

Ukraine (Rus) was not Muscovy (Russia)

I've just read /watched your news article about Ukraine and it is a good effort at briefly presenting Ukraine's troubled history but unfortunately it makes some common mistakes when dealing with Ukraine's identity and history. Let me help as I do appreciate your efforts.

I teach Ukrainian history at a Ukrainian Saturday School. Although I've also read Moscow's propaganda about it, and articles by genuine Russian academics on the subject, I was brought up on a diet of Ukrainian history written by Ukrainians and other sources not censored by Moscow's Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet regimes.

Russia did not start in Ukraine. Kyivan (Kievan's proper spelling) Rus was not Russia. Russia has its origins in the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, not Kyivan Rus. Up until the 15th and 16th century European maps by various cartographers show Rus as today's Ukraine and variants of the term "Muscovy", in Ukrainian "Moskovshchyna", over present day Russia. It was the introduction of the word Russia (Rhossiya) by the Russian Tsars in reference to Muscovy that has confused the two words and in effect the two different entities.

It is easy to see why there is a random jump from the word Rus to Russia in English, but in their original languages they are not the same, Rus is pronounced "Roos", as in (Truce) and Russia is pronounced "Rossiya" in Ukrainian, (the o as in "obvious" and in Russian even more differently Rassiya, (the o as an a) two different words, different meanings too, as different in sound as "boot" and "bottle", bell, and ball, no connection.

Tsarist Muscovy soon understood and utilized the fact that this confusion in other languages would help them in stealing the history of Rus (Ukraine) on paper and therefore lay false claim to the history and culture of Ukraine's and Belarus's ancestry. One explanation of the word Rus (Русь) is old Ukrainian for the colour Russet as in russet apple, russet being an old word probably from or Rusa as in blonde (hair colour). Rassiya (Россия) (Russia in Russian) could stem from the verb рассеянный "Rasseyaniy" "the scattered", a self-aggrandizement of the ability to spread out (i.e. conquer) which came to prevalence in Tsarist times when Russia really started expanding under the likes of Tsar Peter. The word Russians in the phrase "many Russians" is многие россияне (mnogiye Rosiyane). See the similarity in Raseyaniy (scattered) and Rassiyanе (Russians). You won't find this possible explanation in most Russian history books here. It was however taught as one explanation in schools in Ukraine. I had the benefit of having my late Father's schooling from Ukraine passed down to me.

Many Ukrainians still refer to Russians colloquially as "Moskali" (Muscovites) in reference to their original country name and ethnicity, a tag Russians can find annoying as it alludes to their real northern and not assumed "Kyivan Rus" roots. Kyivan Rus was the predecessor state of today's Ukraine and Belarus, not Russia. Kyivan Rus's strength as a state with a capital in Kyiv declined as its quarrelling princes in each of its principalities argued over power. The final blow was the Mongol invasion of 1237–40, that resulted in the destruction of Kyiv. The invading Mongols together with their conquered Turkic subjects Cumans, Kipchaks, Bulgars formed the state of the Golden Horde. The Kyiv Dynasty lineage passed into the Kingdom of Halych Volhynia with King Danylo, which became part of the Ukrainian Lithuanian Commonwealth and then was eventually assimilated by the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, and not northwards to Moscow/Suzdal. The Mongol-dominated Vladimir-Suzdal and Novgorod entities, two regions on the northern periphery of Kyivan Rus, established the basis for the modern Russian nation. There was no voluntary northward succession from Kyiv to Moscow.

Many of Russia's real historians (as opposed to imperial and Soviet propagandists) quote Russia's non-Ukrainian origin. According to Russian historian Lev Gumilev, "Russians went to the Kulikovo battle (1380) as citizens of various principalities and returned as a united Russian nation". Kyivan Rus had already been in existence for centuries with Kyiv as its capital before this "Russian Nation" Gumilev talks of sprang up.

Whereas the Slavic descendants of Kyivan Rus en masse are today's Ukrainians and Belarusians, the lands of today's Russia were mostly non Slavic although there was a few Slavic tribes such as "Vyatychi" in Russia, but even they moved from just east of the Vistula river in Poland to settle in today's Russia and didn't originate in Russia. Unlike "Russia", Ukraine is not a recent word either. "Ukraine" was first used to describe Kyivan Rus in 1187 in the Hypatian codex of the Primary Chronicles of Kyivan Rus, & Halych Volynia as discovered by Russian historian Karamzin. The term Russia however started to be used some 500 years later, in 1721, the start of the "Russian Empire".

Indigenous Volga-Finno peoples (not to be confused with Finns) lived where the area around Moscow is today. Merya, Mari, Muromians, Meshchera, Mordvins, and further north east Permians. These peoples far from embracing the culture of Kyivan Rus resisted Slavicisation for a long time having an array of their own languages. Russian Historian Rybakov emphasizes the unique Ukrainian origin of Rus and the Russian archeologist Spitsyn emphasized there was no mass colonization of Muscovy by Ukrainians. The word Moscv (Moscow) itself is not of Slavic origin. One theory suggests that it is from an ancient Finnic language, in which it means "dark" and "turbid", or the name may come from the Finno-Permic Komi language, meaning "cow-river" or from the Finno-Volgaic Mordovian language, meaning "bear-river". Another claim is that the word is a changed version of the Mongolian word "mushka," meaning tangled or angled re the tangled and angled setup of the Moscow River that much of the city is located next to. Princes from Kyiv did go north and ruled over the non Slavic indigenous populations of this northern principality of Rus, and eventually Suzdal /Mosovshchyna (Muscovy) took on its own "proto Russian" identity, but that does not mean Russia has its origins in today's Ukraine. That would be as ridiculous as saying that because Rome ruled over most of the United Kingdom (excluding Scotland) it follows that England and Wales had their origins in Italy.

Regarding forming "Russian Orthodoxy" in Kyiv, you have been misinformed. Christian communities had existed and been tolerated in Ukraine since the 3rd century AD. St. Andrew is said to have visited the three hills Kyiv was later built on and prophesized there would be a great Christian city there.

Prince Volodymyr of Kyiv chose the Byzantine Rite (style) of Christianity from Constantinople, but in 988, the year he chose it, there was still "One Universal Apostolic Church" with two cultural halves, Roman and Byzantine. Volodymyr the Great in effect chose the Byzantine style of a united church with a Pope. Popes sat either in Byzantium or Rome. "Orthodoxy" as it is understood today didn't come into existence until 1054 when Archbishop Cerularios of Greece broke off relations with Rome. How could Volodymyr have chosen a church that had not come into existence yet? Furthermore how could an as yet nonexistent country (Russia) adopt an as yet nonexistent denomination of a religion ("Orthodoxy") in another country (Kyivan Rus)? Prince Volodymyr maintained friendly relations with Rome, accepting delegations from there on numerous occasions refusing and to get involved in the Rome / Constantinople split, whilst repudiating Greek attempts at being meddling in Ukrainian church affairs. Whilst this was all happening Russia as a concept didn't exist for a few more centuries until the battle of 1380 against the Golden Horde. Ukrainians, both Catholic and Orthodox call themselves "Orthodox" Christians in the original meaning of the word, "PravoSlavniy" in Ukrainian which simply means "The right way to worship". Ukraine's particular Catholic and Orthodox denominations occurred later in Ukraine's history.

Russia's own version of "Orthodoxy", in opposition to , and not successor to or relation of Kyiv's church, didn't even have a Patriarchy until 1589, whereas the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, like the Ukrainian Catholic one, has its origins in the one Universal Apostolic (pre 1054 split church) adopted by Grand Prince Volodymyr's for his baptism of Ukraine in 988. Most Ukrainians don't differentiate that much between Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox, calling them "nashi, (ours) and feel at home in both seeing them as descendants of the church of Ukraine's ancestor state, Rus. They do however see a difference between the Ukrainian Orthodox original church and Russian Orthodox, "pretender" church.

Regarding Slavs origins, a simple linguistic test that proves the primacy of Ukraine's ancestors as the centre of Rus and Slavic civilization is that any other Slav (including a Russian) finds it easier to converse with a Ukrainian in Ukrainian than with another non Ukrainian Slav, and that is from research by Russian experts on the subject. It is also an established fact that Slavs originated in the Ukrainian "Dnieper Basin".

Ukrainian is the descendant of the "parent" of Slavic languages through which other Slavs can most easily understand each other.

Ukraine's history has been mostly defined not by being divided within itself, but by repeating its desire to be united against the wishes of foreign powers who tried repeatedly to completely conquer it.

Regarding the idea of differences in allegiances in East and West Ukraine, Ukraine's nationalism is not exclusively a "Western Ukrainian" concept either. The Father of Ukrainian Nationalism, Dmytro Donstov, was from Melitopil, Southeastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian Youth Association, a patriotic Ukrainian Equivalent of the Scouts that has branches worldwide, was originally formed not in Lviv, but in Eastern Ukraine's city of Kharkiv in the 1920's. Symon Petulra, leader of the Ukrainian liberation army after the Russian Revolution had a significant number of recruits from Kuban, a Ukrainian ethnographic area south east of Eastern Ukraine just north of the Caucasus, now in Russia. Is Ukrainian nationalism a recent phenomenon? Let's go back a few centuries. Left with no choice Bohdan Khmelnitsky was one Cossack leader who signed a military alliance with Russia, one of many alliances Ukraine needed over the years playing off its aggressive neighbours. Russia has always willfully misinterpreted this alliance as an "act of union", but what about the Ukrainian Cossack leader Ivan Mazepa who fought Russia aligned with King Charles 12th of Sweden? What about the routing of Russia's imperial forces by Ukrainian Cossack leader Ivan Vyhovsky at the battle of Konotop in 1659? If this is Eastern Ukraine's "love for Russia" it is a funny way of showing it. The Zaporizhian Cossacks, the most famed for their daring and fighting ability had their base not in Lviv, but in eastern Ukraine.

Russia showed its "love" for Ukraine repeatedly. Moscows Andriy Boholubskiy did a harsher job in ruining Kyiv than the Asiatic nomadic hordes from the far east. It is said these non Christian shamanist/animist Asiatic nomads had more respect for Ukrainian churches than "Christian" Muscovite Boholubsky did. The Zagorska Church in Moscow is probably filled with religious artefacts stolen from the churches he ransacked and burnt down when he invaded Kyiv. Move on to Tsarist times, and the Ukrainian language was banned on a number of occasions, starting with the "Emsky Ukaz" in 1876 a decree by Tsar Alexander 2nd right up to Lenin's banning of Ukrainian in Soviet times. Move into recent history and we have the Soviet Moscow orchestrated Genocide of Ukraine "Holodomor", death by starvation, (defined as a Genocide by the terms originator, Polish Jewish Lawyer Raphael Lemkin) which claimed between 7 and 10 million Ukrainians lives in 1932-33, and then a decade later we have Ukraine's decimation by the Nazis. Ironically Stepan Bandera, leader of Ukraine's nationalist organization OUN is referred to by some western "academics" as a Nazi "collaborator" and yet on 30th June 1941 he declared UDI for Ukraine in Lviv against the wishes of Hitler and was promptly arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Is this a strange type of "collaboration", or Moscow's oldest trick, stating that any enemy of Moscow must belong to or sympathize with some "undesirable" formation? The Ukrainian nationalists military wing UPA, fought against the German Nazi war machine as well as the Bolsheviks, a fact conveniently ignored by western "experts".

The truth is, Ukraine's history has been defined not by being divided, but by its persecution from all sides, most notably by Russian imperialism, and its desire despite this persecution to be unified. The last century has a few important dates where different parts of Ukraine ruled by different powers proclaimed their unity against the wishes of Ukraine's neighbours. In 1918 (January 22nd) Ukraine declared independence, and in 1919 (January 22nd) a declaration of an "Act of Union" joined all Ukrainian lands under previous occupiers into one Ukrainian state. The accurate historical sources now becoming increasingly available are still up against the established lies that have sat in the Wests academic institutions and libraries for too long, supplied courtesy of Moscow and never really questioned until recently. Russia's version of Ukrainian history, which is quite simply a lie that suits its own imperial purposes has become the "lazy" way to understand that part of the world. I can recommend two good Ukrainian history books for you. Look up Hrushevsky (the official and most revered history of Ukraine) and Nahayewsky, a more recent but also very scholarly one.

Putin doesn't want Ukraine because its "sacred" to him or because he believes Russia originated in it, he knows very well it didn't as did all his predecessors through Russia's various forms of Imperialism, pre to

post Soviet. It's just Russian Imperialism, plain and simple. Ukraine has been the "battered wife" in a "shotgun marriage" to an "abusive husband" Russia for over 3 centuries, from that military Treaty of Pereyaslav 1654 that Russia wilfully misinterpreted as a union. Putin wants south eastern Ukraine if at all, for its shale gas deposits and for access to and control of the Black Sea. He even did us the rare kindness of a "faux pas" in a TV interview by demonstrating he knows he is a "Moskali" and not a descendant of "Rus". Talking about transport systems in Ukraine on TV a few years ago he refers to his own people, "Russians" by their real original name, "Moskali" not once but twice. <http://youtu.be/VA5JmcwbQUM> . Many Ukrainians bemusedly picked up on it, and many Russians were annoyed by it. Hear it at 42 and 45 seconds. Lies abound, but the truth always comes out in a careless moment and speaks volumes. I hope the above helps give an insight into understanding Ukraine on its own terms, something every country has a right to.

Regards,

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Musician www.ukrainians.org.uk