Contents

Baltic
Sea

KORELA

Lake
Onega

Lake
Ladoga

CHUD

Suksona River

60°

20°

30°

40°

60°

ESTS

Yurev

Ladoga

Beloozero
VES

SLOVENIANS
Novgorod

Pskov

KURS

LIVS

ZHMUD

Nemunas

N. Dvina R.

POLOCHANIANS

Toropets

Volga

Yaroslavl

Rostov

Vladimir

Kliazma R.

Murom

Polatsk

KRIVICHIANS

KYIVAN

Oka River

MORDVA

Gdańsk

PRUSSIANS

LITHUANIANS

YATVINGIANS

Iziaslavl

Mensk

R.

Orsha

Vitsebsk

Smolensk

VIATICHIANS

Dubok

Visula

Hrodna

DREHOVICHIANS

RADIMICHIANS

Starodub

Desna R.

POLES

Brest

Pinsk

Turaü

Liubech

Lystven

Novhorod
Siverskyi

Kursk

Sandomierz

DEREVLIANIANS

Volodymyr

Ovruch

Chernihiv

SIVERIANS

Cracow

Cherven

Iskorosten

Romny

50°

Belz

DULEBIANS

Kyiv

50°

Sanok

Peremyshl
(Przemysl)

POLIANIANS

Pereiaslav

Halych

Terebovlia

Boh River

Korsun

Dnipro R.

Donets River

RUS'

SLOVAKS

DULEBIANS

TIVERTSIANS

Dnister River

Prut R.

ULYCHIANS

River

PECHENEGS

POLOVTSIANS

Don

R.

MAGYARS

20°

Danube

Oleshia

Sea of
Azov

KHAZARS

Kuban

R.

Tmutorokan

River

Dorostolon

Bilhorod

Pereiaslavets

Kherson

Surozh

KASOGS

BULGARS

Preslav

Black Sea

Philippopolis

Adrianople

Constantinople

BYZANTINE
EMPIRE

40°

30°

— — Border of Kyivan Rus' (1054)

- - - Western territories annexed by
Volodymyr the Great (980 to 1015)

—·—· Border of Byzantine Empire

ZHMUD Peoples and tribes

0   100   200   300   400   500 km

0   100   200   300 miles

Rus' Principalities ca. 1100

Lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries

SOURCE: *Encyclopedia of Ukraine,* ed. Volodymyr Kubijovyč and Danylo Husar Struk, vol. IV (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

The Hetmanate and surrounding territories in the 1750s

The Hetmanate

RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Desna River

Dnieper River

Starodub

Chernihiv

POLISH-

LITHUANIAN

Kyiv

Nizhyn

Pryluky

Pereiaslav

Lubny

Hadiach

COSSACKS OF

Kharkiv

COMMONWEALTH

Myrhorod

SLOBODA UKRAINE

Poltava

Izium

SLAVIANO-SERBIA

NOVO-SERBIA

ZAPOROZHIAN COSSACKS

Zaporozhian Sich

TATARS

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Sea of Azov

Bahçesaray

Black Sea

0   100   200   300 km

0   50   100   150   200 miles

Introduction

Ukrainians probably have just as much right to brag about their role in changing the world as Scots and other nationalities about which books have been written asserting their claim to have shaped the course of human history. In December 1991, as Ukrainian citizens went to the polls en masse to vote for their independence, they also consigned the mighty Soviet Union to the dustbin of history. The events in Ukraine then had major international repercussions and did indeed change the course of history: the Soviet Union was dissolved one week after the Ukrainian referendum, and President George H. W. Bush declared the final victory of the West in the prolonged and exhausting Cold War.

The world next saw Ukraine on television screens in November 2004, when festive orange-clad crowds filled the squares and streets of Kyiv demanding fair elections and got their way. The Orange Revolution gave a common name to a number of "color revolutions" that shook authoritarian regimes from Serbia to Lebanon and from Georgia to Kyrgyzstan. The color revolutions did not change the post-Soviet world, but they left a lasting legacy and the hope that it would change one day. Ukrainians reappeared on the world's television screens in November and December 2013, when they poured onto the streets of Kyiv once again, this time in support of closer ties with the European Union. At a time when enthusiasm for the European Union was at a low ebb among its member countries, the readiness of the Ukrainians to march and stay on the streets in subzero temperatures for days, weeks, and months surprised and inspired the citizens of western and central Europe.

Events in Ukraine took an unexpected and tragic turn in early 2014, when a confrontation between the protesters and government forces violently disrupted the festive, almost street-party atmosphere of the earlier protests. In full view of television cameras, riot police and government snipers opened fire, wounding and killing dozens of pro-European demonstrators in February 2014. The images shocked the

world. So did the Russian annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 and, later that spring, Moscow's campaign of hybrid warfare in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. In July, the downing by pro-Russian separatists of a Malaysian airliner with almost three hundred people on board turned the Russo-Ukrainian conflict into a truly international one. The developments in Ukraine had a major impact on European and world affairs, causing politicians to speak of a "battle for the future of Europe" and a return of the Cold War in the very part of the world where it had allegedly ended in 1991.

What has caused the Ukraine Crisis? What role does history play in those events? What differentiates Ukrainians from Russians? Who has the right to the Crimea and to eastern Ukraine? Why do Ukrainian actions have major international repercussions? Such questions, asked again and again in recent years, deserve comprehensive answers. To understand the trends underlying current events in Ukraine and their impact on the world, one has to examine their roots. That, in very general terms, is the main task of this book, which I have written in the hope that history can provide insights into the present and thereby influence the future. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict the outcome and long-term consequences of the current Ukraine Crisis or the future of Ukraine as a nation, the journey into history can help us make sense of the barrage of daily news reports, allowing us to react thoughtfully to events and thus shape their outcome.

This book presents the *longue durée* history of Ukraine from the times of Herodotus to the fall of the USSR and the current Russo-Ukrainian conflict. But how does one distill more than a millennium of the history of a place the size of France, which has close to 46 million citizens today and has had hundreds of millions over the course of its existence, into a couple of hundred pages? One has to pick and choose, as historians have always done. Their approaches, however, differ. The founder of modern Ukrainian historiography, Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866–1934), who is a character in this book and the scholar for whom the chair of Ukrainian history at Harvard University is named, regarded his subject as the history of a nation that had existed since time immemorial and known periods of flourishing, decline, and revival, the latter culminating in the creation of Ukrainian statehood in the course and aftermath of World War I.

Hrushevsky established Ukrainian history as a distinct field of research, but many of his critics and successors have questioned his approach. Hrushevsky's students put emphases on the history of Ukrainian statehood; Soviet historians told the history of Ukraine as one of class struggle; some Western writers have emphasized its multiethnic character; today, more and more scholars are turning to a transnational approach. These latter trends in the writing of Ukrainian and other national histories have influenced my own narrative. I have also taken advantage of the recent cultural turn in historical studies and research on the history of identities. The questions I ask are unapologetically presentist, but I do my best not to read modern identities, loyalties, thoughts, motivations, and sensibilities back into the past.

The title of the book, *The Gates of Europe*, is of course a metaphor, but not one to be taken lightly or dismissed as a marketing gimmick. Europe is an important part of the Ukrainian story, as Ukraine is part of the European one. Located at the western edge of the Eurasian steppe, Ukraine has been a gateway to Europe for many centuries. Sometimes, when the "gates" were closed as a result of wars and conflicts, Ukraine helped stop foreign invasions east and west; when they were open, as was the case for most of Ukraine's history, it served as a bridge between Europe and Eurasia, facilitating the interchange of people, goods, and ideas. Through the centuries, Ukraine has also been a meeting place (and a battleground) of various empires, Roman to Ottoman, Habsburg to Romanov. In the eighteenth century, Ukraine was ruled from St. Petersburg and Vienna, Warsaw and Istanbul. In the nineteenth century, only the first two capitals remained. In the second half of the twentieth, only Moscow ruled supreme over most of the Ukrainian lands. Each of the empires claimed land and booty, leaving its imprint on the landscape and the character of the population and helping to form its unique frontier identity and ethos.

Nation is an important—although not dominant—category of analysis and element of the story that, along with the ever changing idea of Europe, defines the nature of this narrative. This book tells the history of Ukraine within the borders defined by the ethnographers and mapmakers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which often (but not always) coincided with the borders of the present-day Ukrainian state. It follows the development of the ideas and identities linking those lands

together from the times of the medieval Kyivan state, known in historiography as Kyivan Rus', to the rise of modern nationalism and explains the origins of the modern Ukrainian state and political nation. In doing so, the book focuses on Ukrainians as the largest demographic group and, in time, the main force behind the creation of the modern nation and state. It pays attention to Ukraine's minorities, especially Poles, Jews, and Russians, and treats the modern multiethnic and multicultural Ukrainian nation as a work in progress. Ukrainian culture always existed in a space shared with other cultures and early on involved navigating among the "others." The ability of Ukrainian society to cross inner and outer frontiers and negotiate identities created by them constitutes the main characteristic of the history of Ukraine as presented in this book.

Politics, international and domestic, provide a convenient storyline, but in writing this book, I found geography, ecology, and culture most lasting and thus most influential in the long run. Contemporary Ukraine, as seen from the perspective of *longue durée* cultural trends, is a product of the interaction of two moving frontiers, one demarcated by the line between the Eurasian steppes and the eastern European parklands, the other defined by the border between Eastern and Western Christianity. The first frontier was also the one between sedentary and nomadic populations and, eventually, between Christianity and Islam. The second goes back to the division of the Roman Empire between Rome and Constantinople and marks differences in political culture between Europe's east and west that still exist today. The movement of these frontiers over the centuries gave rise to a unique set of cultural features that formed the foundations of present-day Ukrainian identity.

One cannot tell the history of Ukraine without telling the story of its regions. The cultural and social space created by the movement of frontiers has not been homogenous. As state and imperial borders moved across the territory defined by Ukrainian ethnic boundaries, they created distinct cultural spaces that served as foundations of Ukraine's regions—the former Hungarian-ruled Transcarpathia, historically Austrian Galicia, Polish-held Podolia and Volhynia, the Cossack Left Bank of the Dnieper with the lower reaches of that river, Sloboda Ukraine, and finally the Black Sea coast and the Donets basin, colonized in imperial Russian times. Unlike most of my predecessors, I try to avoid treating the history

of various regions (such as the Russian- and Austrian-ruled parts of Ukraine) in separate sections of the book but rather look at them together, providing a comparative perspective on their development within a given period.

In conclusion, a few words about terminology. The ancestors of modern Ukrainians lived in dozens of premodern and modern principalities, kingdoms, and empires, and in the course of time they took on various names and identities. The two key terms that they used to define their land were "Rus' " and "Ukraine." (In the Cyrillic alphabet, Rus' is spelled Русь: the last character is a soft sign indicating palatalized pronunciation of the preceding consonant.) The term "Rus'," brought to the region by the Vikings in the ninth and tenth centuries, was adopted by the inhabitants of Kyivan Rus', who took the Viking princes and warriors into their fold and Slavicized them. The ancestors of today's Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians adopted the name "Rus' " in forms that varied from the Scandinavian/Slavic "Rus' " to the Hellenized "Rossiia." In the eighteenth century, Muscovy adopted the latter form as the official name of its state and empire.

The Ukrainians had different appellations depending on the period and region in which they lived: Rusyns in Poland, Ruthenians in the Habsburg Empire, and Little Russians in the Russian Empire. In the course of the nineteenth century, Ukrainian nation builders decided to end the confusion by renouncing the name "Rus' " and clearly distinguishing themselves from the rest of the East Slavic world, especially from the Russians, by adopting "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian" to define their land and ethnic group, both in the Russian Empire and in Austria-Hungary. The name "Ukraine" had medieval origins and in the early modern era denoted the Cossack state in Dnieper Ukraine. In the collective mind of the nineteenth-century activists, the Cossacks, most of whom were of local origin, were the quintessential Ukrainians. To link the Rus' past and the Ukrainian future, Mykhailo Hrushevsky called his ten-volume magnum opus *History of Ukraine-Rus'*. Indeed, anyone writing about the Ukrainian past today must use two or even more terms to define the ancestors of modern Ukrainians.

In this book, I use "Rus' " predominantly but not exclusively with reference to the medieval period. "Ruthenians" to denote Ukrainians of the early modern era, and "Ukrainians" when I write about modern

times. Since the independent Ukrainian state's creation in 1991, its citizens have all come to be known as "Ukrainians," whatever their ethnic background. This usage reflects the current conventions of academic historiography, and although it makes for some complexity, I hope that it does not lead to confusion.

"Come, and you will see," wrote the anonymous author of *History of the Rus'*, one of the founding texts of modern Ukrainian historiography, at the end of his foreword. I cannot conclude mine with a better invitation.