

Working Title for the Forum: The Difference Between Russia in Revolution and War and Ukraine in Revolution and War [1917-1919]

The 100th anniversary has overlapped with the 25th anniversary of end of USSR, and now 26 years of independent Ukraine and, of course, independent Russia as two sovereign states. Both of those sovereign states had their first incarnations as separate--if not quite yet independent of one another--states in 1917 and the early months of 1918 culminating in the Central Powers' recognition of, first, the Ukrainian People's Republic in the first Treaty signed at Brest-Litovsk, followed a month later by the second treaty with the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic.

For the last three-plus years, those two states have been at war with one another in what military scholars have called "hybrid warfare" that combines information (and disinformation) wars, economic and political subversion, "humanitarian" interventions to support beleaguered populations, together with the usual tools of conventional military combat and diplomacy. The Bolshevik state conducted a version of "hybrid warfare" in its campaigns against the Ukrainian People's Republic, as well as the Hetman Ukrainian State.

Following on recent scholarship arguing for an "imperial" way of war, illustrated by the wartime policies of Russia that made ethnic and national loyalties and affiliations tools of mobilization and repression, this essay aims to bring the "imperial" turn to our thinking about the 1917 revolutions, together with a perhaps unexpected call to "bring back the state" (or states in this case), as well as highlighting what I have called the entangled histories of the empires that fought with and against each other in the Great War. Josh Sanborn has made an argument that the Great War ought to be understood as a war of decolonization; the argument here will take that but go further.

The standard story of the Russian Revolutions and Civil War that has been taught in European and North American universities has the Civil War starting with the uprising of the Czechoslovak Legion across the Trans-Siberian Railroad in May 1918, though there is usually some attention paid to the first Bolshevik clashes with the Don Cossacks in the first weeks after the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917. Historians generally end the Russian revolution in November 1917 with the Bolshevik seizure of power and the beginnings of state-building under their dictatorship and, notably, in conditions of civil war, including international interventions. The first war of the revolutionary state (the Russian Federated Socialist Soviet Republic), according to this "conventional" narrative, was the Soviet-Polish War in 1919-1920 "settled" by the Treaty of Riga in 1921.

Focusing on the Russian civil war itself, historians have long agreed that after the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd and other urban soviets, they, at some point, created a dictatorial and highly repressive regime. The timing of that transformation generated an important debate on the character of both the February and October revolutions and the character of the Bolshevik party during 1917. Alexander Rabinowitch, a leading American historian, has argued that the Bolsheviks did not so much seize power as they "came to power" on the wave of a mass movement and it was the Russian civil war that transformed the party—again with the May-June 1918 starting point—along more dictatorial and terrorist directions. Rabinowitch was writing against an earlier consensus that the Bolsheviks had "seized power" in a minority coup that usurped the "genuine" democratic revolution of March 1917. Instead, in two pathbreaking works, he argued that "the party's internally relatively democratic, tolerant, and decentralized structure and method of operation, as well as its open and mass character" allowed the party to keep up with the ever radicalizing workers and soldiers. Ronald Suny followed on Rabinowitch's "revisionism" with two surveys of his own highlighting in the first important new work in social history and later the responses to the "linguistic" turn.

Clearly, and perhaps not surprisingly, a “winner’s” history has privileged the Soviet state that eventually was forged from some of the constituent elements of the former Russian empire. The Soviet-Polish war is another example of winners’ perspectives in that the conflicts and campaigns that made up that war also involved Lithuania, two ultimately “failed” states, Ukraine and Belarus, as well as large Jewish populations living among the “state” peoples. A similar simplification of the politics and conflicts of this period shapes our understanding of the Russian Civil War as a war between two different “Russias,” Red and White.

The standard and still unsurpassed survey of the “Russian Civil War” is by Evan Mawdsley, who makes his readers aware of the implications of calling the conflicts the “Russian Civil War” that reflects a largely White Russian and restorationist perspective. Mawdsley acknowledges that “many foreigners writing about Russia become unconscious Great Russian centralizers” (xii) in such simple matters as how they render non-Russian proper names in the more familiar Russian versions, but he reminds us that the “Russian” Civil war was at least a “three-cornered struggle” between Russian revolutionaries, Russian counter-revolutionaries, and the national minorities who resisted both.” (281)

The “Russia” in these cases is not ethnic Russians or Great Russians, but a political definition of Russia with the generally use of the adjective *rossiiskii* that has a more civic and territorial connotation. Still Soviet historians generally avoided assigning any nationality to the revolutionary events, preferring such alternatives as “victory of Soviet power,” “Great October Socialist Revolution.” Likewise, Soviet history did not refer to a Russian Civil War, but the civil war and foreign intervention. Contemporaries did speak of a *rossiiskaia* or *vserossiiskaia revoliutsiia*, but Pavel Miliukov calls 1917 the second *rusaskaia revoliutsiia*, so consensus on the proper adjective seemed difficult to achieve. And then matters got confused again in 1917 when *Rossiiskaia* became the territorial name for a distinct soviet socialist republic of what had once been a *rossiiskaia imperiia*.

A Forgotten War, A Forgotten Peace, A Forgotten Revolution

I propose starting with a few “inconvenient facts” for the narrative just described by looking at these events from the perspective of relations between Petrograd and Kyiv, broadly speaking, Russia and Ukraine. One of the final acts of the Provisional Government in Petrograd, as it was about to be overthrown by the Bolshevik coup in November, was to issue a summons for members of the Ukrainian Central Rada to come to Petrograd to explain their insubordination and disregard for Russian law. The Rada members feared the Provisional Government planned to arrest them, so refused to go.

But after the fall of the Provisional Government, the first conflicts of the just created Council of People’s Commissars in Petrograd came with the Ukrainian Central Rada in Kyiv. A little more than a week after the Ukrainian Central Rada issued its Third Universal (November 20) and proclaimed the Ukrainian People’s Republic, on November 30, Joseph Stalin, importantly People’s Commissar for Nationalities conducted negotiations with Mykola Porsh, from the General Secretariat for Labor over the terms of recognition for both sides and over the return of Cossack regalia from Russian museums to Ukraine. Stalin referred to Porsh as “comrade” and recognized the right of full self-determination, including the right of separation to form an independent state.

This was the first act of defacto recognition, but was soon followed by Foreign Affairs Commissar Leon Trotsky in an order to the Bolshevik Commander-in-Chief, Krylenko, recognizing the Ukrainian People’s Republic on the part of Russian power. As late as January 10, at the peace talks in Brest-Litovsk, Trotsky, in answer to a question posed to him by the German State Secretary, Richard Kuehlmann, declared that the Ukrainian People’s Republic was recognized as a completely independent delegation and is in no way a part of the Russian delegation.

Relations, however, quickly soured over military affairs and the passage of troops across territory claimed by Ukraine, primarily to combat the “counter-revolutionary” Don Cossacks whose base of support lay south of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Central Rada, and the Ukrainian People’s Republic which was proclaimed to succeed it in the Third Universal, refused to recognize the CPC as the government of all Russia, but was willing to recognize it as the government of Great Russia. On December 13 Lenin authorized Vladimir Antonov-Ovsenko to organize operations against Cossack General Kaledin and his “abettors” the Ukrainian nationalists of the Rada. On December 17, 1917, the CPC issued an ultimatum effectively demanding Ukraine’s surrender of sovereignty and the following day declared war on the Ukrainian People’s Republic.

Meanwhile, a group of Kyiv Bolsheviks insisted that new elections be held for an all-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets, anticipating that they would win a majority. When they were soundly defeated and the Congress elected a Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary as its chair, the Kyiv Bolsheviks quit the Congress in protest to found a Ukrainian Soviet Republic December 26 on the base of a congress of soviets of the Donbass and Kryvyh Rih. When the Soviet delegation returned to the peace talks in Brest-Litovsk they brought with them a new “Ukrainian” delegation from that Soviet Republic and reneged on their previous recognition of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. This move was rejected by the Central Powers who insisted on continuing negotiations with the UPR delegation.

Even while Trotsky and the Soviet delegation were negotiating with the Ukrainians and Central Powers, Red Guard forces launched an offensive from Kharkiv to seize Poltava and several other cities under the Rada’s control, where Mikhail Muraev’ev, ordered the arrest of all non-Bolshevik members of the Soviet over the protests of the local Bolsheviks. The Central Powers then recognized the Ukrainian People’s Republic in the first treaty signed in Brest-Litovsk on February 8, 1918. A day later, Red Guards under Murav’ev led a brutal assault on Kyiv and occupied it in a reign of terror for three weeks. In his famous Order No 14 he proclaimed that the revolution was being brought to Ukraine not by persuasion or propaganda but “on the bayonets of our rifles.” Contemporary eyewitnesses estimated 6,000 casualties from the bombardment and early hours of the capture of the city. The Red troops murdered nearly 3,000 Russian officers and clergy, as well as anyone who “looked like a Ukrainian activist”, with victims about civilians and prisoners over 10,000. The Red nightmare ended only when the German and Austrian armies returned the Ukrainian People’s Republic to Kyiv from its first place of exile in Zhytomyr.

Murav’ev’s reign of terror and dictatorship provides clear evidence that the Bolsheviks had turned what had been a revolution to end war into a new war against any rivals to their power.

If we acknowledge that the Soviet Russian Republic and the Ukrainian People’s Republic were recognized international subjects, then the first war between two successor states to the Russian empire was waged well before the Soviet-Polish War. Though the Brest-Litovsk treaties with Russia and Ukraine were the two first international treaties to end the Great War in the East, those treaties were later renounced by the signatory parties as preconditions for their Paris-dictated peace treaties with the Entente victors and renounced separately by the Council of People’s Commissars, which was never invited to Paris and so never signed a treaty. Even among these renounced and forgotten Brest treaties historians have most often “remembered” only the Soviet Russia-Central Powers treaty; the Ukrainian treaty failed to be mentioned at all since Ukraine ceased to exist as an international subject after 1921.

If we return to the “Soviet-Polish War” as the first war fought by the Bolshevik state with a foreign power, but If we also “rehabilitate” the perspectives of the populations and national movements between Poland and Russia, namely Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Jews at a minimum, we need to reframe that conflict as far more complicated than involving merely the second Polish republic and the Soviet republic, but a Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian-Lithuanian-Soviet war. Given the very embryonic forms of all these states, historians have proposed more accurately referring to these conflicts as “frontier wars,” alternately they might be seen as wars of Austrian, German, and Russian succession. Again,

Belarus was a “failed state,” but Lithuania, at least, was recognized internationally as a state between the two wars. Still, the two “survivor” states managed to historiographically squeeze out the perspectives of the failed states, though all the states were new in 1918. Events in Ukraine, when they are covered at all, most often appear as a chapter in the “Russian” Civil War and tend to be “remembered” in either the memoir accounts of the White generals (Denikin, Krasnov, Wrangel) or the Red commissars (Antonov-Ovseenko, Trotsky).

By ignoring the Ukrainian “failed states,” of which there were at least four—the Ukrainian People’s Republic, the Hetman State, the Directory, and the West Ukrainian People’s Republic—and if we add two “Soviet Ukrainian” states proclaimed in 1917 and then in 1919, we have ignored some very important matters and perspectives. Although there was certainly a strong element of civil war in all the countries along the still active Eastern Front of World War I, they were also wars between states--incipient, aspirational states admittedly—but, again, that was true for the new-born Polish state, the Russian Bolshevik state, the several White states on the peripheries, and Belarus and the Baltic states (more successfully than the prior).

By “rehabilitating” the histories of the “failed states” of the “Paris order” that was largely shaped—if not entirely and not consistently—by the peace negotiations in Versailles and other suburban Parisian chateaux starting in 1919, I propose also revisiting how we as historians of this period and this particular set of imperial borderlands have defined and understood revolution, war, and peace, and with a focus on events in Ukraine by returning to “forgotten” wars, revolutions and peace treaties and, after roughly a quarter century of the “imperial turn” to rethink the chronology and understanding of the “Russian Revolutions” and the “Russian Civil War.”

The Forgotten—and Suppressed—History of the Ukrainian Revolution

If we move from the “forgotten” war waged by recently formed--and not always recognized internationally--states back to the revolutions that gave rise to those new states, most historians of the 1917 events have long ignored the Ukrainian revolution itself, together with all the other non-Russian revolutionary processes. We have long acknowledged and taught that 1917 was not one, but many revolutions, including parallel, sometimes overlapping but often conflicting movements of soldiers, workers, peasants, white-collar workers and other intelligentsia and social groups. But all these revolutions were refracted through national, imperial and colonial prisms, so there were also Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish and Tatar revolutions. The most comprehensive attempt to embrace the role of national minorities and minority nationalisms in the Revolutions and Civil War remains Richard Pipes’ classic *Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*. Pipes addresses the revolutions in Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asia, but also leaves out of his narrative Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states because they were not constituent parts of the USSR that was proclaimed at the end of 1922. Pipes’ account of events in Ukraine was based on reading a wide range of primary sources, including long-available accounts in Ukrainian from eyewitness participants.

Geoff Eley, in an essay that “normalized” the Ukrainian revolution in the context of east European revolutions, noted that the Ukrainian revolution is both “invariably omitted from general discussions of nationalist movements in Eastern Europe,” but also “Western historiography incorrigibly subsumes the particularities of Ukrainian development in homogenized conceptions of “Russian” history.” Eley insists on the significance and autonomy of events in Ukraine” [that] are rarely given their due, largely, it seems, because the Ukrainian Revolution was unsuccessful and because the faculty of attained statehood is an indispensable condition of historiographical legitimacy.” Eley also argued that given “the independent dynamic of events in the non-Russians ones [regions], there are grounds for seeing the major regional experiences (Baltic, Ukrainian, Transcaucasian, even Belorussian) as separate revolutionary processes with an integrity of their own.”

The best single-volume introduction to the Ukrainian revolution in the English language—arguably in any language—remains John Reshetar’s 1952 classic *The Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1920: A Study in Nationalism*, in which he makes similar links as does Eley between the lack of attention to the Ukrainian revolution as tied to issues of “failed” statehood and historiographical legitimacy, but also about the continuing “confusion” about the differences between Russia and Ukraine, and Russians and Ukrainians. He began with a lament that the Ukrainian effort to attain statehood was “a sorely neglected aspect of the Russian Revolution.” Though English-language readers and scholars could consult eyewitness accounts and historical studies of events in Moscow and Petrograd, there was much less attention to events in the Russian empire’s peripheries. In the case of Ukraine, Reshetar identified a situation that helped to explain this neglect and that also still largely holds true, namely, “a general unawareness of the existence of a people in Southern Russia distinct from those in the North.” But even then, in 1952, Reshetar was confident that there was no longer any need to argue for the “distinctiveness of the Ukrainians.” After all, he reminded his readers, Ukraine has the “status of a separate republic as well as membership in the United Nations.” Reshetar was somewhat apologetic that “in a narrow sense” his history “was the study of a failure because the men who led the Ukrainian movement were defeated.” But he asked us to view things in the longer perspective, in which case we might recognize that the Ukrainian revolution of 1917-1920 was “no mean achievement” and “was not without effect for it compelled Russia’s Communist rulers to acknowledge the existence of the Ukrainian people.” (vii-viii)

Reshetar’s understanding of the Ukrainian revolution, in turn, was shaped by his reading of the primary contemporary chroniclers of those events, including Pavlo Khrystiuk, an eyewitness-participant in three cabinets of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and an adherent to and leading activist in the Ukrainian Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Reshetar most relies on the accounts of Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Ukrainian Social-Democrat and prime minister of both Ukrainian People’s Republic and Directory cabinets, the left-leaning coalition government, and Dmytro Doroshenko, a leading politician of the Ukrainian Socialist-Federalist Party and foreign minister in the Hetman’s government, the right-leaning monarchist coalition cabinet. Reshetar’s synthesis and periodization, 1917-1920, has now become standard in post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography.

The term “Ukrainian revolution” used by Reshetar and his Ukrainian eyewitness-historians’ accounts, distinguished between the Revolution in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Revolution that emerged out of that broader Revolution. All the authors of this narrative of the Ukrainian revolution acknowledge its inextricable, fateful, and most likely fatal ties to the Russian (or all-Russian) revolution that opened the space for change in the Ukrainian provinces. But these same authors insist that the Ukrainian revolution differed from and—in many senses—challenged the course of the revolution in Russia.

The Ukrainian revolution was part of the all-Russian revolution that began in Petrograd in March 1917, and that revolution was most certainly about land, war and peace, democracy and justice, but it was also—most clearly outside of Moscow, Petrograd and other Russian regions--about the inequities of Russian imperialism and the proposed remedy of national self-determination. The revolutions in 1917 were about ending--or at the very least reforming--empire (into federation); moreover, outside of Petrograd, the questions of land reform, war and peace, were inextricably tied to the “national question” and the future of empire. The Ukrainian revolution, together with the other national liberation movements across the empire, was based on the assumption that any kind of social or political liberation had to come with national liberation for nearly half (and possibly more than half) of the empire’s non-Russian population. From the very first days of the revolution in 1917, Ukrainians, including Pavlo Khrystiuk in the introduction to his history, were talking about their revolution in terms of “dignity” (hidnist’) and the rights of oppressed nation. Moreover, Khrystiuk attributed much of the cause of the Ukrainian revolution’s ultimate defeat to what he called the “tangled knot” of the social and the national

aspects of the revolution and the inability of the leaders of the Ukrainian revolution to find the right balance between these two factors.

Much to their own surprise and alarm, Ukrainian and other non-Russian political activists discovered that Russian imperialism was not just a feature of reactionary elites and the oppressive machinery of the autocracy, but was firmly rooted in the consciousness of Russian workers and peasants, above all in the parties of “Russian democracy.” Outside the Russian heartland, Russian socialism—and Russian democracy more broadly--was very much perceived at its inauguration as very Russian and imperialist. The hostility of Russian democracy was a major challenge to the authority of the Central Rada because ethnic Ukrainians were not the majority in any large city in Ukraine; instead, Russians, Poles and Jews dominated urban institutions. Non-Russian socialists and anarchists already referred to Red imperialism and even socialist imperialism and colonialism. For Ukrainian eyewitnesses--for Khrystiuk and not just for him--the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd and the war that Soviet Russia very quickly waged against Ukraine was a first and fatal blow to both the Russian and the Ukrainian revolutions, for that war turned all belligerent sides dramatically to the right, above all the Russians themselves, but also Ukrainians and even Jewish political activists took more uncompromising and hostile positions to rival parties and nationalities.

Russian (and Russianists’) “Blindness on the National Question”

Perhaps the most important contribution Khrystiuk and his fellow Ukrainian chroniclers-eyewitnesses to the revolutionary years offer to our view of the revolution is their relentless struggle against and disappointment with the “blindness” of Russian “democracy” to the “national question,” and in particular to the Ukrainian national question. Richard Pipes noted that “Russian prerevolutionary political parties of both the center and the left, while opposing discrimination of the minorities, did not envisage granting them independence, on the assumption that the future democratization of the country would in and of itself resolve its national tensions.” He argues that Russians were not aware that they had built an empire and “preferred to view their country as a multinational state, not unlike the United States, whose ethnic minorities would surely, over time, succumb to the greater economic as well as cultural power of the dominant nation and assimilate.” By including (but not always favoring or privileging) what they summed up as “the national” aspects of the liberation movements of 1917, the chroniclers of the Ukrainian revolution represent part of a challenge to that Russia-bounded but still imperial narrative, what Serhii Plokhii, in his study of Myhailo Hrushevs’kyi, called “unmaking imperial Russia.”

In his own reminiscences of his turbulent involvement in the politics of the “dual authority” in Petrograd, the Georgian Menshevik (and Zimmerwaldist) Iraklii Tseretelli lamented what he called the “blindness” of Russian democracy on the national question, another way of saying their blindness to Russia’s imperial institutions and ideologies and the degree to which those imperial institutions and ideologies were in the Russian language and favored Russian culture and identity over others (albeit in a complicated hierarchy of privileges and disabilities). His own memoirs testify that this was not so much “blindness,” that is, not seeing nationalism as much as not understanding it, or even misunderstanding it in ways that might have avoided the tragic clash between Petrograd and the “borderlands” more broadly, and Kyiv in particular.

That blindness, in the sense of not “seeing” the national aspects of the revolutionary processes, or unconscious imperialism, could be a metaphor we might use for generations of later historians of the revolutions of 1917 who did not see the national, imperial, and even anti-colonial aspects of the revolution, or decided that the “national” was not significant or determining. But that blindness was perhaps most pronounced in Russian democrats’ insistence on their own “internationalism,” their having somehow transcended national interests for something more universal. One thing that probably all the

leftist parties, both Ukrainian and all-Russian Social Democrats (Mensheviks) and Socialist Revolutionaries (possibly even the Bolsheviks) could agree upon was the important and tragic role of Russian liberals, above all the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet Party) and its leader Pavel Milukov. Kadets dominated the first Provisional Government with Miliukov serving as foreign minister, but they remained important in the first and second coalition governments even after Miliukov's forced resignation from the government in April after he provoked the first crisis over Russia's war aims. William Rosenberg, the author of the best history of the party in 1917, viewed them as "the one political group whose policies did more to influence the outcome of events than any other political organization besides the Bolsheviks."

It was indeed the Kadets in the Petrograd government and the party's Central Committee who responded most quickly, consistently and aggressively to the transformation of the Ukrainian national movement into a state-building project, even when those ambitions remained within the bounds of federation. The Kadets' shift to the right during the Great War in defense of the "great Russian state" either gave cover to or exerted pressure on the Revolutionary Defensists in the socialist parties, but it also provoked further splits in all the parties, including the Kadets themselves, as the February revolution forced the parties to reconsider their wartime opposition to the existing authorities.

It was largely around the Kadet positions on war and the future of Russia as empire and state that the Provisional Government in Petrograd was wracked by one crisis of the coalition after another, but those crises had their repercussions and echoes outside Petrograd as well, for which Khrystiuk's account provides rich material. The Ukrainians' accounts highlight how much Miliukov's views of Russian liberal imperialism were not just important for questions of war and peace but for questions of domestic reform of imperial institutions and practices. His "turn to the right" during the war can be traced in parallel with the evolution of his views on the Ukrainian opposition movement in the Russian empire.

Whereas the Ukrainians insisted on the entangled character of their national liberation movement and the future peace negotiations, the Kadets sought to separate these issues and abandon both peace and imperial reform for the sake of a victorious war. Moreover, Miliukov was one of the leading critics of the Ukrainian movement as an artificial invention of the Central Powers, above all Austria and Germany. He also dismissed the Ukrainian movement as a small band of out-of-touch intellectuals with no social support. Even when Kerensky "freed" himself of Miliukov and Guchkov and appealed to the Entente allies to make peace immediately, he unwisely decided to support the Entente war efforts and doom his government to defeat with the July offensive of 1917.

The Ukrainian versions of the 1917 revolution highlight this dilemma in ways that were not so readily apparent in Petrograd, both in the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet. Khrystiuk saves some of his most biting critiques for Miliukov and the Kadet "experts" on the Provisional Government's Juridical Commission for their inconsistent and hypocritical legal arguments against the Ukrainian Central Rada's reform projects on autonomy. Indeed, Khrystiuk's history offers the most sustained critique of Russian ideas and practice of *gosudarstvennost'* from the perspective of non-Russian democracy.

Although Khrystiuk's politics as a Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary were consistently focused on the Ukrainian peasants and the soldiers, students, and intellectuals who made up the key constituencies of the Ukrainian revolution, he, like all members of his party, worked closely together and sometimes at odds with the other major Ukrainian socialist party, the Social-Democrats. The Social Democrats were at once the closest in terms of constituencies, but perhaps because of that closeness, the most frustrating partners for the UPSR. Khrystiuk grappled with a dilemma in Ukraine that Oliver Radkey, the leading English-language historian of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party, observed for the dynamic between the Menshevik and SR parties in Petrograd.

The Mensheviks were among the most prolific and talented “loser” historians of 1917 and their views of events have been very influential in shaping later historians’ understanding.

Of all the available English-language memoirs of the revolutionary year 1917, the author-eyewitness closest to Khrystiuk’s is most likely Nikolai Sukhanov (revolutionary pseudonym for Himmer), whose *Zapiski o revoliutsii* (Notes on the Revolution), was translated in a much-abridged edition by Joel Carmichael in 1955. (Leon Trotsky also deserves comparing with both Sukhanov and Khrystiuk and was a Menshevik before he joined the Inter-District group and then in the summer of 1917, the Bolshevik Party itself. His translator, Max Eastman, wrote: “This is the first time the scientific history of a great event has been written by a man who played a dominant part in it. It is the first time a revolution was ever retraced and explained by one of its leaders.”) Sukhanov and Khrystiuk both wrote as “losers” and fierce critics of the Bolsheviks, but also as revolutionaries trying to understand how their fellow socialists had helped prepare the way for the tragedy of the Bolshevik takeover by squandering their initial support among the workers, soldiers and peasants.

As chroniclers of “their” revolutions, Sukhanov and Khrystiuk earned praise for their accounts not only from later historians but also from many of their contemporaries who also wrote their eyewitness accounts-histories. Sukhanov’s work was cited and replied to in the memoirs of Miliukov, Pokrovskii, Trotskii and Stalin, and answered by Lenin in one of his last articles before his death. Israel Getzler, author of the best English-language biography, writes that Sukhanov “has been universally acclaimed (since glasnost, even in the former Soviet Union) as the chronicler par excellence of Russia’s democratic revolution from February to October 1917 and his *Zapiski* have been recognized as an indispensable historical source.”

A very telling omission in Carmichael’s translation of Sukhanov’s classic was any discussion by the author of the national question and its role in the dynamic of the revolutionary year. (Something similar is true of the abridged paperback edition of 1959 that left out the chapter on nationalities, in which Trotsky is far more sympathetic to the Ukrainian movement, especially the genuinely peasant character of the protest, than most Russian “democrats” and even some Ukrainian socialists. In the summary of the omitted chapters, the editor, did not mention Ukraine at all.) And yet, Sukhanov had much to say, and much that was very illustrative of Khrystiuk’s portrait of the all-Russian “revolutionary democracy” and their Great Russian nationalism and even socialist imperialism. It takes Sukhanov until book three, chapter seven “Contradictions of the Revolution and the Exit from the Situation,” of his *Notes* to raise the national question and his immediate focus is on the dangers to “our state life in this period” of “serious separatism—national and provincial” [author’s emphasis] that had “reached alarming levels.”

“Everyone who wasn’t lazy started to demand autonomy, and sometimes began to implement it without preliminary permission. They wanted to tear apart Revolutionary Russia into pieces as if only the tsarist whip (*nagaika*) had held the state together. Not only Finland began to talk about separation, not only did they begin to talk about this in the Caucasus, but also in Ukraine, Crimea and Siberia they started to shout about it.”

He explained this particular “contradiction” as “thought up by idle intelligentsia members who didn’t know what to do with themselves on the new political stage.” But he admitted that these intelligentsia ventures began to take on real strength and the masses began supporting them, while the “revolutionary authorities” could not keep up with the “needs of the people and the demands of the revolution.”

The other important party of Russian democracy was the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, from which the Party of Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries formally broke in April 1917. And the one major Russian democrat whose memoir-history of the Russian Revolution available in English (since 1936) devoted significant attention to the national question was Viktor Chernov, head of the Party and also Minister of Agriculture in one of the coalition cabinets of the Provisional Government during 1917. (Kerensky, by contrast, devotes all of three pages--and only parts of those pages—of his memoirs to the negotiations that he took part in with the Rada and the repercussions back in Petrograd, above all the resignation of the Kadet ministers in protest.)

Chernov's entire fourteenth chapter, titled "Impasse in the Nationalities Problem," is above all concerned with events in Ukraine. His characterization of the Ukrainian movement is much more favorable than nearly any other English-language equivalent. He lays the blame for the failure of this important aspect of the revolution on the Provisional Government.

"In the first period of revolution those elements which led in the awakening of the subordinate nationalities were, on the whole, far removed from the extremes of separatism to which they were later driven. There was full opportunity to enter the new path arm in arm. But instead of a guide in their national resurrection they found the Provisional Government too often a stingy, cold-hearted and evasive protector of the historical privileges of the "dominant" Great Russian nationality.. Instead of a great power for constructive work, the pressure of the nationalities was turned into a destructive force." (287-288)"

Chernov, after taking pride in the party of Socialist Revolutionaries as the only party "of all the Great Russian parties" that championed the federal form of state, noted that such an idea was "strongly opposed by all bourgeois parties, including the most progressive of them, the Cadet party. The Cadet leaders and jurists played a significant role in turning against the Provisional Government all or almost all the smaller nationalities. The federal idea also penetrated with great difficulty among Russian Social Democrats, whether Bolsheviks or Mensheviks." (264-65) In describing these opponents of federalization, Chernov sounded remarkably like Khrystiuk:

"There were doctrinaires of united Statehood (with a big S), idolaters of centralized government; it alone could determine the scope of local and regional government by its own 'grace.'" There were also doctrinaires of economic unity and centralization, of the concentration of the "fatherlandless" proletariat through the growing concentration of "fatherlandless" capital." (265)

He also criticized the Russian Social Democrats, both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, for resisting the penetration of the federal idea. All of the Socialist Revolutionaries' rivals, he claimed, were "doctrinaires of united Statehood (with a big S), idolaters of centralized government." (264-5)

When he turned his attention to Kyiv as "the center of the Ukrainian movement," he began his history of the Ukrainian revolution with the local public leaders who formed the Council of United Civic Organizations and its Executive Committee, which, he admitted, was "in its overwhelming majority, alien to the Ukrainian movement." But throughout his account, he stresses the bloodless nature of the revolution there, and the reasonable demands of the mainstream Ukrainian politicians, who were constantly trying to rein in their extremist elements, whom Chernov labels "Ukrainian separatists."

He also recognized that Russian "revolutionary democracy" was "too insensitive to what was going on under their eyes" and blamed local SRs and SDs for fanning "the fires of nationalist passion by their unrestrained attacks." He compared the opposition among Russian circles in Ukraine unfavorably to "the conduct of the British bourgeois and nationalist government which willingly admitted representatives of all the dominions to the peace conferences," referring to the 1919 Versailles talks, and a strange

conflation of British empire, commonwealth, and British nationalists [?], but an interesting parallel for him to make. He also discussed the representatives of the “immigrant nationalities” who were dominant in the cities and “found it difficult, with their Russian orientation, to cease considering themselves masters of the situation, and to accept the position of national minorities content with the usual guarantees of minority rights.” But he believed that these minorities “alarmed themselves with phantoms” and were “increasing the real danger.” This largely replicated Tseretelli’s characterization of the situation in Ukraine’s major cities, where Ukrainians were in the minority as compared with the overwhelmingly Ukrainian countryside, and also shared Chernov’s critical attitude toward local SRs and SDs.

Chernov, like Khrystiuk, identified the movement to create Ukrainian national military units as the key site of struggle between Petrograd and Kyiv, also something that Tseretelli highlights in his account.

Oliver Radkey, in his still-classic history of the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1917, was able to conduct several interviews with the aging revolutionary Chernov and captured the tortured evolution of his politics on the national question. Radkey’s book also gives substantial coverage to the events in Ukraine and their role in the political crises of the Petrograd government.

Radkey “corrects” Chernov’s own account of the critical trip to Kyiv in June by members of the Provisional Government, Tereshchenko, Nekrasov, Tsereteli, and Kerensky to negotiate with the Central Rada about the terms of Ukraine’s autonomy. First, Radkey notes that Chernov, “the leading exponent of federalism in the cabinet,” was not only left out of this but does not seem even to have been consulted.” But, as Radkey pointed out, according to Chernov, in his chapter, “Impasse in the Nationalities Problems,” “one would think that he sympathized with the Ukrainian point of view, yet he took quite a different line at the time, when he was in the cabinet and could have influenced the course of events.”

Radkey explains this disconnect between Chernov’s memory and his actual behavior at the time as part of the party’s general shift “from internationalism to patriotism by so many members, particularly those in high position,” a shift that “created acute tension within the party, impeded collaboration with the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries, and made it impossible for the membership to present a united front on any number of issues, from matters of domestic economy to questions of war and peace.”

Radkey saw the views Chernov expressed in 1917 to have been a significant retreat from the platform on national self-determination in 1905. Radkey offers the views articulated by M.V. Vishniak in late May 1917 as probably shared by the majority of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary party in embracing a federal republic as the future for Russia, but one that would be ‘a single state, a Bundesstaat instead of a Staatenbund, in which concessions to the various nationalities within the former empire would take the form of mutual agreements between the state as a whole and the parts concerned, never of unilateral decisions by the nationalities themselves.’ (The Staatenbund was closer to what the Ukrainian Central Rada came to propose with a federation of equals from below.)

Vishniak supported independence for Poland alone, not even agreeing to such a status for Finland, let alone Ukraine, despite the Congress’s final resolution upholding the party’s internationalist line of recognizing no distinctions among peoples. Radkey found the reasoning on Finland in particular to be “curious” even given “legitimate concern for the fate of the capital in the light of war experience,” the capital Petrograd being very close to Finland. Radkey suspects something else to be at work here, but “something that could be thought of but never voiced in public.” After looking “deeper into the soul of the right Socialist Revolutionaries,” Radkey sees the right wing as sharing origins with the Populists and Pan-Slavism as “branches of the same plant of Slavophilism” and, as the Georgian Menshevik Tsereteli described them, “Kadets in disguise.”

In the end Radkey identifies the Kadet party as the primary obstacle to any progress on the national question, a party that had shifted to the right because of the war and was “deeply centralistic, with a pronounced anti-Ukrainian bias.” (276) He follows with his most sympathetic effort to understand Chernov’s dilemma on the national question and argues that Chernov saw in the privileges granted the Poles the source of similar demands on the part of the Ukrainians, who could not understand why people whose forebears had joined Russia “of their own accord” should be denied the rights enjoyed by a thrice-conquered enemy.” Radkey comes back to a theme he raised earlier: “The answer lies in the Pan-Slavist aberration of many Russian intellectuals, modified by a touch, or more than a touch, of imperialism. When, with Ukrainian nationalism, the fire turned back on Russia, their pan-slavism ceased abruptly, exposing its imperialist essence. To them Ukrainians were Russians masquerading as a separate ethnic group with a dangerous pro-Austrian orientation, whereas Poles were by no stretch of the imagination Russian and shared their own Germanophobia. Hence the discrimination.”

Finally, Radkey lamented “the inability of the largest party in Great Russia and the largest party in Little Russia to mediate the conflict, despite their common ideology.” He goes on to blame the intellectuals at the top of both parties who cursed their followers, “ninety percent or more” of whom “consisted of peace-loving peasants, who, had they been less helpless and inarticulate, might easily have found their way together, but for the excess of nationalism among the intellectuals.” Though his account of events in Ukraine largely follows Reshetar’s—and thereby to some degree Khrystiuk’s, his invocation of Little Russia and the allegedly misled peace-loving peasants are only a few examples that reveal even his reliance on stereotypes and explanations from non-Ukrainian sources. In a footnote to those comments, Radkey writes, “without any desire to disparage Ukrainian nationalism, it may be pointed out that it undoubtedly contained an element of artificiality. The Ukrainian patriots must have been hard pressed for national heroes to accord this honor to Bohdan Khmelnytsky to a Zaporozhian freebooter who had repeatedly sold out the Ukrainian peasants to the Polish crown. Either the youthful intellectuals who headed the PUSR had no deep feeling for the class they represented or they did not know their history, or knew it only through romantic distortion.”

In the end, chroniclers of the Ukrainian revolution confirm the findings of recent scholarship on Russian nationalism during the war and revolution. A long-standing convention held that the Russian autocracy failed to inculcate any deep or broad sense of Russian patriotism or identity by 1917 and thereby allowed Bolshevism to triumph virtually unchallenged in the aftermath of the downfall of the Russian imperial state. Geoffrey Hosking’s books made the most persuasive case for this “neglect” or failure of the Old Regime. Here is his argument in brief in an introduction:

The theme of this book is how Russia obstructed the flowering of Rus’, [sic] or if you prefer it, how the building of an empire impeded the formation of a nation.” (xix). This failure proved fatal for Russia. “The political, economic and cultural institutions of what might have become the Russian nation were destroyed or emasculated for the needs of the empire, while the state was enfeebled by the hollowness of its ethnic substance, its inability at most times to attract the deep loyalty of even its Russian let alone its non-Russian subjects. The intelligentsia, trying to mediate between them, to create an ‘imagined community’ as a synthesis of imperial culture and ethnic community was crushed between them. The culmination of this process was the revolution and civil war of 1917-21. (xxvi)

Other historians’ work have challenged these views, some for longer than others. William Rosenberg, in his powerful study of Russian liberals’ move toward Russian imperial nationalism during the war, and Pipes, above all in his biography of Petr Struve, were among the first historians to draw attention to the “Russianness” of liberals. More recently, Josh Sanborn’s essays and book on conscription in the imperial and early Red Armies “found” much evidence for imperial state-led efforts to create national identities and loyalties and for the emergence of a Russian nation, and Eric Lohr, following on his monograph, has

launched a new term, “war nationalism.” An even greater challenge to the idea of a “missing” Russian nationalism and national identities has been the work of Melissa Stockdale, who canvasses a vast range of initiatives taken by the autocracy, the Orthodox Church, the print media and civic organizations to forge such identities and loyalties.

The Diverging Paths of Revolution in Petrograd and Kyiv: The Ukrainian Soldiers’ Movement

Khrystiuk in his *Notes and Materials* provided the most sustained critique of the ideas shared widely among Russian democracy about the Ukrainian revolution, its artificiality, its “invented” character (for Mlikukov and others that meant invented in Berlin and Vienna) and its lack of any significant social base outside the minority intelligentsia. One of the most important challengers to that imperial narrative, Pavlo Khrystiuk, was a young, but very energetic and well-connected political activist and chronicler of the period from early 1917 (27 during the revolutionary year) to the end of 1919, at which time he and many other Ukrainian political figures fled for one of many exiles, this time to Vienna, where he was able to publish his *Zamitky I materialy*.

Khrystiuk himself, likely frustrated by his work in exile, largely in his beloved agricultural cooperative movement and encouraged by the Soviet state and Communist party’s “indigenization” campaigns that included the promotion of Ukrainian language and Ukrainian ethnic “cadres” into positions of influence, returned to Ukraine, now Soviet Socialist Ukraine, and its new capital, Kharkiv. After finding employment in Soviet Ukrainian institutions, he was arrested by the NKVD at his residence in the “Word” Writers’ Association building and died in the Gulag in 1937 on trumped-up charges of membership in the anti-Soviet Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (*Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukrainy*).

Khrystiuk has composed a critical documentary history based on textual sources that he places in context and weaves into a narrative. He subjects the documents--resolutions of meetings, statements of political actors, newspaper accounts, memoirs of other participants in the events—to his own critical interpretation. The documents appear in the text itself, they appear in the primary set of footnotes in the main body of the narrative, and a third set of texts in the extended footnotes of the appendices. *Notes and Materials* is at once a history of the institutions that emerged out of the Ukrainian revolution, but as a sociologist by contemporary disciplinary understandings, Khrystiuk also traced the dynamically evolving responses of the major social groups. In this regard, his *Notes and Materials* toward a history of the Ukrainian revolution--a title I believe he chose quite deliberately and consciously to alert the reader that this was a first fragmentary provisional draft of a history that needed much more time and documentary evidence to place in its proper perspective—resemble the wonderful documentary collections-narratives that have long existed with English-language translations for historians of the “Russian” revolutions of 1917, above all Frank Golder’s 1964 collection.

Khrystiuk’s massive documentary history of the Ukrainian revolution starts with the Ukrainian peasants and the cooperative movement where he learned from and taught peasants as one of their own who had risen up by means of education and hard work; he ends his “notes and materials” with a lament over the failure of that revolution and the costs of that failure especially for Jewish democracy that had been so supportive of the revolution of dignity of 1917-19.

Khrystiuk concludes his first chapter with something that distinguishes his and other Ukrainian accounts from most Russian counterparts, above all those who witnessed the revolution in Petrograd. The section is titled “from the prison of peoples to freedom” and it casts the revolution as about the struggle of so-called stateless peoples of the former Russian empire for rebuilding Russia on a federal basis, “intending in this way to destroy in the new Russia all traces of national bondage and transform the common fatherland into a union of politically equal peoples enjoying full civil rights.” Indeed, for Khrystiuk the Ukrainian revolution of 1917 was already a revolution of dignity, the dignity of the human being and

citizen (hidnist' liudyny I hromadianina). This can be taken as Khrystiuk's first definition of the "national revolution," a concept that he proceeds to develop in its manifold nuances and transformations.

And here, too, he notes the ultimate tragic destiny of these revolutionary aspirations at this juncture in human history, "Unfortunately, the fervent drive for full national freedom on the part of these peoples who had been oppressed for centuries was incomprehensible to the broad masses of the Russian people and their leaders, brought up as they were in the spirit of Russian great-power centralism, or—what amounted to the same thing—Russian 'socialist internationalism.'" This is the first of several salvos flung at Russian socialism and its Muscovite imperialist inclinations. This was not just a fault of Russia's autocratic rulers, and nor was it enough to remove the discriminatory legislation against formerly persecuted ethnic and religious minorities.

The attitude of Russian democrats was dismissive and hostile, while socialist revolutionary circles considered the national movements bourgeois and counterrevolutionary. Nothing good for the revolution came of this. Not only was the common Russian revolutionary front split along national lines, but in addition to the socioeconomic struggle of workers and peasants against exploiters, there was being waged a political struggle of nation against nation and workers and peasants against the selfsame workers and peasants.

In response to the critics of the Ukrainian revolution who dismissed it as a minority intelligentsia phenomenon without any genuine popular support, Khrystiuk offered the results of the Constituent Assembly elections, the most democratic in the history of Russia and Eurasia until 1990. Those elections demonstrated that Ukrainians identified with Ukrainian and socialist parties, when the PUSR and the USLDP won the overwhelming majority of votes across the nine "Ukrainian" provinces that voted in late 1917.

More important for Khrystiuk and more characteristic of his method is his chronicling of the key social groups, their institutions, their press, and their leaders. Khrystiuk's discussion of the Ukrainian soldiers' movement is important for its illustration of the diverging paths of the Russian and Ukrainian revolutions, but also his descriptions of the important role of the soldiers helps him to make the case for the genuinely democratic and revolutionary character of the Ukrainian revolution. After a discussion of the important roles of the cooperative, zemstvo, and teacher-student movements, Khrystiuk's next group, soldiers, "peasants in uniform," not surprisingly occupied much of his attention in the unfolding narrative, and it is here that his account of the revolution in Ukraine begins to differ significantly from the leading Petrograd-centered leftist accounts.

Similar to those chroniclers—notably Sukhanov, Tsereteli, and others—Khrystiuk makes a case for the importance of soldiers because the revolution and the war that was its context meant that "a large part of the mostly peasant population was in the ranks of the army." For much of Russian socialism and democracy more broadly, soldiers were largely a source of great anxiety and foreboding. Even the Ukrainian revolutionaries understood that "either the revolution would end the war, or the war would end the revolution," and that the fates of their revolutions, however they defined them, were being shaped and crippled by that war and the sacrifices it continued to demand from the societies of the belligerent states. Sukhanov was characteristic of Russian moderate socialist attitudes toward soldiers and distrusted them as peasants in uniform, precisely the opposite evaluation from Khrystiuk as a Socialist Revolutionary who held a much higher opinion of the revolutionary prospects of the peasantry. The Petrograd leader of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party, Viktor Chernov, recalls in his memoirs his admiration for the Ukrainian soldiers' movement, but the historical record suggests that he was far less enthusiastic about the Ukrainian movement during 1917 itself. Still, he was likely the most sympathetic of the major SR memoirists.

Radkey reminds us of the two other right Russian Socialist Revolutionaries who played important roles. In perhaps one of the most serious confrontations between Kyiv and Petrograd, this one over national Ukrainian military units, namely War Minister Alexander Kerenskii and Provisional Government Commissar and later Commander of the Kyiv Military District, Colonel Konstantin Oberuchev. Radkey captures Oberuchev as “a typical SR from the officers’ corps: the revolutionary tradition in which he was rooted had paled as his patriotism became more intense, and in any event, it had paid little heed to nationalist distinctions.” He is far more sympathetic to Oberuchev--who he describes as “the bluff but well-meaning colonel who became the symbol of mutual antagonism”--than most Ukrainian observers, including Khrystiuk, who “clamored for his dismissal.”

Radkey defends Oberuchev against Kerensky’s ban on the soldiers’ congress in June and claims that Oberuchev had even helped the soldiers to arrange for use of the Kyiv municipal theater, “yet felt obliged by his superior’s attitude to turn his back on the proceedings, thereby adding a personal affront to the difference of principle between himself and the Ukrainian military leaders.”

Radkey sees Oberuchev also as characteristic of other SRs in Kyiv whose Russian nationalism was just as strong as that of the Ukrainian nationalists, “if less strident, since they were not struggling to establish a new order but merely defending one that already existed.” Both the chairman of the Kyiv soviet, Nezlobin, and the mayor of Kyiv, Riabtsev, were SRs of the right center “or beyond, for whom the authority of the Provisional Government was as axiomatic as the indissolubility of the empire. They saw themselves as guardians of the new order against wreckers, whereas the Ukrainians saw them as satraps of Muscovite imperialism.” In Chapter XIV of his memoirs, Chernov also expresses a critical view of Oberuchev and Kerensky on the national question more broadly and sees his own views closer to those of the Menshevik Tsereteli, whom he credits with whatever temporary understandings were reached between Petrograd and Kyiv. But, ultimately, he blames the crisis of the coalition on the Kadets’ withdrawal over the Ukrainian question, followed by their other objections to socialist labor and agrarian policy.

When Khrystiuk listed the soldiers, peasants, and workers and the organizations they formed as those social and political forces playing important roles in this and later stages of the revolution, the order is not random, because, as he notes, soldiers were the “first to make themselves heard.” The first widespread response of Ukrainian soldiers to the overthrow of the autocracy in February 1917 was “their firm resolve to organize themselves on a national basis.” All across the Russian empire, in units that were more or less Ukrainian by ethnic makeup, soldiers formed separate Ukrainian military committees, hromady, clubs, and societies, followed quickly by the organization of separate Ukrainian military units. Khrystiuk attributes the “extraordinarily powerful process of national awakening among the gray masses of the soldiers” to the presence in the lower officer ranks of former teachers, especially village elementary school teachers, who were a “nationally conscious and democratic element in the army.” Kyiv became the center of the Ukrainian military movement and it was there that the first Ukrainian military units began to be formed, leading to the first armed confrontations over power.

He traces the evolution of soldiers’ attitudes over the first months of the revolution and understood them to be the most fervent advocates for peace, though they also insisted that as long as the war continued and Ukrainian peasants and workers continued to bear the burden of that war, they at least wanted to do so as Ukrainian soldiers and as Ukrainian citizens. Their slogan became “fight for free Ukraine” and it meant, in their case, something more than most political agitators meant by the verb “fight.” The soldiers’ sent resolutions to Kyiv and usually addressed to the Central Rada early on from across the former empire and also took a very similar form. The soldiers wanted a territorial system of troop formation and deployment whereby regiments in Ukraine would be made up primarily of Ukrainian soldiers. They wanted Ukrainians serving beyond the borders of Ukraine to be separated into Ukrainian military units and transferred back to Ukraine. They also wanted all unit business to be conducted in Ukrainian language and that military manuals be translated from Russian into Ukrainian.

Khrystiuk insists all along that there was “nothing reactionary, chauvinistic or even harmful to the front in these demands.” After all, the soldiers did not demand the immediate implementation of all these demands, but wanted a recognition of the principle by the Provisional Government, something the Provisional Government was reluctant to grant. Instead, the soldiers got “malicious talk about technical obstacles” and about how such “chauvinistic” attitudes threatened the revolution. The Ukrainian soldiers’ demands were met with hostile responses from Russian soldiers who objected to the very existence of Ukrainian military councils, clubs and societies, as well as to soldiers’ demands that regimental, army and other committees subscribe to Ukrainian newspapers and books. The soldiers responded to these insults to their national feeling and dignity and even began to defend their “national rights” by force of arms.

The Ukrainian Revolution is not the Russian Revolution (Neither is the Jewish, Polish or Tatar Revolution the Russian Revolution)

For the majority of imperial subjects who were non-Russian, the revolution was about ending the inequality of the “oppressed peoples” of the empire, their rights to self-rule in their native languages, and for native elites to take part in more democratic institutions. In most imperial borderlands, national self-determination might also be understood as national territorial autonomy. Almost immediately after its formation, the Provisional Government lifted nearly all censorship of press and public speech, making revolutionary Russia arguably the freest country in the world for a few months between February and October (O.S.). The Provisional Government also abolished many of the policies of legal and administrative discrimination of the non-Russian and non-Orthodox Christian citizens of revolutionary Russia and allowed the return of political exiles and prisoners, including those persecuted for agitation for federalism and national rights. But those measures failed to address the larger issues of the roles of non-Russian citizens in their own self-government, above all the demand for recognition of the principle of national autonomy.

The most ardent and experienced “national” opponents of the autocracy and, specifically imperial rule, had been the Poles, with their large west European émigré communities and their histories of legal and clandestine resistance. But because Poland was under German occupation throughout 1917, the largest movements for national self-determination were the Ukrainian and Finnish ones.

The Ukrainian revolution was perceived as the greatest threat in Petrograd and encountered the most resistance. In Kyiv the “dual authority” of Petrograd Soviet and Provisional Government was quickly replicated with the Kyiv Soviet and the Executive Committee of Public Organizations, but was also quickly “complicated” by the addition of the Ukrainian Central Rada. Though the Rada was created by a group of veteran Ukrainian activists in the Society of Ukrainian Progressists (TUP), it quickly found mass support in the Ukrainian soldiers’ movement, peasant congresses and the rapid growth of “Ukrainian” parties—above all the Party of Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries and the Ukrainian Social Democrats--that also quickly began to distance themselves from their all-Russian counterparts.

Indeed, virtually from day one, the revolutions in Petrograd and Kyiv began to diverge from each other, but, more importantly and threateningly from the vantage point of the Petrograd coalitions, other national liberation movements took advantage of the Ukrainian movement’s advocacy for a federalist and democratic Russian republic and often worked in solidarity with the Ukrainian movement, above all the Jewish socialist parties in Ukraine, the United Zionist Labor Party, the Bund, and the Poalei Tsion.

At first, even local Russian Kadets and other democratic all-Russian parties in Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities claimed by the Ukrainian movement were far more willing to collaborate in coalition civic organizations than were their counterparts in the capital city, Petrograd. This was even true for Moscow politics, but most developed in the historic “borderlands” of the empire. The Ukrainian revolution also

proclaimed the principle of all-socialist homogeneous government, a slogan articulated in Petrograd before October 1917, but also acted on that aspiration in the composition of the Ukrainian Central Rada and later the General Secretariat, and still later in the Ukrainian People's Republic and its Council of Ministers.

The largest all-Russian party, the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the largest Ukrainian party, the Party of Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries, split formally in April, but their positions on key issues, from war and peace to land reform, not to mention on imperial reform and federalism, reveal the huge gaps that emerged between Petrograd and Moscow and grew to crisis proportions. The Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, which also broke from the mainstream SRs, was even more at odds with the Ukrainian socialists, above all on the question of war and peace.

The Ukrainian SRs remained in all the left-center governments in Ukraine and were the party whose leaders signed the first peace of the war with the Central Powers in Brest-Litovsk, thereby staying true to their antiwar and pro-peace politics. The Left SRs not only resigned from the Bolshevik-dominated coalition Council of People's Commissars in protest against the peace, but embarked on a terrorist campaign that resulted in the assassinations of the German occupation commander in Kyiv, the German ambassador in Moscow, and a few Bolshevik leaders for good measure! And, perhaps most tellingly, a Russian Left SR Mikhail Murav'ev led the first Russian Red Guard war of terror against the Ukrainian People's Republic in December 1917 and then again in February 1918, the first war of two socialist states and a war that Khrystiuk lamented had discredited the idea of socialism for many decades to come. The war indeed had killed revolution, a revolution that had started in the name of ending war. There was a leftist defection from the PUSR as well that became the Borot'bist party and formed occasional alliances with Ukrainian Bolsheviks in the name of an independent Soviet Ukraine.

On the issues of imperial reform, federalism, and national self-determination, the Ukrainian Central Rada convened the first and only congress of oppressed peoples of the Russian Empire in Kyiv in September 1917. The Ukrainian model of federation was envisioned to be built from the bottom up, from equal, sovereign people's republics. Indeed, it was not limited to successors to the Russian empire, but open to all free peoples. In contrast to Lenin's call to transform the world war into an international civil war, the Ukrainian socialists called for transforming that war into a federation of people's republics. This model differed from both the Kadets' administrative-territorial (but not national) federalism and the Bolsheviks' top-down federalism within the framework of a one-party dictatorship.

In this sense, the Ukrainian revolution bears comparison with other "third-way" Russian democratic regimes, most notably in Omsk, Samara, Ufa, where coalitions of "democratic parties" included left Kadets and, usually at first even Bolsheviks, but eventually stood for all-socialist coalition governments. The Ukrainian revolution comes closest to the "third-way" short-lived governments in Samara, Omsk, Ufa and other places where Russian liberals and socialists formed coalitions to fend off both Red and White invasions.

Siberian Socialist Revolutionary Paul Dotsenko recalled the slogan "calling for a federal organization of the multinational Russian territory with autonomous rule for its different components; for a government system that would allow each national group, within the confines of the whole, the right and opportunity to shape its own destiny according to the traditions of its past." But these "third-way" regimes also did not characteristically raise the question of the future of empire and Russians' role in such a future polity. By its political complexion the Ukrainian revolution is perhaps closest of all to the experience of the Georgian Menshevik republic, also ultimately crushed by the Red Army and the Bolshevik party dictatorship in 1920.

Even when Hetman Skoropads'kyi proclaimed his own program for a federalized Russia in the very last days of his rule as the German defeat was becoming too evident to deny, even that version of Russian-

Ukrainian relationship was envisioned as two equal states and Ukraine maintaining its sovereignty. Admiral Kolchak, by contrast, insisted that he was Supreme Ruler of All of Russia; under the slogan of a “Great Russia, united and indivisible,” the White generals, with rare exceptions, viewed Skoropads’kyi, despite his pedigree and biography that would otherwise qualify him as a Ukrainian “White” general, as at least as bad and more likely worse than the Bolsheviks and a greater enemy to that restorationist politics.

The independence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic was proclaimed in the Fourth Universal of the Central Rada on January 1918 and quickly promulgated the first law on personal national-cultural autonomy, which emerged out of the collaboration of a Ukrainian Socialist Federalist, Oleksander Shul’hyn, and Farainigte leader Moisha Zilberfarb. This law was inspired by the Austro-Marxist reform programs of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer and were transmitted to the Russian empire via the Jewish Bund, which had its greatest membership in the western borderlands that bore the “footprint” of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This “Ukrainian-Jewish” interpretation of national personal autonomy, however, went much farther than the Austro-Marxist intellectual fathers in granting political rights, not merely cultural institutions and language rights, to national minorities.

As early as the proclamation of the Second Universal in June 1917, the Ukrainian Central Rada, formed a General Secretariat for Nationality Affairs, with three initial sub-secretariats for Jewish, Polish and Russian affairs. This arrangement was upgraded in January 1918 to a ministry with the proclamation of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Fourth Universal, which itself was published in four languages: Ukrainian, Yiddish, Polish and Russian. Though the Ministry went into abeyance under the rule of Hetman Skoropadskyi, it was revived with the return of the Ukrainian socialist government in the Directory at the end of 1919. Among other tasks, the Ministry for Jewish Affairs fought against the anti-Jewish pogroms committed by Ukrainian troops under the command of Symon Petliura, but Jewish ministers remained in the Ukrainian governments and were also numerous among their diplomatic representatives.

The only similar contemporaneous experiment in national autonomy was adopted in Lithuania in the early 1920s, but abandoned by the end of the decade. Poland was obliged to undertake protection of its minorities as a condition of its 1919 treaty signed as part of the Versailles peace talks. The Bolshevik Council of People’s Commissars created a People’s Commissariat of Nationality Affairs, headed initially by Joseph Stalin, but the Commissariat was not motivated by protection of the rights of minorities as much as it was an effort to win over the large populations of prisoners-of-war and refugees, including Poles, Jews, and others, from the influence of “bourgeois” nationalist parties and organizations.

The Ukrainian solution to the multinational character of successor states to the Russian empire was one key component of the Ukrainian revolution that places it somewhere along a spectrum of revolutions between the February and October revolutions of 1917 in Petrograd and the next set of European revolutions that broke out in November 1918 in Berlin, Vienna and other central and east European capitals, most notably in Lviv/Lwow/Lemberg, where a second, but Western, Ukrainian People’s Republic was created and fought for survival with nascent Polish national forces and later the Polish Republic. The West Ukrainian People’s Republic was probably even closer to the post-1918 outcomes of revolution in its acceptance of parliamentary democracy and a multiparty system. The Bolshevik revolution and its rapid evolution toward single-party dictatorship quite consciously repudiated the Central European Social-Democratic outcome of revolution, but the Ukrainian revolutions, both in Kyiv and in Lviv, aspired to the more western alternative.

Finally, on the issues of war and peace, the Central Powers in effect signed two treaties that were both the first to halt fighting in the War, one with Ukraine on February 9, 1918, and a second with Soviet Russia a month later. At first, the Soviet Russian delegation recognized the Ukrainian delegation in the hopes of

having an ally against the Germans and their Central Power allies in Brest-Litovsk. But shortly after that recognition, the Council of People's Commissars declared war on the Ukrainian Central Rada and proclaimed its own Ukrainian Soviet Republic in Kharkiv following a soldier-worker dominated congress of soviets there. When the Germans refused to accede to Trotsky's demands that the Ukrainian People's Republic delegation no longer be recognized in favor of the Kharkiv "Ukrainians," the first peace of the war, at least in words and principles, was a just one that recognized Ukraine's sovereignty.

The second treaty with Soviet Russia, following a German offensive that brought the Soviet delegation back to Brest after a split in the Central Committee which had had to move in the meantime to Moscow, was indeed a draconian one, a victor's brutal peace of submission. The peace with Ukraine, however, turned quickly into a brutal occupation of the country once the Germans had restored the Ukrainian People's Republic. Also in short order the German occupiers tired of the socialist People's Republic and abetted the coup by the former tsarist general Pavlo/Pavel Skoropads'kyi.

In this brief survey of some of the key moments of the Ukrainian revolution, I have tried to highlight that very quickly the Ukrainian revolutions (both in Greater Ukraine and in Galicia/Bukovyna) diverged from the Russian ones, especially in Petrograd, but that it shared more with various Russian "third ways" (between Red and White dictatorship) and perhaps more still with the politics of revolution in November 1918 in central and eastern Europe. As former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma titled his book, Ukraine is not Russia; similarly, the Ukrainian revolution is not the Russian revolution, despite its inextricable and fatal links to that revolution. It is instead closer to the other revolutions of non-Russians in the empire, from Jews to Tatars to Caucasians to Poles.

Preliminary Conclusions

This appeal for an entangled imperial turn approach to the study of the revolutions of 1917 and their immediate aftermath is not meant to ignore nor supplant the wide range of "national" narratives of 1917, but as Andreas Kappeler has argued on behalf of a "transnational approach" that helps to avoid the "danger of essentialism—a primordialist approach in which ethnic groups and nations are projected back into history." But such a transnational approach can offset another "weakness of the ethnonational approach that is its teleological narrative, which usually begins with the homelands or with ethnogenesis, leading inexorably from the ethnic group to the nation and finally to the ethnonational state as the crowning fulfilment of history."

Along these lines, I propose that historians of the revolutions of 1917 undertake a process of internal decolonization to deconstruct those imperial narratives that continue to dominate the field, but silence or distort the voices of large groups of imperial subjects. I invoke "Internal decolonization" in homage to Alexander Etkind's *Internal Colonialism*. Deconstructing the Russian imperial-national narrative requires familiarization with non-Russian voices. Ukrainians have offered those voices for over a century, and can help historians of the revolutions undertake their own "internal decolonization."

President Vladimir Putin, his administration, and a broad range of Russian politicians persist in denying Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine, except for humanitarian convoys to the population in the contested territories. Moreover, the official Russian narrative is that what has happened in eastern Ukraine is by no means an international conflict, since war has, after all, never been declared by either side. Rather, the conflict there is a civil war in a country that has no unity or coherence, whose government is an illegitimate junta in service to the west. As it did 100 years ago, so too today how we call events and periods, must as how we describe or characterize regimes or political and social movements is always important for historians. In the current hybrid warfare, or civilizational conflict in the words of my ASU colleague Brad Allenby, narratives, including historical one, have become weaponized. The Bolsheviks certainly made an important early contribution to the practice of

weaponized narratives. Our job as professional historians is not to provide a counter-narrative, or certainly not just one counter-narrative, but to deconstruct those hegemonic and deadly narratives with rigorous interrogation of the categories we use to read the documents that make up our research material.

What I have discussed as historians' oversight, laziness, or outright obstinance in accepting the largely Russian narrative of the Ukrainian revolution has consequences, as it had consequences in 1917-19, when the victorious Entente powers in Paris refused to receive even one of the three or more Ukrainian delegations who arrived to plead for recognition and the fulfillment of the promises of national self-determination in Wilson's war aims that became his peace platform.

This brings me back to the beginning and the meaning of all this, above all Khrystiuk's critical history of Russian-Ukrainian relations and the birth of the modern Ukrainian state and nation in war, revolution and civil war, reminds us of the importance of the international order for Ukraine's emergence and survival, the importance of informed, sustained, and reliable moral, political, diplomatic, and military support for any small or medium-sized state located in the borderlands between a hostile Russian neighbor and the European Union to the west.

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