

GLAGOSLAV

OLEKSANDR SHYSHKO

# TO GET UKRAINE

A REPORT FROM INSIDE THE COUNTRY,  
FOR THOSE LOOKING ON FROM THE OUTSIDE



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by Oleksandr Shyshko

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# CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR . . . . .	7
WHY ARE WE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE PROOF THAT WE EXIST? . . . . .	10
WHO ARE THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE? . . . . .	14
THE ORIGINS OF THE NAME UKRAINE . . . . .	19
RUS, MUSCOVY AND UKRAINE . . . . .	21
WHO STOPPED US FROM FORMING AN ALLIANCE WITH POLAND? . . . . .	25
THE COSSACKS. . . . .	27
UKRAINE'S FIRST ATTEMPT TO GAIN INDEPENDENCE . . . . .	30
UKRAINE'S SECOND ATTEMPT TO GAIN INDEPENDENCE. . . . .	32
THE LEFT BANK OF UKRAINE UNDER RUSSIAN RULE . . . . .	34
THE RIGHT BANK OF UKRAINE UNDER THE RZECZPOSPOLITA . . . . .	36
AN ASSOCIATION OF UKRAINIAN LANDS INSIDE THE BORDERS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE. . . . .	39
THE FIRST RENAISSANCE OF UKRAINIAN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS . . . . .	45
THE UKRAINIANS UNDER THE RULE OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY. . . . .	50
THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN THE TERRITORY OF UKRAINE . . . . .	52
THE THIRD ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN INDEPENDENCE – AND THE MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED? . . . . .	54
THE OCCUPATION OF UKRAINE BY AUSTRO-GERMAN FORCES. . . . .	60
ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO CREATE A UKRAINIAN STATE . . . . .	62
THE UKRAINIAN PEASANTRY TAKES UP ARMS. . . . .	63
FRENCH TROOPS IN UKRAINE . . . . .	65
THE ACT ZLUKY (THE ACT OF UNIFICATION) . . . . .	66

THE RED ARMY IN UKRAINE . . . . .	67
THE WHITE ARMY IS IN UKRAINE – YET THE RED ARMY TRIUMPHS. UKRAINE IS CARVED UP ONCE AGAIN . . . . .	68
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST POWERS AND THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE . . . . .	71
THE MANOEUVRINGS OF THE BOLSHEVIKS TO QUELL UKRAINE’S RESISTANCE . . . . .	73
THE BOLSHEVIKS SHOW HOW THEY REALLY FEEL ABOUT UKRAINE . . . .	76
WHY DID THE BOLSHEVIKS IN MOSCOW HARBOUR SUCH HATRED FOR UKRAINE? A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER . . . . .	79
WHAT EXACTLY IS A "COLLECTIVE FARM"? . . . . .	81
THE CONSEQUENCES OF FORCING THE PEASANTS TO JOIN COLLECTIVE FARMS . . . . .	84
PARANOID STALINIST TERROR IN UKRAINE . . . . .	87
UKRAINE BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR . . . . .	90
THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND UKRAINE . . . . .	93
THE UKRAINIAN REBEL ARMY . . . . .	94
THE POST-WAR PERIOD. WHAT CHANGED FOR UKRAINE? . . . . .	100
THE PERIOD WHICH BECAME KNOWN AS THE ‘THAW’ . . . . .	104
A MOUTHFUL OF ETHNIC FREEDOM? . . . . .	106
UKRAINE’S ‘MEN OF THE SIXTIES’ . . . . .	108
THE ‘PERIOD OF STAGNATION’ . . . . .	112
THE DISASTER AT CHERNOBYL . . . . .	116
THE ATTEMPT TO MODERNIZE THE USSR . . . . .	118
A NEW ERA APPROACHES . . . . .	120
THE POPULATION OF UKRAINE TODAY . . . . .	123
UKRAINIANS LIVING OUTSIDE THEIR NATIVE LAND . . . . .	125
RELIGIONS IN UKRAINE . . . . .	128

LANGUAGES IN UKRAINE . . . . .	130
THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE . . . . .	135
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES . . . . .	139
FINANCIAL RELATIONS IN THE FAMILY . . . . .	143
PROSTITUTION . . . . .	146
UKRAINIAN MAIL-ORDER BRIDES . . . . .	148
A TOUCH OF THE EXOTIC: AGE-OLD TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS . . .	152
EMBROIDERY . . . . .	157
THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE . . . . .	157
LET'S TALK ABOUT FOOD . . . . .	161
WHAT DO UKRAINIANS REALLY EAT, THEN? . . . . .	164
PORK "SALO" . . . . .	167
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS IN UKRAINE . . . . .	169
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN MODERN-DAY UKRAINE . . . . .	179
THE CAPTAINS OF UKRAINE'S MARKET ECONOMY . . . . .	191
THE HETMANS OF MODERN-DAY UKRAINE . . . . .	197
STATISTICS AND REAL LIFE . . . . .	207
SLAYING THE DRAGON . . . . .	210
A FEW CONCLUSIONS THAT CAN BE DRAWN AT THIS STAGE . . . . .	216
THE THINGS WE DISLIKE . . . . .	224
A FEW THINGS THAT WE LIKE . . . . .	228
IN PLACE OF AN EPILOGUE . . . . .	230
SOME TRADITIONAL UKRAINIAN RECIPES WHICH YOU SHOULD TRY IN ORDER TO GET A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THE IDEAS SET OUT IN THIS BOOK . . . . .	231





## FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR

I would like to stress that all the views set out in this book are my own personal opinions. Plenty of my compatriots would disagree with some of them. Yet I also know that many of them share my assessments of the events and processes taking place.

There will no doubt be some who will feel entitled to express stronger opinions, giving vent to more radical and aggressive views, evaluating facts from the past and the present day and passing judgment, in an uncompromising way, on aspects of society, saying who is in the right and who is in the wrong, and ‘judging’ the public figures of the past and the present.

One thing is certain: I am not going to foist my opinion on readers, nor am I willing to get dragged into arguments. I am going to set out my own personal opinion about my country, its past and its present, and it is for you to decide for yourself to what extent it coincides with your own personal impressions of Ukraine.

I have taken the step of offering my vision to readers from other countries for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I am getting on a bit now, and I have spent most of my life in this country; I love it, and genuinely think of myself as a Ukrainian. My narrative is thus a report by a Ukrainian, for people from other countries.

Secondly, unlike many of my fellow citizens, I have driven all over the country in my time, and have even covered quite a bit of it on foot. I have been to all of Ukraine’s big cities, as well as dozens of small towns, villages and hamlets. In the past I used to make these trips on business, but nowadays I tend mostly to travel as a tourist. So I am fairly knowledgeable not only about my home and my hometown, but also about the country as a whole.

Thirdly, I have had occasion to spend time in other countries. In my time I have visited New York, Miami, Vienna, London, Istanbul, Amsterdam, Bremen, Belgrade, Budapest, the Canary Islands, Hawaii, the Seychelles... the list goes on. This was simply the way my life panned out: my business affairs and a natural sense of curiosity led me to visit various parts of the world and

gave me an insight into the way various peoples live. I am therefore aware of the things my country has in common with these other countries, and the ways in which it differs from them.

Fourthly, when I was younger I used to attend lectures alongside Arabs, Vietnamese, Nigerians, Ethiopians, Bulgarians, Czechs and Cubans. In later years I had occasion to work with people from America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Hungary, France, Switzerland, India, Pakistan and Japan.

I would like to think that I have managed, to a certain extent, to grasp the differences in mentality between these various nations, and to form an awareness of specific aspects of the way in which the Ukrainian people interpret the world around them.

The fifth reason is that I spent the first part of my life in Soviet Ukraine, when my country was one of the many nations incorporated into the Soviet Union, and the second part in the independent Ukraine which came into being in 1991, when the state of 'Ukraine', like a phoenix from the flames, was reborn once again. I say 'once again' because for many centuries, attempts to assert Ukrainian statehood had met with failure, in spite of the efforts and sacrifices made by Ukrainian patriots.

I therefore decided to reflect upon what happened in the past and what is happening now, and to have a think about where the country known as 'Ukraine' is headed. People aged under 30 find it hard to do this: their worldview was formed in a new era.

People approaching the age of eighty are unable to talk about such issues calmly. Just think about it: a little over 20 years ago, when a fundamental shift in the socio-economic order in the country occurred, their careers were already coming to an end, and they were looking forward to a quiet retirement surrounded by the beaming faces of their grandchildren.

And suddenly all that was turned upside down...

The mighty Soviet empire came crashing down, and Ukraine became an independent state. But was this something to be welcomed by the elderly, who in an instant lost everything they had saved up over the course of decades of life and work? They felt oppressed, as though the ancient Chinese curse, "May you live in a time of change!" had been put on them.

And here I am, right in between these two generations. I am glad that I lived to see the day when information is available that has not been put through ideological filters. After all, the younger generation – and this is quite natural – is not in a position to be able to comprehend just how drastically things have changed, and how deep the impact of these changes has been. But I can recall a great deal, I find it easy to reflect on it, and I do not seek to thrust my opinion on readers, it is for you to form your own conclusions...

I am going to attempt to draw a small ethnographic, historical, economic and cultural portrait of my native land. I have heard many times what people from other countries think of us. Can I now tell you how we see ourselves, and give you ‘an insider’s view’?

It may be that some readers will begin to think more highly of us after reading my book. After all, we are all neighbours, when it comes down to it. You can fly right round the world these days in a day or even an hour, depending on your chosen method of transport. It’s nice to be able to see for yourself that your neighbours are a good lot.

If there are readers who end up feeling disillusioned, so be it. This book is in no way intended as a brochure, nor is it a tourist guidebook which wants to say: “Come and visit us and give us some of your money.” Those who wish to do business with us must be given an opportunity to achieve greater success in their business affairs by gaining a better understanding of their Ukrainian partners. And those who, after reading this book, refuse to have anything to do with Ukraine whatsoever, ought to thank me for saving them a good deal of unpleasantness.

In my narrative I sometimes refer to people whose names will mean nothing to you. Some of them are long-forgotten here, too. The collective memory of every nation holds onto images of great leaders, generals and heroes whose names mean nothing to the rest of the world, but who are extremely significant to that particular people. To relate the country’s history without mentioning these names would result in a dry and formal narrative, which would lack authenticity. It is beside the point that all the historical figures of note have long since been rated and ranked in order by their descendants. The descendants always seem incredibly sure about which historical figures were in the right and which were in the wrong.

Let us not protest that the history of human civilization has been one continuous battle, in which everyone is pitted against everyone else. At any given moment there will be someone who is the victor and someone who is on the losing side. History is always written by the victors. But the victor is different every time, and therefore history is rewritten once again – is this not the way it works in your countries too?

I have therefore tried to steer clear of long-held clichés when forming judgments about our Ukrainian heroes. You won’t find any reference to the opinions of established authors on this subject in my book, either: I decided for myself which names to mention, which ones to omit, and how to evaluate them. Any similarities between my judgments and those commonly held are therefore purely coincidental.

## WHY ARE WE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE PROOF THAT WE EXIST?

I must say it feels strange to be starting to tell the story of the Ukrainian people with an explanation of the fact that we are, indeed, a nation.

The Ukrainian people have an ancient history, a culture dating back to primordial times, an authentic language and, as many would assert, a distinct national character. Over the course of many centuries, however, the territory of present-day Ukraine, either in full or in part, has been incorporated into several empires, and on each occasion those running the empire have attempted to integrate the local population into their system of values, and destroy Ukrainians' sense of their own national identity.

Their efforts led to a situation in which a nation of many millions, living on a vast area of land, became almost invisible. It is enough to make one wonder how we managed to preserve our authenticity and our collective historical memory.

To this day many people in Europe and North America describe anyone who lives beyond the eastern border of the EU as Russian. The term 'Ukrainians' is not one with which the average man in the street, as opposed to politicians or historians, is overly familiar.

I have even grown accustomed to the fact that a large number of the foreigners I know do not think of Ukrainians as a separate nation, and were unaware of the existence of the Ukrainian language. It is hardly surprising: over the course of the last three centuries, when the territory of Ukraine formed part of the Russian empire, and throughout seventy years of Soviet rule (with Moscow the centre of power, again), a colossal ideological, financial, propaganda-spreading and penal machine was in operation, the objective of which was to crush the Ukrainians' awareness of their own national identity.

I am minded of a good friend of mine from Moscow. Thirty years ago he tried to convince me, in all seriousness, that the Ukrainian language was

dying out, and disappearing, and that before long everyone would be speaking Russian. There would be no distinct nationalities, either, just a single, unified people.

This, as it happens, was the official policy in the USSR: to establish a new historical community, the ‘unified Soviet people’, whose members would all converse in the same language – and Russian had been chosen as this language. I was brought up in the Soviet ideological environment, and this policy appealed to me greatly. It made the state in which I lived at the time seem limitless, from Brest in the West to Khabarovsk in the East, from the Baltic Sea to the Tian Shan mountain range. It was comforting to think that you were a tiny part of such a mighty phenomenon.

Be that as it may, the Ukrainian roots deep within my soul forced me, committed Komsomol member as I was, to object to what my friend back then in Moscow said: “What do you mean, the Ukrainian language will disappear? We teach children in our schools in Ukrainian, we have huge areas where Ukrainian is not just the only language people speak: they think in it, too, we have our own Ukrainian literature, both classic and modern. I enjoy reading books written in Ukrainian myself, given that I’m bilingual, and take pleasure in hearing the language, with its luscious sounds, precision and melodic tone.”

What one must understand is that the official Soviet ideology sought to water down the Ukrainian people’s self-recognition by citing the shared past of these two peoples – the Russians and the Ukrainians. The idea was put about that Russians and Ukrainians share the same roots, that they are brother-peoples who were torn asunder by a whim of history, but then reunited once again. The Russians were of course portrayed as the more senior, and the Ukrainians as the younger of the two peoples.

I’m afraid my Russian friend may not have too many positive things to say about Ukraine today. It is always hurtful when events unfold in completely the opposite way to the one you forecasted.

In the last 20 years a different historical narrative has become accessible to Ukrainians, one that has not been dissected by the official imperial historians, but is founded on evidence and documents which were previously subject to a ban on being freely studied. It has suddenly emerged that Ukrainians and Russians are not the same, and are far from being brothers: there is reason to believe that they are not even particularly closely related, but are simply neighbours, who have had very different attitudes towards one another throughout history.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth reading the book by the second President of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, *Ukraine is not Russia*. The book’s title alone is telling.

In 1991 it became clear that the Communists had failed to form a single people. When the USSR collapsed, the economic disparities and political ambitions of the regional leaders caused a whole series of conflicts and wars between countries whose citizens had until recently referred to one another as ‘brother-peoples’. Nationalist tensions began to ferment, and bones of contention going back a hundred years were recalled. One must not forget, either, the ‘assistance’ provided by foreign states, which had an interest in stepping up their influence in the former Soviet republics.

Interestingly, the formal liquidation of the Soviet Union took place by a mutual decision by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. As for whether they were driven, at that moment, by an awareness of the historical inevitability that the Communist empire would disintegrate, or by personal ambition, and the desire to become a head of state – head of a small state, admittedly, but one that would be their own – is for history to decide. The die was cast, and the process of political delimitation had begun. Above all, however, the process of the dividing up of the single economic complex of a vast country had begun, and this was to have devastating consequences for the people.

I can well understand where the Russians – or rather, the Russian citizens of the Russian Federation – are coming from. It is one thing for us Ukrainians to feel that we have found independence from an empire; it is quite another

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This is a man who held one of the most influential positions of all in the Soviet Union: he was the director of the flagship Soviet rocket-building plant, Yuzhmash, a member of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party (i.e. he was part of the apparatus of power in Soviet times) – and then suddenly, when he was President of Ukraine, came up with this explosive work. He did not write anything with a title such as Ukrainians and Russians are brother-peoples. On the contrary, his book emphasizes in sundry ways the difference differences between the two ethnicities, not only in their culture and traditions, but also in their mentality and psychology.

To be honest, I am genuinely of the belief that any comparison of the peoples based on anthropometric or psychological criteria is a perverse exercise; and any comparison of their natures and psychological traits – even more so. The genes of the modern Ukrainian nation (like the Russian one) now contain a mixture of so many ethnicities that any attempt to distinguish ‘true’ Ukrainians based on anthropometric characteristics would seem stupid.

A recent trend among people in the mass media, who love to invent all kinds of sensations, is to look for traces of some sort of ‘special’ line of descent among the Ukrainian people, in their DNA. ‘Studies’ such as this are of course nothing more than juggling with quasi-scientific concepts, using comments made by academics and taken out of context, and other forms of verbal sleight of hand. Yet these shows are often watched by people who would describe themselves as intellectuals, and I can understand this: they are an instinctive reaction to the attempts made over many centuries by the Russians, who held sway over the empire of peoples, to oppress the consciousness of the Ukrainians as an independent nation. It is not hard to understand the train of thought of the average person: “How about that, we’ve been told for so long that we don’t even exist as a separate people, and now it turns out that we’re special in some way!”

Today, as I see it, anyone who identifies himself as a Ukrainian and sees benefit for the country in its independence and territorial integrity should be thought of as a Ukrainian. As for what’s in our DNA, I don’t believe this is relevant at all in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Noah’s Ark contained just two of every bird and beast, and yet they arrived safely in Ararat. We shall do likewise.

for the central nation in that empire to come to terms with the fact that it has lost its spheres of influence, and that its former vassals want to negotiate with it on an equal footing. This is quite distressing for people who have always seen themselves as the more senior, more important partner, and looked on the others as younger and in need of wise guidance.

And I know that such feelings can be attributed not only to the effect of the official Russian propaganda machine, which inflates them out of all proportion, creating the notion of the 'ungrateful' Ukrainians. This reaction is as natural as the reaction of people living in a metropolis to declarations of independence by its colonies. It is not as if European nations need to be told about this. There have been ample occasions in the history of the European countries when they have experienced precisely this feeling.

We, on the other hand – the Ukrainian people – are obliged to begin our story by identifying ourselves, and by explaining we ought not to be lumped together with other nations. What are we to do? To a large extent, Ukrainians themselves are to blame for the fact that their national identity has become so blurred.

The Ukrainian people have had so many opportunities throughout history to assert and strengthen their statehood. They have another such opportunity now.

In the past, the failures of the national project were rooted not only in the aggression of the country's neighbours, but in the lack of outstanding and lasting national leaders, and in the people's inability to put to one side local, regional, narrow interests, to forget insults, both real and imagined, suffered by their ancestors, and to advance, on the basis of the common idea of national independence and territorial integrity.

We shall see how things work out on this occasion.

# WHO ARE THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE?

I do not intend to begin an academic debate about the origins of the Ukrainian people, the sources of Ukrainian statehood or the process of forming a Ukrainian national and literary language. I shall merely set out my understanding of these phenomena, which is founded on a study of many official and less official sources. It may be that some readers will seek to put their own interpretation on the facts I am going to set out – and they are entitled to do so.

Today's political leaders love to cite incidents from history in order to back up their theories. Often, though, their wilful interpretation of historical facts has a pragmatic, utilitarian objective.

I would not feel the need to venture into historical episodes, were it not for the attempts by the leaders of neighbouring states to justify their present-day political ambitions by citing history, and coming up with statements such as: “this territory belongs to us by rights,” or “these regions were historically part of our state”. It is easy to understand the desires they have: the land is incredibly good land, fertile and offering very thick soil; it is in a favourable geographical location, and deep rivers run across the country from north to south; it has a moderate, temperate climate, with no tornadoes or earthquakes to worry about, and it has both low mountains and useful minerals. And in the modern world, the fact that it has infrastructure, industry, a well-qualified workforce and a high level of education among the population, it makes perfect sense to try to convince Ukraine to join all manner of unions and associations – preferably to such an extent that it loses its sovereignty altogether.

Before we once again get lost in a tangle of political and historical intrigues, let us first establish what we mean when we refer to the Ukrainian people.

There can be no doubting the fact that we are Europeans. In any event, of the five points in four different countries which lay claim to the title of “The geographical centre of Europe”, two are located on Ukrainian soil. Our history was bound up in the history of the other European countries, this land and this people have been part of empire after empire, have enjoyed independence



and statehood for a short period (in the historical sense) and then fallen once again into the clutches of its more powerful neighbours.

Since ancient times, Ukrainians have lived in the central and eastern part of European territory, adjoining two seas – the Black Sea and the Azov. The kernel of the ethnic territory of the Ukrainian people has always been situated inside the territory of Ukraine itself.

Let us not join in with the various Ukrainian historians and enthusiasts who have estimated that there have been 80 different states on the territory of Ukraine in...12,000 years. It begins to look a little bit made up.

All the same, which civilizations can we find traces of on this land?

There are some signs that the Cimmerians (remember Conan the Barbarian? He was a Cimmerian) may have lived on this land 2500 years ago. They were followed by the Skiffs, the Goths, the Huns and the Sarmates...

And then at last these lands were settled by the Veneti, the Antes and the Sclavines – these were the names given by Byzantine authors to people from the tribes which were later given the name of ‘Slavs’. This supposedly took place in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, i.e. some 1600 years ago. The Slavic race is considered to have originated in the north-western areas of present-day Ukraine. The Slavs were of course divided into tribes, each with its own name. One of them, for example, is known in Russian as the *polyane*, and this name no doubt came from the word for field, *polye*.

The Polish tribes were founded at the site of the capital of Ukraine – the city of Kiev. According to various experts, the city was founded at some point in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. It was a very good site from a strategic point of view, being at higher altitude than the surrounding area, on the banks of a broad river, the Dnieper, with its abundant waters. According to legends written down many centuries later, the city was founded by three brothers, the leaders Kiy, Shchek and Khoriv, with the city getting its name from the eldest of these three. This is the story told to tourists visiting the city, and several hills and streets in the city are to this day named after the middle brother and the youngest brother; there is also a stream in the city named after their sister, ‘Lybid’ (meaning Swan), which was once abundant with water but has now run dry and is hidden away inside a sewer.

Alternative accounts, which do not have quite the same legendary status, but which are cited in the written sources, indicate that Kiev was ruled by the commanders of Varangian brigades. As many of my readers will be aware, the Varangians were bandits from Scandinavia, who seized power over the Slavic peoples and laid the foundations for statehood on their land.<sup>2</sup>

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2 The theory that the Varangians were Vikings from the Swedish fjords was drawn up, strange to say, by order of the Russian Empress in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It had come about that for the last three

The ‘Scandinavian’ hypothesis is not particularly convincing, however.

The Slavs had in fact *invited* the Varangian leaders to govern them, so they were probably very similar to the Slavs in terms of their language, culture and outer appearance. It is very doubtful that Rurik, who was invited by the northern Slavs and the Finno-Ugric peoples to govern them and to defend their land from attacks by their neighbours, was descended from the Scandinavians – a people with a completely different language and culture and different gods.

The most likely theory is that the Varangians were descended from the Slavic peoples of the Obotrites, who lived on the banks of the Baltic Sea (which was then known as the Varangian Sea), who were skilled and warrior-like, and were adept at seafaring. They lived more by war than by peaceful labours, and were therefore better warriors and had better weapons than their enemies. They plundered enemy territory and protected their own kind. The people working the land, who had founded a settlement at the site of present-day Kiev, were certainly in need of such protection.

Among the rulers of Kiev who are often evoked are the Varangian Askold and the warrior Rurik. Prince Oleg, a relative of Rurik’s who killed Askold, and Rurik’s son Igor, who ruled Kiev after Oleg, were also Varangians – of that there is no doubt.

And what of their descendants? Often we find among their number some outstanding leaders, and occasionally some who were not particularly successful or capable. Under their guidance the city grew larger and stronger, then collapsed and grew weak; by turns it was a capital city then a province. They invaded neighbouring states, established diplomatic relations with them and married the daughters of Byzantine emperors, Scandinavian kings and Huns from nomadic tribes (Cumans). In a word, the DNA of the local aristocracy consisted of an extremely diverse range of material.

Take Prince Yaroslav, for example, who ruled Kiev between 1016 and 1054. Yaroslav himself was married to the daughter of a Swedish king; one of his daughters, Anna, married the Henry I, King of France, and the other married Andrei I, King of Hungary; his sister Maria married the Polish king Casimir I; and his son married a Byzantine princess. Kiev’s rulers were eager

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centuries the monarchs ruling over the Russian state had been people of Germanic stock. Attempts to demonstrate that the Slavic peoples were incapable of any form of state-building were an important component of the ideological battle. From this stemmed the belief that it was the Germanic peoples’ mission to act as a civilizing force. Incidentally, in order to destroy any possible counter-arguments at the time this theory was devised, a thorough check was made of the monasteries where historical chronicles were kept, accompanied by the confiscation and destruction of manuscripts. As Bismarck once said, “Nations are ruled by Kings, Kings are ruled by bankers, but above all of these are the chroniclers – for they hold sway over history.”

to intermarry with powerful ruling dynasties from neighbouring states, and the latter were no less eager, for their part, to establish ties with the powerful state on the banks of the Dnieper.

These lands were known as Rus, and chroniclers from other areas referred to the people who lived on them variously as Rusins, Rutens or Roksolans. It is very unlikely they thought of themselves as a fully-formed ethnic group, or that they identified themselves as belonging to a particular tribe, region or principality. The area was surrounded by Lithuania to the north, Poland to the west, Muscovy to the east and, to the south, the Wild steppes and some nomadic tribes.

Since Kiev was seen as the most important city in Rus, and its ruler – the prince – was known as the ‘Grand Prince’, the city was at the centre of intense conflicts between the Rurikoviches themselves. As a result, the city was burned to the ground several times and its people were massacred, and the competing grandsons and great-grandsons of the great Kievan princes departed for the north-west and founded new cities, new fortresses and new duchies. It was in this manner, for example, that the Grand Duchy of Moscow came into being – a duchy which was at loggerheads with the duchy of Kiev practically from the very outset. The people of the Duchy of Moscow bore no relation to the Slavs from an ethnic point of view – most of them were descended from Urgo-Finnish tribes – but their conflicts with the Duchy of Kiev were not inter-ethnic ones. All of the princes fought each other for power and for territory which they would be able to tax. This was known as ‘feudal fragmentation’, and is something you will have read about in your history books.

Eventually, the princes and the population of Rus, who would one day become the Ukrainian people, preoccupied as they were with internecine warfare, proved unable to resist an invasion by nomadic tribes from the East, led by the grandson of Ghengis Khan, Batu Khan. Their invasion in 1240 found Kiev without a prince and without an army. By then, the former capital of the Great Dukedom was already ruled by Danila Galitsky, whose court was six hundred kilometres west of Kiev. The people of Kiev tried to defend the city against the Mongols but were defeated, and Kiev was razed to the ground once again.

In a manuscript housed at the Gustinsky monastery (in the Chernigov Region, 160 km from Kiev), a historian refers to the warlike nature of the ‘rusian’ people, which had led to infighting, and to the fact that great troubles were brought to the ‘Russian land’ from Poland, Lithuania and Moscow: “Since it first came into being, our Rusian people has always had to do battle, and began by mastering the art of weaponry, and then, at the time of the duchies, this warlike people waged war unceasingly, either with the peoples

OLEKSANDR SHYSHKO

surrounding it – the Greeks, the Polovtians or the Pechenegs – or, failing that, with one another.

And this continued until the Tatar Tsar Baty (that was the name given to Batu Khan in Rus) laid waste to our land, and great damage was done by the Liakhs, Lithuania and Moscow, and by the infighting.”

## THE ORIGINS OF THE NAME UKRAINE

In ancient times, a substantial part of the territory we now know as the Ukrainian state was called ‘Rus’, or the ‘Rusian land’. One often sees the names ‘White Rus’, ‘Black Rus’ and ‘Red Rus’ on maps from those times. So where did the word ‘Ukraine’ come from?

The similarity between Ukraine and the Russian word *okraina*, meaning a place removed from the centre, has prompted a handful of jingoistic Russian historians to come up with the theory that the name ‘Ukraine’ stands for a place which is on the outskirts by comparison with the central, Muscovite land.

This is pure fantasy, of course. When the word ‘Ukraine’ was first used, there were not yet any traces of even a small Duchy of Moscow, and Russia’s future capital, Moscow, was a border outpost for Kievan princes at the edge of Ukraine. These lands were known as Rus right up until the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, as countless documents and manuscripts testify. The word ‘Ukraine’ dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, however, and simply meant ‘country’. The oldest of all the documents containing the word ‘Ukraine’ is the so-called Hypatian Codex (a copy of an ancient manuscript found at the Ipatiev Monastery outside Kostroma). The manuscript tells of the heroic death of the Prince of Pereyaslav<sup>3</sup>, Vladimir Glebovich, in 1187, reporting: “Ukraine grieved for him very much.”

The term ‘Ukraine’ was well-known in European countries, too. Levassaire de Beauplan, who served in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1630 to 1647, refers, in his work ‘A description of Ukraine’, to a Ukrainian territory, “which lies between the borders of Muscovy and Transylvania.” The traditional names Rus and Rusian lands continued to be used to describe the Ukrainian lands which were part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

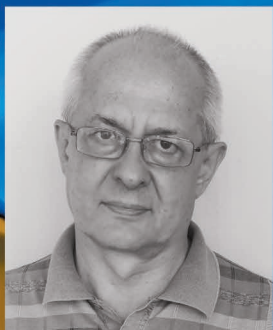
Russian Imperial historians later coined the term *velikoross* (i.e. *veliky russky*, meaning ‘great Russian’) to describe the people of the state of Moscow, and

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3 *Pereyaslavl is an ancient town not far from Kiev*

Since Maidan in Kyiv and Russian presence in the Crimea, Ukraine has never been the same. In 2014, the country is deeply divided by the conflict imposed on the Ukrainians. But since nobody actually asked the nation, author Oleksandr Shyshko decided to take matters into his own hands and look for the answer to the ultimate question – who are the Ukrainians and what do they want.

Shyshko spent his time researching the national identity of native Ukrainians, and as he went he stumbled on a discovery that led to yet another question – where is Ukraine going, the so-called *Quo vadis?* of the Ukrainian people. His findings and critical comments gave birth to this new book that is now for the first time being published in English. *To Get Ukraine*.



Oleksandr Shyshko is an oxymoron. In the past a formidable example of Homo Sovieticus, Shyshko is now an authority on the international environmental law with multiple publications on record and a successful consultant in the field of finance, credit and foreign capital. Throughout his life Shyshko never stopped learning, and the effort paid off in the form of a PhD degree in Law, another degree in Finance, and fluency in a number of European languages including English.

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