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The Dawning of Christianity in Poland and across Central and Eastern Europe

History and the Politics of Memory



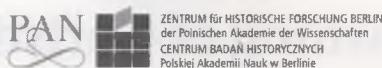
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Vasyl' M. Tkachenko

The inseparable heritage of early medieval Rus'. On the celebration of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood¹

Abstract: The chapter discusses the current politics of memory of the Russian Federation in the context of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood. The main celebrations of the anniversary took place on September 21–23, 2012 in Veliky Novgorod. Despite this, it seems that no consensus as to the date of the original event has ever been reached among the representatives of Russian academia – neither is there any unanimous interpretation of its meaning. Indeed, Russia's jubilee activities were among the matters that influenced the rise of vigilance among Ukrainian scholars concerning the issue of Ukrainian national identity. This attitude is illustrated by numerous publications on the subject of the historic past, published both in scholarly journals and in the commercial press.

Keywords: origins of the Russian statehood, Veliky Novgorod, Kievan Rus', Ukrainian identity, politics of memory

On March 5, 2011, the Presidential Decree No. 267 from March 3, 2011 *On the celebration of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood* (*O prazdnovanii 1150-letija zarozhdenija rossijskoj gosudarstvennosti*) was published in the Russian Federation. It stipulated that “in order to further consolidate Russian society”², the President of the Russian Federation decrees to “take the leadership” of the governmental position “regarding the celebration of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood” in 2012. The respective steering committee was made responsible for the main activities pertaining to the festivities.³ The Russian media informed the public that “in 862 AD Rurik

1 This chapter is an abbreviated, translated version of the following article: V. M. Tkachenko, “Nepodil'na spadshchina Davn'oï Rusi (pro svjatkovannja 1150-richja zarodzhennja rosijs'koi derzhavnosti)”, *Problemi vsesvitnoi istorii: naukovij zhurnal* 1, 2016, p. 24–51.

2 Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all in-text quotations were translated by the translator of the paper.

3 Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 3 марта 2011. №. 267, [electronic resource] available at: <https://rg.ru/2011/03/05/1150-site-dok.html>.

took power in Novgorod, and this date is traditionally considered to be 'the starting point' for Russia".⁴ The main festivities were to take place on September 21–23, 2012 in Veliky Novgorod. Despite this, it seems that no consensus as to the date of the anniversary^{5*} has ever been reached among the representatives of Russian academia – neither is there any unanimous interpretation of the date.⁶

How did the Ukrainian public react to the anniversary initiatives taken in Russia? The famous columnist Ihor Losiev asked in a tone of surprise: "Does this mean that in 862 Anno Domini Russia already existed?", and further: "Who in our country will respond to this 'soft', but rather dangerous challenge? Where is our divided intelligentsia who constantly brawl and entertain themselves with postmodernism?"⁷

A number of Ukrainian scholars publicly addressed the issue of the jubilee of Russian statehood, mostly in the *Den'* newspaper. Practical proposals soon followed. According to the professor of the Ostroh Academy National University, Petro Kraliuk, some Ukrainian scholars suggested that we should celebrate the anniversary of a date 10 years previous to the one announced in Presidential Decree No. 267. This statement was based on the fact that the name *Rus'* was first mentioned in the twelfth-century *Tale of Bygone Years* under the year 852.

4 Medvedev velel prazdnovat' 1150-letie rossijskogo gosudarstva, [electronic resource] available at: <http://fed.sibnovosti.ru/society/139057-medvedev-velel-prazdnovat-1150-letie-rossijskogo-gosudarstva>.

5 * The footnotes marked with an asterisk were added by the editorial team.
The only information about Rurik is provided by the *Tale of Bygone Years* (*Povesti Vremen'nyh Lëtù*) or *Primary Chronicle* originally compiled in Kiev around 1113 and later in the 12th c. updated and edited. This source covers the history of Kievan Rus' from 850 to 1110. It mentions that some tribes, including Eastern Slavs, refused to pay tribute to the Varangians and tried to govern themselves. After they failed and got into fighting each other in order to reestablished political order they invited the Varangians, led by Rurik, who arrived in the Ladoga region in 862 along with his brothers and a large retinue and built the Holmgard settlement near Novogrod. This moment is known as the invitation of the Varagians and since the 19th c., became officially interpreted in Russia as the starting point of Russian history.

6 About present debates see: BBC Russian-Rossija – 1150-letie rossijskogo gosudarstva, [electronic resource] available at: https://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2011/03/110307_russia_ryurik_anniversary; and Kogda prazdnovat' 1150-letie rossijskogo gosudarstva? Kogda prazdnovat' 1150-letie rossijskogo gosudarstva?, [electronic resource] available at: <https://newsland.com/user/4297701455/content/1150-letie-rossijskogo-gosudarstva-riurikovichi-my/4144590>.

7 I. Losev, "Rosija gotuet'sja do '1150-richchja rosij'skoj derzhavi'. Hto v Ukrainsi vidpovist' na cej viklik", *Den'* 132/133, 2011.

However, *Rus' land* is not synonymous with Russia.⁸ Until the 19th c. Rus' was the name generally given to Ukrainian lands. This is why the Ostroh Academy initiated a fitting celebration of the 1,160th anniversary of Ukrainian statehood. Thus, we could also speak of the 1,160th anniversary of Ukrainian historiography and Ukrainian literature. Hence it would be a mistake to trace the origins of Ukrainian literature to *Eneïda* (1798) by Ivan Kotliarevsky, who is regarded as the pioneer of modern Ukrainian literature. Alas, understanding of the early medieval period is meager.⁹

Russia's jubilee activities were among the matters that influenced the rise of vigilance among Ukrainian scholars concerning the issue of Ukrainian national identity. This attitude is illustrated by numerous publications on the subject of the historic past, published both in scholarly journals and in the commercial press. A good example of this is the publication under the editorship of Larysa Ivshyna, a monumental collected work called *The power of the soft sign, or the return of the Rus' Law* (*Sila m'jakogo znaka, abo Povernennja Rus'koi pravdi*).¹⁰ In my opinion, the main pathos communicated by this publication lies in its attempt to comprehend the identity of Ukraine through the lens of its historic continuity – Rus'-Ukraine. The second feature is its effort to go beyond political history and to analyze the phenomenon of intensifying system of socio-normative values that manifest our Europeanness in the environment of the Ukrainian *demos* and not *ethnos*.

Since the subject is inexhaustible, we can suggest another, alternative perspective on the origin of Rus'-Ukraine, and do so on the basis of research in the field of the social sciences. This point of view is partly based on Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis and his concept of world-empires.¹¹

8 In the Ukrainian language normally two terms are used: a) *руський* – adjective of (Kievan) Rus' or also of Ruthenia), and b) *посійський* – adjective of Russia. In the Russian language two similar terms are used: 1) *русский* and *российский* – both are adjectives of Russia, though the latter is also more commonly used in political contexts, e.g., Russian Federation – *Российская Федерация*, Russian Empire – *Российская Империя*; while the former may refer to both the people of Russia (*русский* – Russian nationality, while *рussianский* – Russian citizenship), and to Kievan Rus.

* For the sake of clarity, in this text the spelling of the word Rus' was unified and in all uses and cases an apostrophe was used.

9 "Cja knizhka – strategichnogo znachenija", *Den'* 170/171, 2011, p. 6.

10 *Sila m'jakogo znaka, abo Povernennja Rus'koi pravdi*, ed. L. Ivshina, Kiev 2011.

11 I. Wallerstein, *World system analysis: introduction*, Durham and London 2004. *The author used the Russian edition, published in Moscow in 2006 by the publishing house Territorija Budushchevo, trans. N. Tjukina.

World-systems analysis is a narrative concept. Adhering to the principle of comprehensive history and a single interdisciplinary approach, the supporters of this notion abandon the narrative focused on the history of national states as independent units of study, in favor of destroying the rigid boundaries between economic, political, and sociocultural research methodologies.

It is obvious that each narrative requires its own protagonist. For positivists, everything revolves around the individual and his/her personality. For classical Marxists, the main character was the proletarian, and for the nation-oriented historians – the politician. Yet, for those in favor of world-systems analysis these characters, as well as numerous social structures, are all links in one chain. They are viewed not as elementary particles, but as components of a systemic amalgam, from which they sprang and in accordance with which they act.

An important condition for analysis of the origin of Rus', one applying approaches employed by followers of world-systems analysis, relates to time and space, namely the *chronotope*.¹² This is not an external constant (something that always has been, is, and will be), within which social reality exists. On the contrary, it is constantly changing, while society is a "palpitating organism". It remains unchanged over a long period of time, yet at the same time it is constantly changing. This, obviously, is a paradox – but not a contradiction. That is why the main task of history is to learn how to overcome this paradox.

Antinormanism as a diagnosis for Kievan Rus'

What is the main narrative of Rus', and who takes the central place amongst the main characters in this narration? There is no need to invent a new perspective – in the last centuries, three times there have been debates in Russia's between Normanists and Antinormanists concerning the problem of the Varangians: in the 18th c., the discussion between Gerhard Müller against Mikhail Lomonosov in the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences; in the 19th c., the public debate between Mikhail Pogodin and Nikolay Kostomarov at Saint Petersburg University; and since 1965, the debate between Leo Klejn and Igor Shaskolsky. They all focused on the role of the Varangians (Normans) in the formation of Rus'.

12 *The concept used in literary theory and philosophy of language, analyzing how configurations of time and space are represented in language and discourse. The term was coined by Russian scholar M. Bakhtin as an element in his theory of meaning in language and literature – see: M. Bakhtin, *Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel*, [in:] idem, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Austin TX 1981, p. 84–258.

Our role here is reduced to briefly presenting a few bullet points from Omeljan Pritsak's vision of the origin of Rus.¹³ The author, whom I consider to be our mentor in leading the way towards historiosophical research, was the founder and first director (1973–1989) of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. According to Pritsak, "the 200-year long Normanist-Antinormanist confrontation has proven powerless in solving the problem of the origin of Rus." His opinion resonates with the judgement of the last "troublemaker" on the Norman question, the acclaimed Russian archeologist and dissident persecuted during the Soviet era, Leo Klejn, who believes that no theory of the Norman genesis of Rus' statehood or even scholarly concept exists at all; instead there are only "hypotheses about the ethnic identification of the Varangians, about the extent to which the Scandinavians participated in the history of our country." As for Normanism, it is not represented in any country but Russia, though there were Scandinavian invasions throughout all of Europe and beyond. According to Leo Klejn, in Russia, "this is not an academic movement, but an ideological tendency, which is implanted into science out of patriotic considerations. This is an inferiority complex, so characteristic of our country, whose roots must be sought after in the modern situation." For Ukrainians, commenting on Russian complexes directly leads onto a slippery slope. Let us therefore step aside from the "modern situation" in Russia and just consider Leo Klejn's viewpoint that "not all hypotheses when proven become theories, many of them become not theories, but facts. The debate is about facts".¹⁴

Omeljan Pritsak states several interesting facts concerning, primarily, the term *Rus'* and its "national" interpretation. In 839, the *Annales Bertiniani* mentioned a ruler of a political organization ("polity") called *Ros* (*Rhos* – Byzant.). The Arabic author, Ibn Khordadbeh, who described trade routes in Eurasia at that time, also noted the existence of two "companies" – Judean Radhanites, who controlled the routes to Khazaria; and non-Judean Rus', who controlled the trade in the north of Eastern Europe. Pritsak asks a rather justified question: how did it happen that the community of Rus' people, who had just come into being, turned out to be such skillful international merchants and took control of such a huge region?

Let us consider the ethnic factor, which seems to be a crucial issue in the formation of Rus' statehood. Omeljan Pritsak comments on this process thus:

13 O. Pritsak, *Pohodzhennja Rusi. Starodavni skandinavski dzherela (krim islandskih sag)*, Kiev 1997.

14 L. Klejn, Antinormanizm kak diagnoz, [electronic resource] available at: http://polit.ru/article/2010/12/03/klejn_antinormanism/print/.

Societies of the Baltic region, which were then developing, certainly did not comprise a national culture in its modern sense. The Danes, the Frisians, and the Rus' people were a polyethnic, multilingual community, devoid of territory, comprising marine nomads and inhabitants of partially "eastern" settlements, and sometimes wooded towns and trade settlements of the "western" type. The Rus' people and the Frisians acted as international merchants, which confirms the theory about the formation of the market as an economic organization by merchants, and not by peasants or artisans.¹⁵

The two latter strata, as representatives of the "lower" culture, had not become familiar with literature or sacred texts, which lay at the foundations of "higher" culture. At that time, the territory of the Rus' people had not yet been clearly defined either.

The ethnic factor goes hand-in-hand with the language factor. The continuity of written tradition is characteristic of a settled empire. Written language acquired the "sacred" character of "national" heredity, i.e., of a settled culture. The change of dynasties did not disrupt linguistic unity. In contrast, a nomadic empire often changed not only the ruling clan (the dynasty), but also its name for itself and its official language. A nomadic empire did not attempt to provide the continuity of "national culture," but strived to wield the unlimited power of an army of young warriors determined to get economic profit. When the nomads overthrew one charismatic ruling clan, they also rejected its language.

International nomadic merchants often cooperated with the local tribal chieftains, helping them to adopt "progressive" governance. For instance, merchants helped to unite different strata of the local population to create a patrimonial state. Throughout medieval times, as Omeljan Pritsak writes, "the towns and states of the Eurasian steppes, and also of the Baltic region, were founded not by the local populations, but by foreign international merchants". At the same time, it makes no sense to try to determine the "nationality" of the Vikings and the Varangians: "They had none. They were just professionals, ready to serve anyone who needed their skills and who could pay for their work"¹⁶.

In urban trade settlements, several languages were spoken. Families or kindred groups used the local language, and two or more *linguae francae* were used for professional purposes. Thus, as Omeljan Pritsak concludes, in the context of Rus':

it makes no sense to talk about the Swedish national culture of the 9th and 10th c. In the Baltic community, all its components – the Normans, the Veneti (the Slavs), the Balts,

15 O. Pritsak, *Pohodzhennja Rusi...*, p. 95.

16 Ibidem, p. 83, 90.

the Finns – were equivalent [...] It was customary (as is known from the Rurikids) to have two or more names, in accordance with professional or marital connections.¹⁷

Pritsak summarizes a lengthy route leading to the formation of Rus' by distinguishing three stages: the Volga period (c. 839–930), the Dnieper period (c. 930–1036), and the Kievan period (1036–1169). The Kievan stage is essentially different from the two former ones, for during the two first stages, the Rus' people mostly controlled trade routes and tribes, but did not possess territories. When necessary, they defeated their enemies, collected tribute, and controlled trading posts along the two main international routes: the Volga-Don to Bulgaria and Atil, and the Dnieper – from the Varangians through Kiev to Constantinople. In this context only the Kiev period was significantly different, marking the beginning of the cultural consolidation of Rus' and an attempt at its “nationalization.”

Real shifts occurred in Rus' during the third stage. Firstly, Novgorod became more significant than Staraya Ladoga, which both linguistically and culturally remained exclusively Scandinavian up to its demise in the middle of the 11th c., while Novgorod had been bilingual from the very beginning. The Novgorod people were mostly descendants of the Veneti, Baltic Slavs who played a key role in the process of adapting the Viking concept of the “barbaric” law to Slavic political culture. Also the oldest surviving copy of the *Rus' Law* (*Russkaja Pravda*), the first legal code of Kievan Rus' and the subsequent Rus' principalities, come from Novgorod, the only place in Rus' where the concept of law was generally recognized, adopted, and self-evident up to the dramatic demise of the Veliky Novgorod Republic in 1479.

Secondly, in 1036, Prince Yaroslav I the Wise (1015–1054), definitively took power in Kiev, crushed the Pechenegs, and consolidated his version of the Roman Empire, the ideological center of which was Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev, and the foundations of which were provided by the system of Novgorod laws. In the next step, Yaroslav introduced a sacral (as a result of the mission of Cyril and Methodius) and legitimate language in his territories, the Church-Slavonic language, whose importance after the demise of Danube Bulgaria decreased significantly on the national level.

Thirdly, Yaroslav started turning Rus' into a territorial community by establishing the princely vagrant army (*druzhina*) in Kiev, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav lands. As a result of these measures, the names *Rus'* and *Rus' land*, recorded in the second half of the 11th c., started to be used in a new meaning – exclusively relating to southern Rus' (today's Ukraine). Before this, *Rus'* had been

17 Ibidem, p. 96.

a foreign ruling leadership with a primitive socio-political organization that rested on seafaring and river nomads who periodically collected tribute for their princes, but did not attach themselves to any specific territory.

Indeed, Yaroslav's "cultural revolution" was the source of a qualitatively new leap from a polyethnic, multilingual community devoid of territory with a "lower" level of culture to a "higher" one, sanctioned through the domination of the Church-Slavonic language. The decline of the independent Bulgarian state left the Church and the Slavonic rite (with its code of spiritual and government-political texts) without a proprietor. This enabled *Rus' land* to appropriate this culture without the fear of losing its own identity. The compilation of the collected chronicles in 1115, created in the first spiritual center of Eastern Europe – Kiev Pechersk Lavra – entailed a unique act that demonstrated "a common historic fate." Omeljan Pritsak's conclusion about the origin of *Rus'* is unambiguous: "It was then, during the Kiev period, that its own historic self-consciousness appeared and *Rus'* began to emerge as a legitimate historic entity."¹⁸

A monopoly on legacy?

The account of the origin of *Rus'* outlined above is based in an academic perspective dominated by the Hegelian tradition – namely, that when a given social phenomenon, such as the system of state power, is emerging, at that moment it is practically non-existent. The formation of a system, and especially of such a world system as *Rus' land* as an Eastern European counterpart of ancient Rome or Byzantium, is in reality a lengthy historical process. When today we raise the question of marking a specific date for the foundation of *Rus'-Ukraine* on the national level, the scholars' argument that "on the one hand, it is sort of like that, but on the other hand, it is not" does not suffice. As a rule, certain arbitrary administrative decisions that follow a political rationale are taken on the national level, and they reflect the political background. Such was also the case with the decision concerning the anniversary of the origin of Russia, which was taken in the Russian Federation on the national level.

On a practical level, in Ukraine the debate concerning the origin of *Rus'* clearly will also continue at the intersection of scholarly thought and political rationale. In 2011–2012, while this topic was relevant for Russia, it was yet to become a burning issue for Ukrainian political elites, thus no decision was made on the national level. Ukrainian society responded to the Russian initiative with

18 Ibidem, p. 101.

heated debates, which took place on the airwaves and in the media, while scholarly publications were few and far between. There was a feeling that the political factor in the current situation would be determinative and this affected the nature of the discussion.

In my opinion, a certain level of political correctness and scholarly balance should have been adhered to. Especially during the discussion of such a sacred issue as the one defining who is "the older brother", and thus, presumably, who has a stronger mandate over the historical legacy of Rus'. It is hard to picture an argument between the Italians, the Spanish, the French, the Germans, and the English attempting to determine who of them is the true and only heir to the empire of Ancient Rome. Only one exception must be noted – Mussolini had no doubts here. Yet what can one expect from the leader of Italian fascism? We, however, should learn our lessons from history. Because those who consider the problem from the perspective of whether Rus' was "Ukrainian" or "Russian", emphasizing only the ethnic aspect of this issue and looking for arguments in the context of "land and blood" etc., will ultimately lose the argument.

In consequence, our premises are that early medieval Rus' was a multi-tribal and multi-ethnic territorial-political entity, founded by a trading-military political class, which was generally typical of the early Middle Ages. For instance, the term *Khazars* was also used without any ethnic coloring as a geographical-political concept, and later it started to denote all the subjects of the Khazar king, who constituted the Khazar tribal union. At different times in the existence of the Khazar "federation" it consisted of the Azov and the Volga Bulgarians, the Caucasian and the Don Alans, the Volga Burtas, the trans-Volga Oghuz, the Crimean Goths, the Caucasian highlanders, the Khoresm Iranian Aorsi, the Hungarian Magyars, the Slavs, and the Rus' people. The Khazar language was probably kindred to Old Bulgarian, and is a predecessor of the modern-day Chuvash language. At the same time, the koine of the Jewish-Khazar merchants was the Slavic language.¹⁹ Kievan Rus', in a lot of respects, became an heir to the Khazar Khaganate, when, according to Omeljan Pritsak, "the multilingual trading companies and trading communities, as well as seafaring nomads, adapted the political structure and the charisma of the steppe empires to their needs in order to transform it into the Christian-Slavonic-speaking high culture from which Rus' arose".²⁰

19 Khazaria, [in:] *Electronic Jewish Library*, [electronic resource] available at: <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/14401>.

20 O. Pritsak, *Pohodzhennja Rusi...*, p. 101.

Very often in the case of marking anniversaries, political considerations take priority over scholarly concerns. It is no wonder then, that when analyzing the technologies of "jubilee initiatives" in the Russian Federation, the problem of the scholarly justification of a prominent date was far from being a top concern for some initiators of anniversaries. As can be seen from Russian publications, on September 18, 2009, during jubilee ceremonies marking the 1,150th anniversary of Veliky Novgorod, the famous director Nikita Mikhalkov initiated the discussion on the marking of the 1,150th anniversary of the "formation of the state". At the same time, he noted that "the country should be cleaned up, since we live in a terrible mess".²¹ The initiative was heard by political leaders, and, as the Russian press agencies reported, the President of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, concluded that it was necessary "to mark 1,150 years of the origin of the Russian state in 2012".²²

These jubilee dates did not pan out at once. Veliky Novgorod turned out to be a "stumbling block". First of all, scholars had already voiced a number of questions on the 1,150th anniversary of the foundation of Veliky Novgorod three years earlier. This date, ever so prominent for the city, turned out to be a real mystery. Analysts assumed that since the first mention of the coming of Rurik († 879) is dated at 862, then, for him to "have somewhere to come to", the initiators of the jubilee stepped three years back and waywardly "assigned" the date of the foundation of Novgorod to 859. However, archaeological research conducted in the 20th c. dated the foundation of Novgorod to not earlier than the end of the 9th c., i.e., a few decades after the coming of Rurik. For instance, one of the leading Russian archeologists conducting excavations in this region, Anatoly Kirpichnikov, states that it was Staraya Lagoda (currently a rural village) that became the first capital of the early medieval Rus' state and only later was the capital moved to a settlement next to current Novgorod, one known in the chronicles by its Scandinavian name Holmgard, and now as Rurik's Town (Rurikovo Gorodische). Back then, Novgorod did not yet exist.²³

21 Medvedev prizval otmetit' 1150-letie Rossii, [electronic resource] available at: <http://newsland.com/user/4297646261/content/medvedev-prizval-otmetit-1150-letie-rossii/3973597>.

22 Medvedev predlozhil otmetit' 1150-letie vozniknovenija rossijskogo gosudarstva, [electronic resource] available at: <http://www.newsinfo.ru/news/2009-09-18/medvedev-722293/?mod>.

23 V strane novyj superproekt – "1150-letie Rossii", [electronic resource] available at: *<http://www.dp.ru/f/2010/07/27/V-strane-novij-superproekt/>.

Few people paid any real heed to the considerations of scholars. As can be seen from the media, the governor of Novgorod Oblast, Sergey Mitin, opened hearings with a speech declaring “the Novgorod land as the historical cradle of Russian statehood”, while making reference to acclaimed Russian historians (Vasily Tatishchev, Nikolay Karamzin, Mikhail Pogodin, Sergey Solovyov, Vasily Klyuchevsky) who “considered 862 to be the date of the origin of Russian statehood.” The governor added that this particular date was deeply respected by the Russian public and authorities in the 19th c.:

Namely, by the decree of Emperor Nicholas II [(1894–1917) – ed.], the year 862 was given the status of the “primeval event of Russian statehood”. The decree was executed by the Ministry of People’s Education and several generations of Russians from early childhood adopted the annalistic version of the formation of their state.²⁴

The governor built his argument on a historic precedent from 100 years back and appealed to tradition. How could contemporary historians possibly refute this argument?

Consequently, “the process was started”. At the beginning of 2011, the leader of the LDPR, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, expressed the will to make Veliky Novgorod the center of the celebration of 1,150 years of Russia. The Russian media reported that the main centers of the 2012 celebrations would be Moscow, Kiev, and Veliky Novgorod. In addition to these three cities, where the main events were to take place, other locations expected to participate were Izborsk (Pskov oblast), Belozersk (Vologodskaja oblast), and Rostov the Great (Yaroslavsk oblast). Three years previously, the Russian government had allocated financing in the amount of 5,000 million Russian rubles for the celebration of 1,150 years of Veliky Novgorod. The media did not draw any attention to the amount of money allocated for the jubilee of the origin of Russian statehood.²⁵

Involvement of Kiev

Simultaneously, the problem arose of involving Ukraine in the anniversary celebrations. Naturally, the initiative was supposed to come from the public.

24 Forum umnyh ljudej. Novgorodskij gubernator: 1150-letie Rosii: [electronic resource] available at: <https://forumnov.com/lofiversion/index.php?t284667.html,%20%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9>.

25 Novgorodskie vlasti zdut prikaza o prazdnovanii 1150-letija Rossii, [electronic resource] available at: <https://forumnov.com/lofiversion/index.php?t278240.html,%20%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9>.

Consequently, counterparties that apparently specialized in the propaganda of the idea of the "Russian world" were mobilized in Ukraine: the European Institute of Political Culture (Kiev), the news outlets "InfoRos" and "RBK-Ukraine", the Institute for Russians Abroad (Moscow), and the Forum-ua.com portal. On November 12, 2010, the media announced that they were organizing public hearings to which representatives of the Ukrainian authorities were invited, alongside the opposition, scholars, experts, and journalists. There is no conclusive information stating who from those invited actually participated in the hearings. Only two or three speeches given by the participants were made available on the internet, ones including such opinions on the subject as: "Well, I was born in Ukraine (or in Belarus), but now I work in Moscow, and that is why I find it difficult to self-identify what I really am".

The director of the Institute for Russians Abroad Sergey Panteleev voiced the ideology of the above-mentioned assembly. It can be summarized in several statements: traditionally, people born in Ukraine have always been an "empire-building" element in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union; leading Russian geopolitical concepts, namely, "Eurasianism", were created mostly by ethnic Ukrainians (e.g. Petro Savytsky, Petro Suvchynsky or George Vernadsky); at the time, Ukraine could also act as an "adhesive" in Russian-Belarussian relations. Thus, the social demand for Ukraine was formed. The historical, spiritual, and cultural role of Kiev as the traditional center of "the Russian world" was emphasized. Referring to the concept of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus', Kirill, Sergey Panteleev expressed his confidence that there was a demand in Russian society for integrational initiatives from Kiev's side, ones which would reflect its status as "the mother of Russian cities" and "the cradle of Russian orthodoxy". In summary, Panteleev initiated the convening of a civil forum in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus as "an instrument of public diplomacy which would promote the harmonization of relations between our states".²⁶

Stressing the fact that Euro-illusions seemed to be dissipating at that time in Ukraine, the participants of these hearings urged the "leaders of Ukraine and the foreign affairs establishment to promptly and pragmatically create a long-term, beneficial and patriotic, strategic, geopolitical Eastern project, rooted in

26 S. Panteleev, Rossii, Ukraine i Belorusi nuzhen Grazhdanskij Forum, [electronic resource] available at: *<http://www.russkie.org/index.php?module=printnews&id=19893>.

the deep-seated interests of Ukrainian society. Primarily, this is for the development of relations with the Russian Federation and Belarus".²⁷

These assemblies entered a new stage on April 21, 2011, in the Central House of Journalists in Moscow, where an international round table was held "dedicated to the problems of preparing for the celebrations in 2012 of the 1,150th anniversary of the formation of the Old Rus' state". The contingent making up this assembly was also peculiar - "public activists, scholars, and representatives of official structures of the three countries, who were specialists in working with their compatriots." Sergey Panteleev, who repeated all the statements he had issued in Kiev, again determined the nature and the mood of the reports. Taking into consideration the occasion of the 1,150th anniversary, he somewhat changed the socio-political emphasis of the speech, adding an apparently more scholarly component: "This includes the historical and the social aspect. Moreover, the former one is definitive". The contents of this "scholarly aspect", according to the scientific expert of the assembly from the Institute of Slavonic Studies, Oleg Nemenskiy, lay in the opinion that "historically we are participants of a single state project and a single country. All of us together are Rus'. This is our legendary original beginning, written down in Kiev, which has not lost its importance even now. This date is the font of our self-consciousness".²⁸

The resolution of the round table was not very original either: the participants "urged the presidents of Ukraine and Belarus to support the idea of holding jubilee activities in all the countries, heirs to the Old Rus' state". The initiators of this idea also proposed to the heads of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus that they hold an informal summit dedicated to the jubilee. Plans for developing an international public program of festivities were mentioned, along with the intention to create a respective steering committee. The characteristic feature of the round table lay in the statement that "this event is the first step towards implementing another large-scale idea: the creation of the Public Forum of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus". The information on who and from what sources would finance all these forums and programs once again was not revealed.²⁹

27 Konec evroilljuzij: nuzhen li Grazhdanskij Forum Ukrayiny, [electronic resource] available at: <http://fraza.ua/analitics/13.11.10/103445.html>.

28 Sovet po podgotovke prazdnovanija 1150-letija obrazovanija, [electronic resource] available at: http://russkg.ru/index.php?ohtion=com_content&view=article&id=11.

29 Edinaja Odessa, [electronic resource] at: <http://www.edinaya-odessa.org/publ/print/page,1,28858-obshchestve>.

The masterminds of the “Russian world” did not conceal the strategic orientation behind the various jubilee festivities: “Old Rus’ can become a new integration center which unites not only Slavonic lands and peoples, but also its neighbors, as was the case many times in the Russian Empire and Soviet times”.³⁰ Tactically, they recommended promoting in the context of Ukraine and Belarus the idea of a common cultural space, which, presumably, already existed *de facto*, and soon could become a common information space. The main aim was to form a successful cooperation with the profile parliamentary committees of the Eastern Slavic countries and to conduct an informal summit of the three heads of state.

The 1,150th jubilee of the origin of Russian statehood was presented by certain circles in Ukraine under the cover of the 1,150th anniversary of the foundation of Kiev’s Metropolitanate and the original Baptism of Rus’; during the times of Prince Askold († 882). Under this pretense, a draft resolution (№ 9597) about the celebration on the national level in 2012 was registered in the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) of Ukraine. The Orthodox hierarchs of both the Moscow and Kiev Patriarchates announced the celebrations. Few cared that there was no actual evidence confirming the baptism, while contemporary history dates the foundation of the Kiev Metropolitanate back to the times of the introduction of Christianity in Kievan Rus’ by Grand Prince Volodimer the Great (980–1015) in 988. There was a rather vague mention in the reasoning of the clergy that “in the 860s, i.e. around 1,150 years ago, Prince Askold and some Rus’ people were baptized, and also a separate Metropolitanate for Rus’ was created”. This vague “around”, or “862 is the most probable date” became the starting point of the jubilee of the Metropolitanate in 2012, i.e., during the celebration of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood.³¹

30 V. Shestakov, 150 let Drevnej Rusi, ili Ochrednaja popytka istoricheski obedinit’ Rossiju, Ukrainu i Belarus’, [electronic resource] available at: <https://fraza.ua/analytic/115162-let-drevney-rusi-ili-ocherednaya-popytka-istoricheski-obedinit-rossiyu-ukrainu-i-belarus>.

31 V UPC KP otmetjat 1150-letie uchrezhdenija Kievskoj Mitropolii i Kreshchenija Rusi vo vremena Askol’dja, [electronic resource] available at: https://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all_news/orthodox/uoc_kp/45936; K voprosu o nachale russkoj ierarhii. K 1150-letiju osnovaniya Kievskoj Mitropolii, [electronic resource] available at: <https://www.religion.in.ua/main/history/14789-k-voprosu-o-nachale-russkoj-ierarxii-k-1150-letiyu-osnovaniya-kievskoj-mitropolii.html>.

The i's dotted

These public initiatives merely laid the foundations for an event which was truly important for Russian society. On June 22, 2011 in the old Russian city of Vladimir, the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev held a general session of the presidium of the Council of Culture and Art and the Council of Science, Technology, and Education. It was dedicated to the preparation for the celebration of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of the Russian statehood according to Decree No. 267. It should be noted that this meeting confirmed the fact that during 2009–2011, there was an evolution in the assessment of the jubilee date by the Russian authorities: the conversation referred not to the "formation" or the "emergence" but to the "origin" of Russian statehood. This can signify a certain shift in Russian societal awareness, as the term "origin" can be interpreted rather broadly, and, if required, it can even be substantiated rationally.

Dmitry Medvedev also noted that "science has the right to adhere to absolutely different, diametrically opposite opinions about different events". The president noted that teaching history at schools and universities is a different issue, as this is where the problem of searching for consensual views arises, "so that our young citizens would get some general notion of how the formation of our country occurred".³² Indeed, these reflections voiced by Dmitry Medvedev are justified and generally accepted in the entire civilized world, since the education of future citizens is the task not only of science and education, but also of the political class, as demonstrated by Dmitry Medvedev's speech. Ultimately, science and education are financed by the state, hence, as the Russian president notes,

we are currently in a unique situation where we are able to celebrate this jubilee duly, and at the same time give an impetus to the development of history, archaeology, and a whole set of other sciences which are connected with the history of our country. *But ultimately, this is done in order to achieve additional opportunities for the development of our country* (italics – V.T.).³³

Thus, without any prejudice or kowtowing, we should acknowledge that the speech was given by a political leader who defended the interests of his country in the context of the challenges and problems of the time, which Russia was trying to resolve internally, as well as certain global tendencies. It therefore seems that the Ukrainians should have taken the stance of the Russian president

32 President of Russia. Official website, [electronic resource] available at: <http://state.kremlin.ru/news/12075>.

33 Ibidem.

into consideration. For instance, when he signed this decree, he claimed that he was pondering:

whether or not to sign it, and yet the reasons in favor of celebrating this symbolic jubilee of Russian statehood outweighed the arguments against it, because at this point in time this matters – and not only and indeed not principally scholarly, as it is based in entirely practical reasoning. And the point is obvious: *consolidation of our country, our people, towards the further development of our great and very complicated country* [italics – V.T.].³⁴

The interest of Ukraine, which Dmitry Medvedev was not obliged to have at heart, is a different matter, and he diplomatically addressed the issue in his speech:

Now, in terms of our friends in Ukraine and in Belarus [...] Of course it is in our interest that they celebrate all this together with us. But we are rather intelligent and flexible people. The Decree which I have signed, I would like to emphasize this, is a Russian decree, not Ukrainian one. I am the President of the Russian Federation, not of Ukraine. It is called “the celebration of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood”, because it covers the territory of the Russian Federation. Of course, we can view this event as a central link in the emergence of Russian statehood, because we understand what events those were. And in this sense, such an interpretation does not contradict the meaning of this document. Please, if our Ukrainian friends in this respect are ready to cooperate in these processes, I will be very happy. Naturally, at my own level, I will definitely raise this issue in mutual relations with Ukraine and Belarus.³⁵

We can see the complexity that the president's statement poses for Ukrainians as to an unambiguous interpretation of the Russian stance. This is based on the fact that modern Russian texts do not have an old spelling of “Russian” (*русский*), as was characteristic of the 11th c., or the spelling of *Rus* (*руський*), as was common in the 15th c., yet the term “Russian” (*русский*) is widely used, when it is not always clear what it refers to – to “the Russians” as “the Great Russians”, or to “Russia’s people” as the citizens of Russia, or, ultimately, the population of ancient Rus.³⁶ Likewise, in Dmitry Medvedev's speech we hear at the same time both “Russia’s statehood” (*российская*), and “Russian statehood” (*русская*).

Some representatives of the Ukrainian side lacked the nerve to overcome the psychology of “a younger brother” and the posture of “little Russianness”. They immediately used the 1,150th anniversary as an opportunity to bow to the “older brother”. Thus, on September 12, 2012 a conference was held in Kiev, called

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ See footnote 8.

“The 1,150th anniversary of the formation of the Old Russian state: history and modern times”³⁷ Noteworthy is the fact that while the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev mentioned only the “origin”, the participants of the Kiev conference started talking about the “formation”, not of Old Rus’ (from the term “Rus”), but of “Old Russia” (from the term “Russia”). In the speech by Sergey Panteleev, cited above, this view is presented in greater detail: “the tradition of celebrating anniversaries of Russian statehood is reviving”³⁸ Thus, an event was held in Kiev, where truly laudatory performances were given in honor of the 1,150th anniversary of Russian statehood, during which the indivisible heritage of early medieval Rus’ was “appropriated” by Russia. What should we make of this? And how to interpret it, if not from a position of “political responsibility” (Karl Jaspers), then at least from the perspective of “moral responsibility”³⁹

After the “warm-up” in Kiev, jubilee celebrations were held in Veliky Novgorod on September 21–23. The opening day was properly justified: on this day 150 years earlier, Tsar Alexander II opened the monument to the “Millennium of Russia”; on this day in 1380, the Battle of Kulikovo took place, this date is also celebrated as the Day of Russian Unity. As the Russian media reported, the ceremony was attended by the members of the International Committee of the World Day of Russian Unity, the Centre of National Glory, the Foundation of Saint Andrew the First-Called, and by Russian and international scholars and NGO activists.

The day started with a mass and ended with a theatrical performance devoted to the history of the Russian state. Finally, a solemn ceremony of unveiling a monument to the formation of Russian statehood, the “Prince’s rock”, was held in the Novgorod museum complex “Rurikovo Gorodische”. The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies prepared a film “1,150 years of confrontation between Russia and the West” for the jubilee ceremonies. This last event demonstrated Russia’s shift towards an intensification of “cold war” psychology.

³⁷ The conference “1150-letie obrazovaniya Drevnierusskogo gosudarstva: istorija i covremennost”, was held in Kiev 11–12.09.2012, see: <https://guralyuk.livejournal.com/1871600.html>.

³⁸ S. Panteleev, Rossii, Ukraine i Belorusi nuzhen Grazhdanskij Forum, [electronic resource] at: <http://www.russkie.org/index.php?module=printnews&id=19893>.

³⁹ Uchastniki konferencii “1150-letie obrazovaniya Drevnjerusskogo gosudarstva” vyskazalis’ za edinstvo bratskikh vostochnoslavjanskih narodov, [electronic resource] available at: http://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2012/09/15/uchastniki_konferencii_1150letie_obrasovaniya_drevnjerusskogo_gosudarstva_vyskazalis_za_edinstvo_bratskikh_vost.

The triumph of presentism

The question naturally arises: where does this increased demand for various jubilees and celebrations, which often put historians in such a quandary, come from? The French scholar François Hartog contends that against the background of globalization, the formation of a “global economy”, and, at the same time, the increased dangers of losing “world heritage”, there has been a real surge in attention to all matters concerning the memory of the past. These recent social upheavals and crises have intensified the desire to renew the disrupted “continuity of time”⁴⁰.

Yet the memorial surge of the late 20th and early 21st c. does not signify that society has started to explore its own historical past more scrupulously. On the contrary, according to Hartog, admiration of historical memory has become a true dictate of modernity. Moreover, the adherents of presentism consider that the present is supposed to straightforwardly determine both the past (what we must remember and save, and what we must forget), and the future (what we are building and what fate we are laying for humanity). In summary, the present takes responsibility both for the past and the future. There is a certain rationale here: national consciousness, according to Ernest Renan⁴¹, is not only what is remembered jointly, but also what we must jointly forget.

However, the presentism of the end of the 20th and early 21st c. has some original qualities. At its foundation lies the disappointment in all illusions and ideals. When no faith in a revolutionary idea remains – whether in a socialist society, the nation state, or a better future – then only affluence, comfort, and the tempting changeability of feelings acquire the greatest value. François Hartog lists the most divergent manifestations of such “household” presentism: from the worldview of an unemployed (and untroubled) clochard to the contemplative philosophy of a wealthy tourist; from cosmetic products against obesity and ageing, to the most modern information technologies.

We should note that the present behaves very aggressively in the process of its “self-adoration”: it is not enough for the present just to be the present; it strives to secure a place in history, to perpetuate itself in it. Politicians consciously build up their biographies as paths constructed from consecutive steps leading to

40 F. Hartog, *Order of time, regimes of historicity*, [electronic resource] available at: *<http://magazines.ru/nz/2008/3/ar3.html>; F. Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, New York 2015.

41 E. Renan, “What is a Nation?” [in:] *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. E. Geoff, R. Grigor, New York and Oxford 1996, p. 41–55.

"historic" acts, while also displaying significant interest in their own family histories (there are active searches through genealogical archives).

Sociologists and political strategists, who construct an image of their patron with references to all possible opinion polls over a period of time, are in great demand. Various anniversaries, whether of commercial companies or educational establishments, become key elements creating an institution's image and brand. The same can be said about various national celebrations, with their fireworks and fancy parades, through which the ruling strata, who profess presentism, try to sanctify their own identity.

In our heyday of presentism, "memory" acquires an ever-growing value, pushing the science of history into second place. Presentism tries to raise the study of the collective memory of a certain region or social stratum to the level of an analogue of the "history of mentalities". Memory, which serves presentism, becomes a way of perceiving and sharing its narrow-minded understanding of the spirit of the present among the wider public. Various realms of memory are constantly constructed and reconstructed according to the current conjecture, which prompts the most varied, sometimes traumatic reactions from other segments of society. To please the ruling class, national histories are rewritten, different national symbols are created. "National heroes", who are supposed to perpetuate the present fragment in the life of the country and give it the status of a truly historic epoch, are mass-produced with proper grandeur and honors.

In such conditions, historians lose a number of functions that used to be theirs. Historians cease to serve as a "raw nerve", trying to map and think out of the indistinct lines of the future in the past; they cease to be intermediaries between the past and the future. They are replaced by spin-doctors who become liaisons between contemporaries, granting them (at their own permission) a certain place in the modern social hierarchy. Spin-doctors simultaneously select from the past only those things which correspond to the historic memory of statesmen in the present, while at the same time neglecting those things which have lost significance for their noble contemporaries, and which they thus consider irrelevant to the social interest. Ultimately, the disciples of national memory and their comrades talk only about the things that the political leaders want to remember and, by no means, about the ones they wish to forget.

This vernacular and abridged historical memory, damaged as a result of the above-mentioned circumstances, in the short term turns into a free-floating meta-history, because in the battle between memory and history preference is now given to memory. Moreover, the opinion that this "filtered" understanding of history is, in fact, an implementation of the idea of "responsibility to the memory of past generations" has been imposed on public opinion.

What are we celebrating?

According to well-established tradition, the success of celebrating any anniversary whose date has been agreed upon (and this has become standard practice) depends on its meaningfulness. The question of “what super-task we are setting and what ultimate result we are expecting” must always be at the forefront. From the Ukrainian viewpoint, this super-task on the public level was formulated by Larysa Ivshyna in her preface to the book *The power of the soft sign, or the return of the Rus' Law* (*Sila m'jakogo znaka, abo Povernenna Rus'koi pravdi*): “to rise to the level of our own history!”. At the same time, it would be worthwhile to single out the dominant link that could become paramount in the context of the beginning of the third millennium. We consider, relating to Immanuel Wallerstein's concept, that this could be expressed in the formula: “Rus'-Ukraine as a world system”, primarily as a system of power and respective moral and socio-normative culture. Subsequently, we could also analyze the progress of Ukrainian history from this perspective.

The history of Ukraine provides a peculiar illustration of the complexity and ambiguity of the manifestation of a central sociocultural law – namely, the determination of the extent of cultural and social practice involved in unifying the character of a civilization. The main dialectical contradiction which was placed in the genetic pool of the Ukrainian people who formed after the collapse of Rus' lay in the fact that the religious and cultural heritage (primarily Eastern Greek-Byzantine), through the influence of historical circumstances, was able present an appropriate response to the challenge posed by the socio-political system of the West.

The Baptism of Rus' in Kiev over 1,000 years ago had its own peculiar features. Cyril and Methodius, while still in Great Moravia, tried to defend the right of the Slavic community to independence, thus the right to search for their own way between the Roman and Byzantine influences.⁴² They tried to solve the Schism, which back then was already looming, by returning to the truths of early Christianity. The evangelism of Kievan Christianity was oriented towards the tradition of the Apostle Paul, which stipulated the unity and equality of all people in Christ. This version of Christianity established the preconditions for the idea of a “free individual”, the interest in the inner world of the person, their soul, their search for God, martyrdom, and compassion. The New Testament lay foundations for a free individual in the mentality of the people.⁴³

42 *Ukrains'kaja cerkva Miz Shodom i Zahodom*, ed. P. Yarotsky, Kiev 1966.

43 *Istorija religii v Ukraini u dvoh tomah*, vol. 2: *Ukrains'kje pravoslav'ja*, Kiev 1977.

Ultimately, the mainstream of the socio-normative culture of the Ukrainian people formed in the tradition of early Eastern Christianity, appealing to equality and the Non-possessors Movement. In addition, the interaction of two opposite tendencies – eastern cultural heritage on the one hand, and the innovative rationalist influences of Western social relations on the other hand – pushed Ukrainians towards a synthesis of the East and West, making Ukraine an initiator of unifying traditions. Unfortunately, the outcomes were dramatic. Ukraine, situated between the worlds of Greek-Byzantine and Western Roman cultures, and being a lawful member of both, endeavored throughout its history to unify these two traditions into one living synthetic model. It approached this synthesis in the great epochs of its history, yet, despite numerous opportunities and partial successes, the efforts towards forming an ultimate synthesis fell flat. Ukraine failed to fulfill this mission fully and collapsed under the yoke of extreme external pressure and internal contradictions.

The 20th c. once again presented Ukraine with the task of self-determination. The cofounder of Ukrainian twentieth-century historiography, Mykhailo Hrushevsky⁴⁴, saw the solution in a synthesis of the historic experience which the Ukrainian people had gained both during the principality period (prior to the Union of Lublin in 1569) and during the Hetmanate era (from the age of Khmelnitsky until 1764). Yet the liberation movement of 1917–1921 exposed the insufficient statist capacity of the peasantry, who constituted up to 90 percent of the overall Ukrainian population. The solution of the synthesis problem and consequently of the emergence of modern Ukraine once again was postponed until new geopolitical conditions appeared and new driving forces accumulated.

The theorist of Ukrainian statecraft, Vyacheslav Lypynsky, presented the future task in a fundamentally new light: instead of perceiving Ukrainians as an *ethnos*, he urged creating Ukrainianness in the mode of a civil society capable of synthesizing the experiences of East and West. In this context, Lypynsky wrote that “the main difference between Ukraine and Moscow is not language, not tribe, not faith [...], but a political order formed in branches, a different method of organizing the ruling stratum, with differing relations between the top and the bottom, the state and the citizenry – those who govern in respect of those who are governed”⁴⁵.

44 M. Hruševs'kij, *Istoriia Ukrains'kyj-Rusy*, vol. 1–10, Lviv, Kiev 1991–2000.

45 V. Lypynsky, *Listy do brativ-hliborobiv. Pro ideju i organizaciju ukraїns'kogo monarhizmu*, Kiev, Philadelphia 1995, p. XXV.

These are distinctive and differing features of the Russians and the Ukrainians that the “ringleaders” of the “triune Russian world” are trying not to notice in close-up, waving the bugaboo of *mazepinstvo*⁴⁶ as the manifestation of separatism, radical nationalism, and even racism. This is an extremely sad consequence of our modernity, one which creates a demand for such ideologists who contribute to discord both between Russia and Ukraine and within Ukrainian society itself. As the leading theorist in the field of structural anthropology, Claude Lévi-Strauss, explains: “Any culture develops as a result of the exchange with other cultures. But it is necessary that every culture should offer some resistance, because otherwise it will lose very soon what is inherent to it.”⁴⁷

Thus, this “certain resistance” in the sphere of culture is the barrier that some Ukrainians will struggle to overcome. Others will fail to overpower it in the case of the proposed Russian participation in the common jubilee celebrations on account of the 1,150th anniversary of the origin of Russian statehood announced by the leaders of the Russian Federation.

Common ground

In the first edition of this chapter, published in the Russian journal *Politicheskaja konceptologija* just before the celebration of the jubilee in Russia, I warned: “And if, God forbid, during the jubilee celebrations, the pioneers of certain political forces come to issue mutual accusations of racism or radical nationalism, this will be something verging on a crime against humanity”.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, the worst happened – after the pompous celebration of the jubilee in 2012, Russia resorted to an act of aggression against Ukraine. In February-March 2014, a military invasion and occupation by Russia of an integral part of Ukraine (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and city of Sevastopol) occurred. The second stage of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine started in April 2014. It was then that military groups supervised, controlled, and financed by Russian special forces proclaimed the

46 * Ivan Mazepa, the Hetman of Zaporizhian Host (1687–1708), during the Great Northern War deserted the army of Tsar Peter the Great and sided with King Charles XII of Sweden. Mazepa has been negatively presented in the traditional Russian and Soviet historiography and culture of memory, which derogatorily refers to Ukrainian emancipatory attempts as *mazepinstvo*.

47 See: <https://www.scribd.com/document/155012071/Interview-Levi-Strauss-1988-Eribon>.

48 *Politicheskaja konceptologija* 2, 2012, p. 160–180.

creation of the Donetsk People's Republic (April 7, 2014) and the Lugansk People's Republic (April 27, 2014). Regular military groups employed by Russia in the war against Ukraine were systematically reinforced by Russian mercenaries from the reserves of the Russian Federation's military forces. At the end of August 2014, Russia's war entered its third stage – the direct military incursion into mainland Ukraine with the use of their regular military forces.

This incursion into Ukraine was accompanied by an unparalleled ideological cover-up claiming that "nationalists" and "fascists" had supposedly come to power in Ukraine. The Kiev establishment, as the separatists claimed, used the army for "punitive actions" against their own people, who had supposedly expressed their will and proclaimed "their" republic in Donbass. Russia, allegedly, had chosen to protect the traditional values established in early medieval Rus' – Orthodoxy, national character, and commonality. In the system of Moscow's traditional values Ukrainians are not a separate nation, but only a component of the "triune Russian world" consisting of the Great Russians, Small Russians, and Belarussians (White Russians), while the territory of Ukraine is merely the "backyard" of Russian statehood. This was ultimately caused by ideological campaigns like the 1,150th anniversary of Russian statehood, which Russia is currently trying to revive within its old imperial boundaries.

In order to avoid the need to analyze Russian biases (this is a matter for a separate paper), we should refer to the famous Russian political commentator, poet, and Russian nationalist, Aleksey Shiropaev (by the way, I treat the notion of nationalism without prejudice, simply as one of the trends present in public opinion). According to Shiropaev, when talking about the "fraternal Ukrainian people", most Russians consider the Ukrainian language and heritage to be a regrettable historical irregularity, a historical anomaly, one which came into being as a result of the harmful Catholic influence of Lithuania and Poland: "And at the same time, the Russians never ask themselves: maybe they themselves are an anomaly?"⁴⁹

However, one positive sign is that a new attitude towards Ukraine is now being formed among the milieu of the Russian democratic intelligentsia, though this process is somewhat ambivalent. This is illustrated by the publications from the Yeltsin era, when such highly esteemed Russian historians as Yury Pivovarov and Andrey Fursov defended the pro-European alternative for Russia's development.

49 A. Shiropaev, Ukrainskij i rossijskij puti v istorii: tolchok k razmyshlenijam, [electronic resource] available at: <http://www.day.kiev.ua/290619?idsource=298307&mainlang=rus>.

Later their paths diverged and currently only Pivovarov, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, supports this stance. Nevertheless, at that period, the authors were in agreement:

It is necessary to look into history more deeply, into the Kiev period, always remembering that the “Kiev model” was not only different from the “Moscow model”, but in many respects was its antipode, and that it was not Moscow, but Lithuania [the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Ruthenia, and Samogitia – V.T.] that was the “model” successor of Kievan Rus.⁵⁰

Without renouncing the “Kiev legacy” (and they are right, because Rus^{*} was a unique universe of civilization in Eastern Europe, which, in addition to its Kiev “nucleus” also had a huge “external Rus”), the above-mentioned Russian authors admit that

everything that we call the Russian system started to emerge in the Golden Horde era (we consider this term more adequate than the “appanage epoch”), during the times of the “white-boned” Horde rulers [...]. The historic moment of eternal significance, the birth of the Russian System, was the Great Tsarist Revolution (1517/1565–1649), during which, within the mode of autocracy, the subject of Russian Power was ultimately formed and forged, enabling the creation, construction, carving, imagination, and spatialization of a certain system.⁵¹

For further perspective on the growth of Ukrainian national identity, when we finally comprehend the fullness of the sense of the term “Rus'-Ukraine” and mark some anniversary, it would make sense to take into consideration Yury Pivovarov and Andrey Fursov's interpretation of those characteristics of the “Russian System” of the Kiev period which have also remained significant for modern Ukraine. Primarily, this refers to the fact that back then Rus^{*} was a European and poly-subjective society. The European type of social development is different from others in that it is founded not only on the fixation of the subjectivity of society, but also on the subject in society itself. The adoption of Christianity became not only a huge spiritual revolution, but also a social one. It created a social model of the individual subject where the physical individual and the social individual were combined.

A Christian society is poly-subjective as a social type: separate individuals, groups, corporations, institutions, and the state become (and are recognized) historical subjects. Either way, in the context of power relations, different

⁵⁰ Y. S. Pivovarov, A. M. Fursov, “Russkaja Sistema: genezis, struktura i funkcionirovaniye (tezisy i rabochie gipotezy)”, *Russian Historical Journal* 3, 1998, p. 16.

⁵¹ Y. S. Pivovarov, A. M. Fursov, “Russkaja Sistema...”, p. 16.

principalities of Rus' were "social quadrilaterals" with the vectors constituted by the "prince", "boyardom", "veche", "church", etc. Understandably, different "vectors" were dominant in different lands of Rus'. But even where the dominant "vector" was that of the prince, and even in places, where the prince historically had the best position compared to the other "vectors", where it was not "society" that drove the prince, but rather the prince's power that constructed society (e.g., north-eastern Rus'), this power nevertheless did not have at its disposal a sufficient amount of violence to become absolute and qualitatively alter the correlation of powers or "vectors" in the quadrilateral, let alone break it, or, moreover, deprive the "vectors" of subjectivity.

The arguments of Yury Pivovarov and Andrey Fursov are as follows:

When [Grand Duke of Vladimir-Suzdal (1157–1174) – ed.] Andrei Yuryevich Bogolyubsky decided to follow the principle that "power is ultimate", "power is everything", and tried to steamroll the boyars and the Church, to become the first absolute monarch in Russian histories (and retrospectively in Russian History) and to turn the "quadrilateral" of power into a singular point of Power from which everything else emerges, he was sent to kingdom come.⁵²

At that point, the prince's aspirations had not yet become dominant, and the authorities did not have the force to conduct pervasive violence because the armed people opposed it. A Rus' commoner of pre-Mongol times often was not only armed, but also knew that he could count on the support of the veche.

What happened to the democratic traditions of Rus' later is a separate research topic. The history of a given society is an open system, while its development is not fatally doomed – there are always alternatives, as well as the influence of chance. The historic process could be deemed mystical, were we to exclude the role of chance or accident from it, Karl Marx wrote, and he was right. This statement is especially important today, when we are faced with choices – between the traditions of the democratic system of power and those of autocracy. This is a choice that depends on each of us. It is this choice, above all, that should be brought to public attention by the organizers of festivities, should it ever come to adopting an official decree about the anniversary of Rus'-Ukraine.

However, I believe that Ukraine currently lacks the necessary social consensus on the issue of proclaiming an anniversary of Ukrainian statehood. Moreover, the state itself is not yet in a condition to arouse in the public all the piety necessary for such anniversary festivities. What could definitely unite Ukraine is consolidation in the practice of a high level of social justice and equality of all

52 Ibidem, p. 19.

people under the law, which is something that Taras Shevchenko was urging us to do. The 200th anniversary of his birth coincided with the Euromaidan, which was remarkable and serendipitous. We hope that we will be equal to his inescapable longing:

Will there be judgement? Will there be punishment?
For the kings and kinglets in this world?
Will there be truth amongst the people?
There should be! For the sun will rise
And scorch the desecrated earth.⁵³

Translated by Yuriy Velykoroda

53 T. Shevchenko. *Zibrannja tvoriv*, vol. 2: *Poezija 1847–1861*, Kiev 2003, p. 363.

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