

Where Is Ukraine?

By [Dr. Vladislav B. Sotirović](#)

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The German occupation forces were those who have been the first to create and recognise a short-lived state's independence of Ukraine in January 1918 during the time of their-own inspired and supported anti-Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917–1921. As reoccupied by the Bolshevik Red Army, the eastern and southern parts of the present-day territory of (a Greater) Ukraine joined in 1922 the USSR as a separate Soviet Socialist Republic (without Crimea). According to 1926 Soviet census of Crimea, the majority of its population were the Russians (382.645). The second largest ethnic group were the Tartars (179.094). Therefore, V. I. Lenin has to be considered as the real historical father of the Ukrainian statehood but also and as of the contemporary nationhood.

The territory of the present-day Ukraine was devastated during the WWII by the Nazi German occupation forces from 1941 to 1944. During the war the Ukrainian nationalists of S. Bandera (1900–1959) [committed a genocide against the Poles, Jews and Russians](#) [on Stepan Bandera, see: Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*, Stuttgart, ibidem, 2014]. The Jewish holocaust in Ukraine was an extensive criminal act. For instance, the Ukrainian militia (12.000) directly participated in the 1942 holocaust of some 200.000 Volhynian Jews together with 140.000 German policemen. The Ukrainian mass killers learned their job from the Germans and applied their knowledge as well as on the Poles [Timothy Snyder, *Tautų rekonstrukcija: Lieuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija 1569–1999*, Vilnius: Mintis, 2009, 183].

During the [1947 Operation Zapad](#) (West) 76,192 pro-Bandera Ukrainian collaborators were deported by the Soviet authorities to Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, in 1945 the lands of Transcarpathia, littoral Moldova (Bessarabia), Polish Galicia and part of Romania's Bukovina followed by Crimea in 1954 were handed to Soviet Ukraine by Moscow's *Politburo*. These territories, which never have been part of any kind of Ukraine and overwhelmingly not populated by the ethnolinguistic Ukrainians were included into Soviet Ukraine primarily due to the political activity by the strongest Ukrainian cadre in the USSR – Nikita Khrushchev, a person who was installed in the Kremlin after Stalin's death in 1953. On this place, a parallel with Croatia is required: for the Croat committed genocide on the Serbs, Jews and Roma by A. Pavelić's regime (a Croat version of S. Bandera) during the WWII on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia a post-war (Socialist Republic of) Croatia was awarded by a Croat-Slovenian dictator of Yugoslavia J. B. Tito with the lands of Istria, Adriatic islands and Dubrovnik – all of them never have been in any kind of the state of Croatia before the WWII.



Post-WWII Ukraine, 1947. Photo by Robert Capa.

Gorbachev's policy of deliberate dissolution of the USSR from the time of Reykjavik bilateral

meeting with Ronald Reagan in 1988 caused a revival of the ethnic nationalism of the Ukrainians who proclaimed an independence on August 24th, 1991 (confirmed on referendum on December 1st, 1991 only by those who did not boycott it) in the wake of anti-Gorbachev's military putsch in Moscow (mis)using the political situation of paralyzed central government in the country. The independence of Ukraine was proclaimed and later internationally recognized within the borders of a Greater Stalin-Khrushchev's Ukraine with at least 20% of the ethnic Russian population living in a compact area in the eastern part of the country and as well as making a qualified (2/3) majority of Crimea's population.

The coming years saw the rifts neighbouring Russia with the main political task by Kiev to commit as possible as the Ukrainization (assimilation) of ethnic Russians (similar to the policy of the Croatization of ethnic Serbs in Croatia orchestrated by the neo-Nazi government in Zagreb led by Dr. Franjo Tuđman). At the same time the Russian majority in Crimea constantly required the peninsula's reunification with mother Russia but getting only an autonomous status within Ukraine – a country which they never considered as their natural-historical homeland. The Russians of Ukraine were becoming more and more unsatisfied with conditions in which they have been living from the time when in 1998–2001 the Ukrainian taxation system collapsed what meant that the central government in Kiev was not able to pay the salaries and pensions to its own citizens. A very weak Ukrainian state became in fact unable to function normally (“failed state”) and as a consequence it did not have a power to prevent a series of politically motivated assassinations followed by popular protests which had been also very much inspired by economic decline of the country [on history of Ukraine and the Ukrainians, see more and compare with: Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2009; Serhii Plokyh, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, New York: Basic Books, 2015; Anna Reid, *Borderland: A Journey Through the History of Ukraine*, New York: Basic Books, 2015].

As a matter of fact, it has to be stressed that the Ukrainian historiography on their own history of the land and the people is extremely nationalistic and in very cases not objective like many other national historiographies. It is basically politically coloured with the main task to present the Ukrainians as a natural ethnolinguistic nation who have been historically fighting to create a united independent national state and unjustifiably claiming certain territories to be ethnohistorically the “Ukrainian”.

As a typical example of such tendency to rewrite history of the East Europe according to the nationalistic and politically correct framework is, for instance, the book by Serhy Jekelčyk on the birth of a modern Ukrainian nation in which, among other quasi-historical facts based on the self-interpreted events, is written that the USSR in 1939–1940 annexed from Poland and Romania the “West Ukrainian land” [Serhy Jekelčyk, *Ukraina: Modernios nacijos gimimas*, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2009, 17]. However, this “West Ukrainian land” never was part of any kind of Ukraine before the WWII as Ukraine as a state or administrative province never existed before V. I. Lenin created in 1923 a Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine within the USSR but at that time without the “West Ukrainian land” as it was not a part of the USSR. Moreover, the Ukrainians were either not living or being just minority on this land what means that Ukraine even did not have ethnic rights over the biggest part of the “West Ukraine”. Even today around half of Ukraine's state's territory is not populated by Ukrainians as a majority of the population. Moreover, in some regions there are no Ukrainians at all. Therefore, the cardinal question became: On which principles the Ukrainian

borders are formed?



National University of Chernivtsi

As another example of the Ukrainian historiographic nationalistic misleading we can find in an academic brochure on Bukovina's Metropolitan's residence, published in 2007 by the National University of Chernivtsi. In the brochure is written that this university is "...one of the oldest classical universities of Ukraine" [*The Architectural Complex of Bukovynian Metropolitan's Residence*, Chernivtsi: Yuriy Fedkovych National University of Chernivtsi, 2007, 31] that is true only from the present-day rough political perspective but not and from a moral-historic point of view.

Namely, the university is located in the North Bukovina which in 1775 the Habsburg Monarchy had obtained. The land was from 1786 administrated within the Chernivtsi district of Galicia and one hundred years after the affiliation of Bukovina to the monarchy, the *Franz-Josephs-Universität* was inaugurated on October 4th, 1875 (the name day of the emperor). In other words, the university's origin as whole Bukovina has nothing to do with any kind of both historical Ukraine and ethnic Ukrainians. Before 1940 it was outside the administrative territory of Ukraine when the whole North Bukovina was handed to the USSR in August 1940.

While the Ukrainian nationalists claim that the USSR "occupied" Ukraine, the annexation of the North Bukovina and other territories from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania in 1940 are for them a legitimate act of "historical justice". Here we have to notice that according to [Soviet-German non-aggression agreement](#), the territories of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are as well as annexed by the USSR that is considered by their historians and politicians as "occupation", what means (illegal) act of aggression that is braking international law and legitimate order. Nevertheless, they never accused Ukraine of doing the same in regard to occupied lands from its three western neighbours in 1940/1944 [see, for instance: Priit Raudkivi, *Estonian History in Pictures*, Tallinn: Eesti Instituut, 2004 (without numeration of the pages); Arūnas Gumuliauskas, *Lietuvos istorija (1795–2009)*, Šiauliai: Lucilijus, 2010, 279–295].



Political assimilation of certain separate Slavonic ethnolinguistic groups in Ukraine was and is one of the standardized instruments for the creation and maintaining of the Ukrainian national identity in the 20th century. The most brutal case is of the Ruthenians (Rusyns) who are simply proclaimed as historical Ukrainians known under such name till the WWII. Their land, which was in the interwar period part of Czechoslovakia, that was annexed by the USSR at the end of the WWII and included into a Greater Soviet Ukraine is simply renamed from Ruthenia into the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. However, the Ruthenians and the Ukrainians are two separate Slavonic ethnolinguistic groups as such officially recognized, for example, in Serbia's Autonomous Province of Vojvodina where the Ruthenian (Rusyn) language is even standardized and studied together with Ruthenian philology and literature at a separate department at the University of Novi Sad. Unfortunately, the Ruthenian position in Ukraine is even worst in comparison with the Kurdish position in Turkey as the process of Ruthenian assimilation is much speedier than of the Kurdish case.

From the current perspective of the Ukrainian crisis and in general from the point of solving the “Ukrainian Question” it has to be noticed a very historical fact that a part of the present-day East Ukraine became legally incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1654 as a consequence of the decision by the local hetman of Zaporozhian territory [Bohdan Khmelnytsky](#) (c. 1595–1657) based on a popular revolt against the Polish-Lithuanian (the Roman Catholic) occupation of Ukraine which broke out in 1648 [Alfredas Bumblauskas, *Senosios Lietuvos istorija, 1009–1795*, Vilnius: R. Paknio leidykla, 2007, 306; Jevgenij Anisimov, *Rusijos istorija nuo Riuriko iki Putino: Žmonės. Įvykiai. Datos*, Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos centras, 2014, 185–186]. It means that the core of the present-day Ukraine voluntarily joined Russia, therefore escaping from the Roman Catholic Polish-Lithuanian oppression. Subsequently, B. Khmelnytsky’s ruled territory has to be considered from a historical point of view as the motherland of all present-day Ukraine – the motherland which already in 1654 chose Russia.



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Dr. Vladislav B. Sotirović is Founder & Director of the Private Research Centre “The Global Politics” (www.global-politics.eu), Ovsishte, Serbia. Personal web platform: www.global-politics.eu/sotirovic. Contact: sotirovic@global-politics.eu

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