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Lenin, “Great Russia,” and Ukraine

ROMAN SZPORLUK

“REVIEWING THE HISTORY of international affairs in the modern era,” George F. Kennan wrote in 1995, “I find it hard to think of any event more strange and startling, and at first glance more inexplicable, than the sudden and total disintegration and disappearance from the international scene, primarily in the years 1987 through 1991, of the great power known successively as the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union.” Kennan was especially struck by the “extreme abruptness, the sharp quick ending, and not least the relative bloodlessness with which the great Soviet Empire came to an end.”¹

In search of an explanation Kennan turned to the Russian Republic’s declaration of “sovereignty” (1990) which, he said, differed significantly from similar declarations by other Soviet republics:

In the case of the Russian Republic, the gesture was far more serious. ...It ranked the Russian nation with the various other peripheral entities in the former Soviet Union.... For the Russian Republic to assume this position was to pose a mortal threat to the Soviet Union itself. For if the Russian nation were to go ahead and declare its own full independence, or even if it were to become a member of some sort of a federal or confederal “union” on an equal basis with all the others, what, beyond the name, would be left of the Soviet Union? It would have become an empty shell, without people, without territory, and with no more than a theoretical identity.²

In Russia’s action Kennan saw the subversion or rejection of an assumption that until then the world outside had taken for granted: that the USSR and Russia were synonyms, and that the RSFSR was an odd entity on the administrative map of the Soviet Union that was not to be confused with the real Russia. While this presumably was not the opinion of ethnically non-Russian citizens of the USSR, most ethnic Russians within the USSR, like foreigners, thought that the Soviet Union was another name for Russia. Likewise, in the time of the tsarist Russian Empire there had been no accepted concept of a Russia that was not

coextensive with the empire. As the British historian Geoffrey Hosking puts it, “Britain *had* an empire, but Russia *was* an empire—and perhaps still is.” Unlike the British Empire, Hosking continued, the “Russian empire was part of the homeland, and the ‘natives’ mixed inextricably with the Russians in their own markets, streets and schools—as indeed they still do.”³

Hosking returned to this theme in his major book, *Russia: People and Empire 1552–1917*, where he quoted a remark that Sergei Witte, imperial Russia’s former prime minister, made in his diary in 1910: “The mistake we have been making for many decades is that we have still not admitted to ourselves that since the time of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great there has been no such thing as Russia: there has been only the Russian Empire.”⁴ Ivan L. Rudnytsky, in an article first published in 1963, quoted the same passage of Witte (although he translated it slightly differently), but also cited Witte’s next sentence, in which he noted that 35 percent of the population were ethnic minorities, and that the Russians themselves were divided into Great Russians, Little Russians, and Belorussians. To ignore “this historical fact of capital importance,” Witte concluded, made it impossible to engage in an effective politics in Russia.⁵

In December 1914, several years after Witte’s pessimistic note, Vladimir Il’ich Lenin let the world know that *he* was not ignoring “this historical fact of capital importance.” Not only did Lenin base his own policy on the fact of the empire’s multinational character; he also recognized that Great Russians and Ukrainians were two different nations. In an article of exceptional historical importance, “On the National Pride of the Great Russians,” which appeared in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, an émigré journal in Geneva, Lenin presented an idea of a Russia (which he called *Velikorossiiia*) that was different as a nation, and potentially as a state, from the “Russia” that everyone in his time used as a synonym for the Russian Empire, just as later many would use “Russia” as a synonym for the Soviet Union. In that article Lenin spoke about the Great-Russian democrats’ struggle for “a free and democratic Great Russia,” and about “the proletarian brotherhood of all the nations of Russia” in their joint struggle for the cause of socialism.

The reasons for which we consider this article to be important are rarely, if ever, recognized in literature. On the few occasions when “On the National Pride” is referred to in studies of Lenin’s thought or politics or when it is included in Western anthologies of Lenin’s writings, it is presented as “the apologia of an anti-war Russian radical for his position, an attempt to show how such a position could itself be patriotic insofar as Russia’s revolutionary tradition was a legitimate basis for national pride.”⁶

Witte and Hosking help us to see how revolutionary Lenin’s distinctions were: there was a Great Russia, the country of the Great Russians, and there was a “Russia,” whose many peoples, including Ukrainians, were under Great-Russian rule. Lenin condemned the tsarist state’s war aim to “throttle Poland and

Ukraine." He unequivocally recognized Ukraine as an equal—and a victim—of "Great Russia." Thus, he rejected the idea of an "All-Russian nation" that the majority of leading political figures of Russia held at that time.⁷ Clearly, for Lenin "the Russian Question," or more precisely "the *Russia* Question," was the central nationality problem in the Russian Empire. The ideas Lenin formulated in that 1914 article explain his politics in 1917–22. Decisions made then created the political and intellectual setting for the political developments in the late twentieth century that led to the rise of the state we have known since 1991 as Russia.

Lenin began "On the National Pride" by stating that national feeling was not something alien to "class-conscious proletarians," even though the ruling classes—the landowners and capitalists—of the advanced Western nations had invoked the principle of nationality to serve their class interests. "Is a sense of national pride alien to us, Great-Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country, and we are doing our very utmost to raise *her* toiling masses (i.e., nine-tenths of *her* population) to the level of a democratic and socialist consciousness."

Lenin explained that it was a special responsibility of "us, Great-Russian Social-Democrats...to define our attitude to this ideological trend," that is, nationalism:

It would be unseemly for us, representatives of a dominant nation in the far east of Europe and a goodly part of Asia, to forget the immense significance of the national question—especially in a country which has been rightly called the "prison of the peoples," and particularly at a time when, in the far east of Europe and in Asia, capitalism is awakening to life and self-consciousness a number of "new" nations, large and small; at a moment when the tsarist monarchy has called up millions of Great Russians and non-Russians, so as to "solve" a number of national problems in accordance with the interests of the Council of the United Nobility and of the Guchkovs, Krestovnikovs, Dolgorukovs, Kutlers and Rodichevs.⁸

Against these representatives of reactionary Russia Lenin cited the names of people the Great Russians could be proud of: they included Radishchev, the Decembrists, the "revolutionary commoners" of the 1870s, the Great-Russian workers who had created a mass revolutionary party in 1905, and the Great-Russian peasants who had fought the clergy and landlords then. While he recalled, with approval, that Chernyshevsky, "the Great-Russian democrat," had spoken about Russia as " [a] wretched nation, a nation of slaves, from top to bottom—all slaves," he insisted that the situation had changed: "We are full of national pride because the Great-Russian nation, *too*, has proved capable of providing mankind with great models of the struggle for freedom and social-

ism, and not only with great pogroms, rows of gallows, dungeons, great famines and great servility to priests, tsars, landowners and capitalists.”⁹

The Great-Russian opponents of tsarism, Lenin continued, ought to fight for the establishment of “a free and democratic Great Russia” that would become one of the parts of a new union of free peoples of the former tsarist empire.

...Full of a sense of national pride, we Great-Russian workers want, come what may, a free and independent, a democratic, republican and proud Great Russia, one that will base its relations with its neighbours on the human principle of equality, and not on the feudalist principle of privilege, which is so degrading to a great nation. Just because we want that, we say: it is impossible, in the twentieth century and in Europe (even in the far east of Europe), to “defend the fatherland” otherwise than by using every revolutionary means to combat the monarchy, the landowners and the capitalists of *one’s own* fatherland, i.e., the *worst* enemies of our country. We say that the Great Russians cannot “defend the fatherland” otherwise than by desiring the defeat of tsarism in any war, this as the lesser evil to nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Great Russia. For tsarism not only oppresses those nine-tenths but also demoralizes, degrades, dishonours and prostitutes them by teaching them to oppress other nations and to cover up this shame with hypocritical and quasi-patriotic phrases.¹⁰

Lenin did not assume that the victory of the revolutionary cause was assured in the immediate future. On the contrary, he acknowledged that tsarism might be succeeded at first by “another historical force,” namely Great-Russian capitalism, and that it was possible to argue that capitalism was “carrying on progressive work by economically centralizing and welding together vast regions.” Even though Lenin did not accept that argument, he admitted that Great-Russian capitalism might—for a time—prove to be successful: “Let us even assume that history will decide in favour of Great-Russian dominant-nation capitalism, and against the hundred and one small nations.... We do not advocate preserving small nations at all costs; *other conditions being equal*, we are decidedly for centralization and are opposed to the petty-bourgeois ideal of federal relationships.” Such a turn of events did not mean that the socialists should accept it: “it is, firstly, not our business, or that of democrats (let alone of socialists) to help Romanov-Bobrinisky-Purishkevich throttle the Ukraine, etc.... Secondly, if history were to decide in favour of Great-Russian dominant-nation capitalism, it follows hence that the *socialist* role of the Great-Russian proletariat...will be all the greater.”

The economic prosperity and rapid development of Great Russia... require that the country be liberated from Great-Russian oppression of other nations....

The proletarian revolution calls for a prolonged education of the workers in the spirit of the *fullest* national equality and brotherhood. Consequently, the interests of the Great-Russian proletariat require that the masses be systematically educated to champion—most resolutely, consistently, boldly and in a revolutionary manner—complete equality and the right to self-determination for all the nations oppressed by the Great Russians. The interests of the Great-Russians' national pride... coincide with the *socialist* interests of the Great Russians (and all other) proletarians.

In the second hypothetical case we have considered, our home-grown socialist chauvinists, Plekhanov, etc., etc., will prove traitors, not only to their own country—a free and democratic Great Russia, but also to the proletarian brotherhood of all the nations of Russia, i.e., to the cause of socialism.¹¹

Even a brief reference to several other articles Lenin wrote in 1914–16 will provide additional support to the thesis that by 1917 Lenin had concluded that the Russian question, or Russian nationalism, posed the greatest challenge to the revolutionary movement in the Russian Empire. These articles clearly differ in emphasis from what Lenin had stated as late as 1913 in his critique of Jewish and Ukrainian "nationalist" tendencies in the socialist movement. There he appeared to treat those tendencies as being as equally dangerous for the cause of proletarian solidarity as the Great-Russian nationalist tendencies, or those of other established, ruling nations in Europe:

There are two nations in every modern nation—we say to all nationalist-socialists. There are two national cultures in every national culture. There is the Great-Russian culture of the Purishkeviches, Guchkovs and Struves—but there is also the Great-Russian culture typified in the names of Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov. There are *the same two* cultures in the Ukraine as there are in Germany, in France, in England, among the Jews, and so forth.¹²

It is easy to see how simplistic if not demagogical was Lenin's 1913 statement that there were "*the same two cultures*" (Lenin's italics) in Ukraine and among the Jews as there were in Germany and in France. Most seriously, Lenin did not bother to explain to which of the two national cultures the Great-Russian peasants belonged—or whether they had as yet become "national" at all. By 1914, Lenin no longer contrasted the nation of "the Purishkeviches, Guchkovs and Struves" with that of "Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov," as if these two were static givens. In an article titled "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," written in the spring of 1914, several months before the outbreak of the war (and before "On the National Pride"), Lenin admitted that the Great-Russian

nationality problem was a very complex phenomenon, and because it was so complex it posed a particularly serious danger to the proletarian cause. Like other nationalisms, Lenin admitted, Great-Russian nationalism passed and was passing through “various phases.” Before 1905, “we almost exclusively knew national-reactionaries”; after 1905, there emerged “national-liberals” whose ideology was adopted “by the whole of the present-day bourgeoisie.” After the national liberals, Lenin predicted that “Great-Russian national-democrats” would “*inevitably* appear later on.” Moreover, those national-democrats, Lenin continued, would try to appeal to the peasantry—and he did not exclude the possibility that they might be successful. As we just noted, when Lenin spoke in 1913 about the two cultures, he did not talk about the possible nationalist orientation of the peasantry; now he conceded that the peasants, and not only the bourgeoisie, might embrace nationalism: “Even now, and probably for a fairly long time to come, proletarian democracy must reckon with the nationalism of the Great-Russian peasants.” Lenin warned that in response, the proletarian democracy would refuse to make “concessions to it, but [would]...combat it” instead.¹³

Clearly, of all the nationalisms in the empire the most dangerous to the proletarian cause was Great-Russian nationalism, and Lenin admitted that a *popular* Great-Russian nationalism might emerge. In this connection it is worth noting that he thought the Great Russians might follow the Poles in their transition from nobility nationalism to bourgeois nationalism to peasant nationalism: “Things might be moving in the same direction in Russia...”¹⁴ Lenin denied that this was a new Bolshevik position on the peasantry; the Bolsheviks had never “idealized” the peasant. On the contrary, “we always have made and always will make a clear distinction between peasant intelligence and peasant prejudice, between peasant strivings for democracy and opposition to Purishkevich, and the peasant desire to make peace with the priest and the landlord.”¹⁵ In the fall of 1916, literally months before the March 1917 revolution, Lenin returned to the idea that the peasantry’s position in any future revolution should not be taken for granted. He reminded his readers that while “1905” had been a “bourgeois-democratic revolution,” those participating in it included “masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle...” What mattered, Lenin continued, was that “*objectively*, the mass movement was breaking the back of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.”¹⁶

Lenin did not specifically explain whether, and in what way, “the class-conscious workers” had led the popular movement in which, as he himself had just admitted, the masses had pursued very vague and fantastic aims. But he used the memory of 1905 to offer a general view of what social revolution was and was *not*:

To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.—to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*.¹⁷

Lenin thus ridiculed the view that it was possible to exclude nationalist revolts from social revolutions, that a social revolution was possible in which one side declared "We are for socialism" and its opposite said "We are for imperialism." He illustrated his point by making a reference to the Irish uprising that had broken out earlier that year: "Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a 'putsch.'" It was enough for Lenin that such popular movements challenged the system he opposed: "We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilize *every* popular movement against *every single* disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis."¹⁸

The last quotation helps to see why it was so easy for Lenin to respond more readily than any other Russian political leaders to the emergence of Ukraine as a major problem after March 1917. It also helps us to see how different Lenin's sense of reality was when one compares it with that of some of his contemporaries in the revolutionary movement. In 1916, Andrea Graziosi writes, Georgii Piatakov, Evgeniia Bosh, and Nikolai Bukharin "elaborated a platform of remarkable historical and political blindness," in which they declared that "both the question of state and that of nation, and in particular that of the national state, were dead, no longer relevant, no longer on the agenda."¹⁹

Lenin did not make their mistake. In short time he realized that the opposition to the war he had advocated in 1914 would not lead to a Europe-wide socialist revolution of the proletariat. He understood that the only Europe-wide revolution actually taking place was the revolution of nationalities, of which the Irish uprising of 1916 was an example, and that the task of the proletarian revolutionaries was to manipulate those revolutions in order to make them serve the socialist cause. Lenin was prepared for more nationalist revolutions in Eastern Europe, including the Russian Empire, and recognized that nationalist movements would make the tasks of proletarian revolutionaries in Russia much more difficult. But rather than ignoring the fact of "the nationalization of the masses" (to cite the title of a famous book on German nationalism), Lenin asked the proletarian socialists to look for ways in which popular movements could serve the proletarian cause. When tsarism suddenly collapsed several months later, he knew what needed to be done.

Lenin's new, more realistic and flexible approach to the nationality question was fully consistent with his fundamental views on such issues as the role of professional revolutionaries in the party or on "scientific socialism" as an ideology that had to be brought to the proletariat "from outside." (Without the leadership of revolutionary intellectuals, the workers were, at best, capable of developing only a "trade union consciousness.") It was the task of the party to raise the "toiling masses" to a "democratic and socialist consciousness" and to educate the workers "in the spirit of the *fullest* national equality and brotherhood." These educational efforts were necessary because "tsarism...demoralizes, degrades, dishonours and prostitutes" the masses; without the revolutionaries, tsarism might succeed in "teaching them to oppress other nations and to cover up this shame with hypocritical and quasi-patriotic phrases." Thus, Lenin's "flexibility" did not mean concessions in matters of principle: it was a call for education, or, one might say, for sophisticated manipulation, of the popular masses and their movements.

In March 1917, earlier than Lenin had anticipated, revolution came: before Great-Russian capitalism had a chance to replace tsarism as a more "progressive system," before the national-liberals or national-democrats managed to establish themselves firmly in power, and before the peasants embraced Great-Russian nationalism. A "free and democratic Great Russia" having failed to establish itself, Lenin moved to the next stage: "the proletarian brotherhood of all the nations of Russia" should assume power for "the cause of socialism." Just as the Bolshevik party was not a Great-Russian party but represented the proletariat of all the nationalities of the former empire, so Lenin's government did not consider itself to be one of *Great Russia*. Indeed, because after taking power in Russia he expected a socialist revolution to follow in other countries, and because he treated nations and nationalism as phenomena the proletarian revolutionaries could make use of in their struggle for socialism, Lenin was ready to offer deals to the nationalities that no other Russian politicians were prepared to do. For our topic, the most important of these was in the area of Russian-Ukrainian relations. In 1917, Lenin's party and then government adopted his ideas of 1914: to quote Serhii Plokhyy, the Bolsheviks accepted "not only in theory but also in practice, the division of the all-Russian nationality into three separate nations: Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian." This amounted to "a turning point in the unmaking of imperial Russia."²⁰

It did not take much time for the Ukrainians to discover what Lenin's recognition of Ukraine's independence amounted to in practice: the Bolsheviks were no more prepared to respect Ukraine's independence than they were ready to respect the independence of Russia, as the violent overthrow of the Provisional Government and the subsequent dissolution of the Constituent Assembly showed. The Ukraine Lenin wanted to have was a Soviet republic, formally an equal of Russia, but governed by local functionaries of his own

Bolshevik party. And yet, in the confusing days of wars and revolutions, even this concession "brought together the Bolshevik authorities and the leaders of the Ukrainian national movement." In the 1920s, the "cooperation between the Bolshevik regime and the activists of the Ukrainian national movement," even though it was based on an "uneasy compromise," in Plokhy's words, allowed Mykhailo Hrushevsky to return to Ukraine in 1924 and work there for several years.²¹

When we remember what Lenin had said about the "fantastic" and "unconscious" or "semi-conscious" ideas and actions of "the masses" helping the cause of the revolution, we can understand why he would have been willing to make deals with the Ukrainian Left, for example the Borotbists, while pursuing his strategic goal of defeating his main enemy, the Russian Whites. In their war with the Russian Counter-Revolution, Bolsheviks needed "a bloc with the Ukrainian peasantry," and Lenin's "support" of the Borotbists served that that goal.²²

Whatever their Ukrainian "partners" may have thought they had won, a majority of leading officials of the new regime regarded the concessions granted to the nationalities, and in particular Moscow's recognition of the independence of Soviet republics such as Ukraine, as only temporary. From as early as 1919 they demanded that a single Soviet—but Russian—state be established with its center in Moscow. This arrangement was proposed by Stalin, who already in 1920 wanted all Soviet republics to be incorporated in the RSFSR. Other central party leaders supported Stalin, and his only serious opposition came from Lenin. Stalin brought back his plan during the intra-party and inter-republic discussions in 1922. He insisted that Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and other republics be included in the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, as the RSFSR's "autonomous" republics, equal in status to that of the Bashkir and Tatar ASSRs.²³ Stalin's proposal was opposed by the national Communists in Ukraine and Georgia, and, most importantly, by Lenin, who wrote: "We recognize that we are equals in law with the Ukrainian SSR etc. and together on an equal footing with them we are joining a new union, a new federation, 'The Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia.'" ²⁴ From the Ukrainian point of view the adoption of the Stalin proposal would have amounted to the restoration of imperial Russia, even though it would be a Russia under a new management and with a different ideology. For Lenin in 1922, the construction of socialism in Russia faced new and unexpected threats, and in his speech at the party congress in March 1922, he acknowledged that even among the leading officials of the Soviet state there were few committed Communists, whereas pro-capitalist attitudes were widespread. By then Lenin had realized that the revolution had destroyed not only the landlords and bourgeoisie but also the proletariat.²⁵ He called the party to develop a higher socialist culture capable of defeating the capitalist culture. The equality of Ukraine and other

republics with the RSFSR within a new, broader Union was a means to control the resurgent Great-Russian nationalism.

CONCLUSIONS

The breakup of the USSR was a great surprise, as Kennan points out in the above-mentioned article. Among the many explanations given for the breakup of the Union is the argument that its collapse was made possible by the Union Treaty (1922) and the subsequent constitutional provision (1924) that recognized the right of the republics freely to secede, as agreed upon during the Union's establishment. However, this "right" was never intended to provide a means for Russia to leave the Union. Thus, the rise of an independent Russia and Russia's role in the breakup was an even larger surprise. People did not understand that the biggest nationality problem of the Russian Empire and its successor, the USSR, was the Russian problem, or to be precise, the Great-Russian problem. As we have tried to show, Lenin did know this. He knew that as of 1914–17 a Russian nation had not been formed, and today scholars agree, as Dominic Lieven writes, that "even in 1914 the Russians were not really a nation."²⁶

The "Russian Question" was not solved during the Soviet period. *The Affirmative Action Empire* by Terry Martin covers the nationalities policies from 1923 to the late 1930s. David Brandenberger, in his book *National Bolshevism*, has written about Russian ethnocentrism in Stalin's time. Among studies of Russian nationalism after Stalin's death is Yitzak Brudny's *Reinventing Russia*. John B. Dunlop explores the Russian question as a central problem in Gorbachev's time in his *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*.²⁷ My "Dilemmas of Russian Nationalism," published in 1989, discusses various currents or variants of Russian nationalism, including the one that eventually prevailed, RSFSR nationalism, although not in the form defined in that article.²⁸ The emergence of Russia as a political power is a major theme in Jerry F. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–1991*. Hough concluded that "ultimately it was Russia that ended 'the Russian Empire' by seceding from it."²⁹ For, indeed, it was Russia that in December 1991, together with Ukraine and Belarus, denounced the 1922 agreement forming the USSR, and that earlier, in November 1990, during the Russian leader's state visit to Kyiv, had signed a treaty with Ukraine. Roman Solchanyk's *Ukraine and Russia* examines the background and the first years of Ukraine and Russia's interstate relations as independent states.³⁰

Thus, because the RSFSR began to function as the Russian nation-state in the late 1980s–early 1990s, we can see that Lenin's creation played a role at a very critical moment in history, making it possible to prevent a replica of the

Serbian-Croat war, with Donbas and especially Crimea as likely battlegrounds in a war between Ukraine and Russia.

While Lenin's solution of the Russian Question—his acceptance of Ukraine as a nation and thus his rejection of the all-Russia nation—did not cause the breakup of the Soviet Union, in retrospect we conclude that it helped to carry out the dissolution—whatever causes lay behind it—peacefully. Lenin's government was the first government of Russia to recognize Ukraine as Russia's equal as an independent state, and the importance of this admission is not diminished by the fact that Lenin did not want Ukraine to be any more independent than he wanted Russia to be independent, since both were to be under the rule of the Bolshevik party. There is deep historical irony—a paradox—in the fact that it was an ideologist of communism and proletarian internationalism, and the founder of a totalitarian system, who influenced the relations between Russia and Ukraine in the way he did.

But to close with the preceding sentence is to invite questions. One question may be addressed to Lenin's biographers, historians, and political scientists interested in the origins and development of his thought and in its relation to his politics. Where and when did Lenin reject the idea of the "All-Russian nation" and conclude that the Great Russians were a nation separate from the Ukrainians—for surely he had not learned it in school? A student of Ukrainian history, reading "On the National Pride," written in 1914, notes that it followed the publication, in 1904, of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's article titled "The Traditional Scheme of 'Russian' History and the Problem of Rational Organization of the History of East Slavs."³¹ Without regard to whether he had read Hrushevs'kyi (or learned about his views from a party comrade, say the historian Mikhail N. Pokrovskii), would one be wrong to conclude that Lenin's political position on the Ukraine-Russia problem were consistent with, indeed followed from, Hrushevs'kyi's historical scheme?

Another question, or perhaps a proposal, might be directed to the historians of Ukrainian-Russian relations in whose works—and there are many, including ones of high quality—Lenin's pre-1917 view of Ukraine is ignored or presented in a less than comprehensive way. Considering the role Lenin played in Ukrainian history during the period from 1917 to 1922, Lenin deserves a closer look also by Ukrainian and Russian historians.³²

And finally, there is the problem of "Great Russia." As we noted, writers on Russian nationalism focus their attention on just one form of it, what Alexei Miller calls "the All-Russian" national project. But was Lenin the only supporter of its rival, the "Great-Russian" national project? It would be useful to learn about his predecessors. We suggested that his most notable followers and successors played a major role in the events of 1990–91, but a comprehensive and systematic study of this subject would be very useful.

Andreas Kappeler, in his study titled *"Great Russians" and "Little Russians"*:

Russian-Ukrainian Relations and Perceptions in Historical Perspective, began his survey that closes in 1991 with quotations from Semen Divovych's 1762 poem, "A Talk between Great Russia and Little Russia," but noted that the "dialogue" imagined by Divovych did not reflect "the reality of political interrelations between Russia and the Ukrainian hetmanate...but, rather, the wishful thinking of the Cossack elite."³³ While we agree with this conclusion, we may add that a "dialogue" imagined by Divovych was not possible in his time and much later, because no Great Russia existed under the monarch who according to Divovych ruled both Little Russia and Great Russia. There was no Great Russia within the Russian Empire—no entity comparable to the England that survived the creation of the United Kingdom or to "Poland proper," the Korona, within the Commonwealth even following the Union of Lublin (1569). So there was no one for Little Russia to talk to—no one, that is, until Lenin.

In this connection let us note that George Kennan was not the first to point to the Russian Republic's sovereignty as a threat to the survival of the Soviet Union. As early as October 1991—that is, two months before the dissolution of the USSR—Aleksandr Tsipko charged that those involved "in the struggle for the sovereignty of the RSFSR" failed to understand that a sovereign RSFSR "would inevitably push both Ukraine and Belorussia, not to speak of Kazakhstan, toward separation from a sovereign RSFSR."³⁴ Critical exposures of what he calls "suicidal Great Russian separatism" have been a theme of Tsipko's writings also since 1991. In an article published in 2001, for example, Tsipko states: "In our country [*u nas*], just as on the threshold of the revolutions of the early 20th century, an integrated national elite did not exist and does not exist; there is no nation in the exact meaning of the word."³⁵ Tsipko appears to be ideally qualified to write a book titled *Proiskhozhdeniie velikoruskogo separativizma*.³⁶ One would hope that in it Lenin would receive the attention he deserves.

NOTES

1. George F. Kennan, "Witness to the Fall," review of *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, by Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *New York Review of Books*, November 16, 1995, 7.
2. Kennan, "Witness to the Fall," 10.
3. Geoffrey Hosking, "The Freudian Frontier," *The Times Literary Supplement*, March 10, 1995, 27.
4. S. Iu. Vitte [Witte], *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1960), 3:274–75, quoted in Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552–1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 479.
5. Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, ed. by Peter L. Rudnytsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 34.

6. See Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology* (New York, 1975), 196. The text of the article appears on 196–99. "Revolutionary defeatism" was indeed one of the messages of "On the National Pride," but its novelty and real importance lay elsewhere.
7. Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Olga Poato (Budapest and New York, 2003), and originally published as "*Ukrainskii vopros*" v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX v.) (St. Petersburg, 2000), is a study of what Miller calls the "All-Russia" national project. He makes no references to Lenin's ideas about Russian national identity.
8. V. I. Lenin, "On the National Pride of the Great Russians," in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, 3 vols. (New York, 1967), 1:664–65. For the nationalist anti-minority official and popular campaign in 1914, see Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2003).
9. Lenin, "On the National Pride," 665. (Italics in the original.)
10. Lenin, "On the National Pride," p. 666. (Italics in the original.) In the Russian original Lenin placed Russia in "far-eastern Europe"—v dal'nevostochnoi Evrope—which at the time when he wrote conveyed a message that is lost in the translated version, "in the far east of Europe." See V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., vol. 26 (Moscow, 1961), 108.
11. Lenin, "On the National Pride," 666–67. As the second part of the last quoted sentence makes clear, Lenin considered the Great-Russians' "own country" to be Great Russia, and when he spoke about "Russia" he meant the multinational tsarist empire in which the Great Russians were one of many nations. It is important to remember Lenin's point because his references to "Russia" in 1917 have been often interpreted as meaning that he considered all of the empire to be Russian in a national sense. As Lenin had made clear in "On the National Pride," he thought of Great Russia as a nation that was just one of the nations within the Russian Empire.
12. V. I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," in V. I. Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question. The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (Moscow, 1974), 20. (Italics in the original.) At times Lenin did qualify his "two cultures" statement by admitting that bourgeois nationalism and what he called "Black-Hundred nationalism" in Great Russia were not identical (p. 20), but more often than not he placed them under one rubric in opposition to proletarian culture. See, for example, p. 13: "Our task is to fight the dominant, Black-Hundred and bourgeois national culture of the Great Russians.... Fight your own Great-Russian landlords and the bourgeoisie, fight their 'culture' in the name of internationalism...."
13. V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, 3 vols. (New York, 1967), 1:651. (Italics in the original.)

14. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," 651n.
15. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," 651.
16. V. I. Lenin, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up," in Lenin, *Critical Remarks*, 146.
17. Lenin, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up," 146.
18. Lenin, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up," 148.
19. Andrea Graziosi, *A New, Peculiar State: Explorations in Soviet History, 1917–1937* (Westport, Conn., and London, 2000), 4–5.
20. Serhii Plokyh, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 2005), 213.
21. Plokyh, *Unmaking Imperial Russia*, 214. For a fuller review of the Ukrainian-Bolshevik confrontation in 1917–20, see John S. Reshetar, Jr., "Ukrainian and Russian Perceptions of the Ukrainian Revolution," in *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter*, ed. Peter J. Potichnyj, Marc Raeff, Jaroslaw Pelenski, Gleb N. Žekulin, 140–63 (Edmonton, 1992), especially 144–48 and 156–59.
22. Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917–23* (Basingstoke and London, 1999), 120–21. Lenin understood the implications of the Ukrainian Left's success in the elections of 1917 and may have seen in it a sign that the Ukrainian peasants were becoming "national" following the Polish model. In 1919 Lenin proposed a temporary bloc with the Borotbists, while concurrently "launching a propaganda campaign for the complete merger [of Ukraine] with the RSFSR." At the same time, however, he advocated "greatest caution regarding nationalist traditions, strictest observance of equality of the Ukrainian language and culture, all officials to be required to study the Ukrainian language, and so on and so forth." Richard Pipes, ed., with the assistance of David Brandenberger, *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven and London, 1996), 76. For the Ukrainians this was more than the other Russians were prepared to do at that critical time. We may add that it was owing to Lenin's pressure that the Ukrainian SSR was allowed to embrace practically the entire territory that Ukraine held between March and December 1918 when it was independent of Moscow. Defying Bolshevik activists in Kharkiv, Odesa, Kryvyi Rih, and Donbas, but in order to accommodate the Ukrainian leftists (some of whom joined the Bolshevik party), Lenin insisted on attaching the south and southeast of today's Ukraine to the Ukrainian SSR. See Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Communist Take-over of the Ukraine," in *The Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak, 104–27 (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), especially 127.
23. See Robert Service, *The Iron Ring*, vol. 3 of *Lenin: A Political Life* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995), 93–96, for party policies regarding the status of Ukraine between 1919 and 1922.
24. Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 185–86. It might be pointed out that the RSFSR, even without Ukraine and other "independent" republics, did not become a *Great-Russian* Soviet republic but remained an heir of the empire in that

- it included Volga Tatars, Bashkirs, the peoples of North Caucasus, as well as those of Central Asia (the latter until their elevation to the Union-republic status later on). The post-Soviet Russia inherited this part of imperial legacy when it became independent, as the current protests by some *russskie* who say they do not want to be called *rossiiane* show.
25. Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2005), 6.
 26. Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, 2000), 384.
 27. Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001); David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002); Yitzak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, 1993). Roman Szporluk, "Nationalities and the Russian Problem in the USSR: A Historical Outline," originally published in 1973 and reprinted in *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 2000), 1–27, argued that the Russian problem was the most important nationality problem in the USSR.
 28. Roman Szporluk, "Dilemmas of Russian Nationalism," reprinted in *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union*, 182–228.
 29. Jerry F. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–1991* (Washington, D.C., 1997), 374.
 30. Roman Solchanyk, *Ukraine and Russia: The Post-Soviet Transition* (Lanham, Md., 2001).
 31. Hrushevs'kyi's article first appeared in English in *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.* 2, no. 2 (1952): 355–64; reprinted in *From Kievan Rus' to Modern Ukraine: Formation of the Ukrainian Nation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984); an English translation is also in Lubomyr R. Wynar, *Mykhailo Hrushevsky: Ukrainian-Russian Confrontation in Historiography* (New York, 1988), 35–42.
 32. See for example, Peter J. Potichnyj, Marc Raeff, Jaroslaw Pelenski, Gleb Žekulin, eds., *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter* (Edmonton, 1992); Andreas Kappeler, Zenon E. Kohut, Frank E. Sysyn, and Mark von Hagen, eds., *Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter (1600–1945)* (Edmonton, 1992); and A. I. Miller, V. F. Reprintsev, and B. N. Floriia, eds., *Rossiiia-Ukraina: istoriia vzaimootnoshenii* (Moscow, 1997).
 33. Andreas Kappeler, "Great Russians" and "Little Russians": *Russian-Ukrainian Relations and Perceptions in Historical Perspective*, Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies (Seattle, 2003), 78. Divovych never explained whether Great Russia embraced the entire area of the state other than Little Russia: did he think that Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia, or the Baltic provinces, were parts of Great Russia? For a discussion of Divovych's work in its

Ukrainian political and intellectual context see Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto, 2008), 5–6 and especially 36–40.

34. Aleksandr Tsipko, "Drama rossiiskogo vybora," *Izvestiia*, 1 October 1991, 5, cited in Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 61.
35. Aleksandr Tsipko, "Oslepleniie i nakazaniie," *Literaturnaiia gazeta*, 23–29 May 2001, 1 and 3 (translation mine).
36. That is something comparable to N. I. Ulianov, *Proiskhozhdenie ukrainskogo separatizma* (Moscow, 1996), originally published in New York in 1966.