the only force who would spar with neighbouring states in the name of the Ukrainians, fighting for their right to an existence and economic and spiritual development.

In the political field, the Cossacks established a new era of nation-building. The creation of Zaporozhian Sich, which was the Cossack conception of a state, meant that the Ukrainian state organisation was enriched by historical forms, which were inadequate for economic and social basis of late medieval community. A republican form of government and the participation of a wide circle of Cossacks in the decision-making process around economic and social problems resulted in Zaporozhian Sich becoming a strong political organisation with a wide field of activity. During the different periods of its existence,

Fig. 8

STATES ON THE PRESENT TERRITORY OF UKRAINE (1700–2007)



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Zaporozhian Sich was not a “republic in itself”, but always strove for expansion of its political sovereignty to the other Ukrainian lands.

The 1640s were marked by the event that fundamentally changed the course of Ukrainian history and predetermined it in many respects. The national liberation movement between the 1640s to the 1670s had no rival in Europe for its strength, scope and results. It is interesting to note that the revolutionary outburst occurred on the territory of the Cossack state (*Figure 7*). These revolutionary events kept their significance over the following decades, having a noticeable influence on all Ukrainian activities. The most significant consequence was the establishment of the Ukrainian Cossack state with its democratic forms of government, original legislature and executive power, which received well-defined national features. The establishment of the full range of state institutions took some years to achieve and occurred with permanent military operations and an increasing threat to independence inter-playing in the background. The vitality and great potential in the new state is easily explained by the fact that it was founded by the people themselves..

The period of Bohdan Khmel’nyts’kyi, or so called Khmel’nytchina, was not only when the independent state was established, but was also when Ukraine gained new political status on the European continent. It was a period of social upheaval that fundamentally influenced all strata of society and had a considerable impact upon the development of the national culture. Despite hardship arising from war, annexation of Ukrainian territory and obstacles placed by foreign conquerors, the nation continued to develop successfully in the general context of European cultural and historical process, enriching both global and Ukrainian cultural wealth.

Territorial incursion into the Ukraine during the last three decades of the 17th century caused certain divisions to arise in social, political and economic development between two large regions – the left-bank of the Dnipro (Livoberezhzhia) and Slobozhanschina on the one hand, and the right-bank of the Dnipro (Pravoberezhzhia) and western Ukrainian lands on the other. After the divisions of Poland in the 18th century and the reunification of the main regions of former Hetmanate (Hetmanschyna), it was eastern Galicia, northern Bukovina and Transcarpathia, that still remained outside the

borders of ethnic Ukrainian territories. The Ukrainians were highly populous in the coastal lowland along the Black Sea (*Figure 8*).

The 19th century was an ambiguous era for the historical evolution of Ukraine. Despite being assimilated into the empires of the Hapsburgs and Romanovs (*Figure 8*), the Ukrainians managed to significantly develop their culture. The result of this was a phenomenon of cultural and national revival in the middle of the 19th century that further stimulated the development of a national movement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The Intellectual resources of the nation, which consisted of descendants of the Cossacks and Ukrainian nobles, was directed to save the heritage of the Ukrainians and took the form of collecting historical documents, artifacts, manuscripts from the Cossack period and folklore. New groups mushroomed as the national liberation struggle expanded, such as: “The search for Cossacks”; “New Haidamakschina” of Ustim Karmalyuk, the activities of the “Russian Troyka” in Galicia and the Cyril and Methodius Society in Dnipro (central-Ukraine). These groups were at outward expression of social phenomenon called “khlopomanstvo” and “hromadivstvo”. National and cultural development, as well as the development of political and social ideas of the modern Ukrainian community were advanced by such people as Ivan Kotlyarevskyi and Mykola Lysenko; Taras Shevchenko and Lesia Ukrainka; Mykhaylo Drohomanov and Mykhaylo Hrushevskyi; Ivan Franko and Yurii Fedkovych, amongst others. At the same time the political, social and economic spheres themselves witnessed modernisation. Artistic masterpieces amongst the world’s best in quality were produced and it is significant that the Ukrainian Renaissance - in spite of the destructive influence of the empires that divided Ukraine - without exception involved all Ukrainian regions, each of which had a unique local contribution to make.

The 20th century brought new ordeals for Ukraine. It was the century of wars and revolutions, famines and deportations, juxtaposed with a rejuvenated national renaissance and fresh attempts at nation building. The first Universal of Central council declared a right of self-determination for Ukrainians . Further steps taken towards nation building included the declaration of an independent Ukrainian People’s Republic

(*Figure 8*); the establishment of the Ukrainian Hetmanate of P. Skoropadskyi in Dnipro-Ukraine; and the proclamation of a Western Ukrainian People's Republic in Galicia.

Once absorbed into the USSR (*Figure 8*), attempts were made to eradicate illiteracy. Thousands of people originally from working class and peasant families were allowed access to higher education and with time, to gain positions in high-level scientific, economic, academic, diplomatic and administrative posts. The possibilities that arose from an improvement in the national economy, to a hitherto unseen level of technological prowess resulted in a parallel growth in economic potential. This, together with the integration of the Ukrainian lands enabled Ukraine to raise its profile in the international arena. The final realignment of Ukrainian territory took place in the middle of the 20th century. After the Second World War, peace treaties defined the political borders of Ukraine and consolidated all ethnic Ukrainian territories, that were earlier parts of Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. The final touch to this process was added by Russia, when it handed Ukraine the Crimea peninsula in 1954 (*Figure 8*). Since the middle of the 19th century, the dispersion of Ukrainians has increased. The migration streams moved not only in easterly, southerly and northerly directions, but also further inland into Europe. Ukrainian diasporas appeared on the American and Australian continents. Many Ukrainians fell victim to both world wars (which lasted for years within Ukraine), along with mass repression and persecution by the Soviet authorities subsequently. The final three decades of the 20th century bought with it new ordeals for the nation to overcome. The process of urbanisation and industrialisation became an obstacle to agricultural development, which fell by the wayside. Meanwhile, the war in Afghanistan, as well as the Chernobyl disaster had a negative impact on the country's demography.

Ukraine managed to avoid becoming embroiled in armed conflicts that erupted in some of the territories of the former Soviet Union after 1991 (*Figure 8*). The nation building process today charts its path next to the struggle for old and new, and is accelerating. A modern social and economic pattern is emerging and these processes carry on parallel with the integration of Ukraine into the global community. While investigating some aspects of Ukrainian history, researchers may miss the universal historical context, but it is known that Ukrainians have never existed in isolation. Circumstances have many times developed in such a way, that this old European nation found itself at the centre of the historical evolution of Europe and events that took place in Ukraine had an important meaning not only for central and eastern Europe, but for the whole European mainland too. Situated at the crossroads of economic and commercial arteries between East and West, North and South, from ancient times Ukraine was a recipient of hostility from martial tribes. The country's location has saved other European countries from devastation on numerous occasions by acting as a buffer, but was nevertheless a destructive experience for Ukraine which later became the hostage of the geopolitical interests of neighboring countries.

Those who believe that Ukraine's role was passive, under conditions of permanent foreign policy pressure, are wrong. On the contrary, Ukraine not only resisted this pressure (and very often successfully), but also became an active influence on European international relations during certain periods of time. Coming under the direction of European civilisation, Ukraine felt an impact on its political, economic, social, and cultural development, but at the same time, original Ukrainian thoughts and actions repeatedly impacted on eastern Europe, enriching not only European political thinking, but also its practice.