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The Paradoxes of Eurasianism. George Vernadsky, Exile Networks, and the Origins of American Ukrainian Studies*

Zarys treści: Artykuł analizuje mało znaną kwestię zaangażowania czołowego przedstawiciela nurtu euroazjatyckiego, historyka George'a Vernadsky'ego w rozwój studiów ukraińskich w amerykańskiej Akademii podczas i po II wojnie światowej. Na podstawie kwerendy archiwalnej z prywatnej kolekcji uczonego przedstawiono analizę jego długiej intelektualnej podróży od radykalnego antyukraińskiego stanowiska w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym do zdecydowanego ukrainofilskiego podejścia w latach późniejszych, a także rolę sieci jego nierosyjskich kontaktów w tej przemianie.

Outline of Content: The article delves into a little-known role played by historian George Vernadsky, a prominent figure in the Eurasian intellectual movement, in shaping Ukrainian studies in North America both during and following the Second World War. By conducting research in the historian's personal archives, it examines his extensive intellectual evolution – from his earlier strongly anti-Ukrainian views during the interwar period to his subsequent transformation into a fervent supporter of Ukrainian culture and history. Additionally, the article explores how his network of non-Russian connections played a crucial part in facilitating this transition.

Słowa kluczowe: Gieorgij Wiernadski, sieci naukowe, studia ukraińskie, USA, zimna wojna, euroazjatyzm

Keywords: Georgy Vernadsky, academic networks, Ukrainian studies, United States, Cold War, Eurasianism

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Introduction

In 1957, Columbia University in New York became the backdrop for a dramatic episode referred to by its actors as the 'Little Russian intrigue'. George Shevelov, an émigré Ukrainian linguist and literary scholar, faced challenges while trying to bring Ihor Ševčenko, a young Polish-born cultural historian, into the Slavic Department. Since Columbia held a prominent position in Slavic and East European studies, securing this appointment required the backing of influential experts in the field. Ševčenko had hoped to gain the support of George Vernadsky, a respected Yale University history professor renowned for his books on Russian history. However, Shevelov disagreed, stating, "Fortunately, Vernadsky declined to write a recommendation for you, citing illness as the reason. I use 'fortunately' because he has recently adopted such an anti-Ukrainian stance that I have little hope for anything positive from him".[1]

The quoted view provides a clear illustration of the mixed perception of George Vernadsky within the Ukrainian émigré community, a reception shaped by his complex stance on the "Ukrainian question". Much like his father, Volodymyr Vernadsky, the renowned geochemist and first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, George Vernadsky belonged to the group of "Ukrainians of Russian culture" who aimed to reconcile their Ukrainian heritage with a strong allegiance to the Russian state.[2] However, Vernadsky underwent a significant transformation in terms of his identity as both Russian and Ukrainian, from vehemently denouncing the Ukrainian cause in the 1920s to eventually perceiving himself as "simultaneously Ukrainian and Russian" as the war approached. As correctly pointed out by Igor Torbakov, Vernadsky's concept of multiple identities was partially influenced by his affinity for Eurasianism, a prominent intellectual movement among Russian exiles who sought to address Russia's pressing issues by celebrating Asian influences. They rejected both Bolshevism and Western democracy in favour of what they termed "the third way".[3] The notion of "Russia-Eurasia" as a distinct civilisation was formulated by key figures in this movement, Piotr Savitskii and Nikolai Trubetskoi, to resolve the intricate issue of nationalities that contributed to the downfall of the Russian Empire and the rise of "small" nationalisms in its aftermath. In contrast to the ill-conceived Soviet federalism, "all-Eurasian nationalism" attempted to synthesise individual national aspirations into a broader pan-national Eurasian project described as the "assembly of peoples". Ukrainians, along with

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[1] Columbia University Archives, Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture (hereinafter: BAR), George Shevelov Papers, box 12.

[2] See Э. Гыйдел, 'Об „украинофильстве" Георгия Вернадского, или вариация на тему национальных и государственных лояльностей', *Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2006), pp. 329–46.

[3] I. Torbakov, 'Becoming Eurasian: The intellectual Odyssey of Georgii Vladimirovich Vernadsky', in: *Between Europe and Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*, ed. M. Bassin, S. Glebov, M. Laruelle (Pittsburgh, 2015), pp. 115–21.

Russians, were envisioned as fundamental to the founding of Eurasia, given the Ukrainization of Great Russian culture in the seventeenth century and Ukraine's importance within the Eurasian state – "a multi-people nation".[4]

The existing body of academic literature provides a persuasive portrayal of George Vernadsky's intellectual journey, involvement in the Eurasianist movement, and the origins of his enigmatic identity.[5] Scholars generally concur that Vernadsky's Eurasianist perspective, if not a direct extension of the traditional Russocentric historical framework, closely resembled it.[6] However, the multifaceted nature of Eurasian theory, its internal disparities, apparent inconsistencies, and contradictions are frequently disregarded, particularly in its nationality aspects. Vernadsky's commitment to Eurasianism, whether deliberate or not, compelled him to reevaluate the history of Russia and Eastern Europe within their diverse national identities. He expressed scepticism about re-establishing Russia as a conventional nation-state and instead explored new theoretical paradigms for reconceptualising national histories. His endeavours to spotlight Ukraine on the relatively vague American intellectual map of Eastern Europe solidified his reputation as a "pioneer of Ukrainian history-writing" in the United States, a source of evident pride for him.[7] This article delves into Vernadsky's role as a trailblazing American historian of Ukraine, dissects the circumstances that led to his shift toward Ukrainian studies, and evaluates his impact on the post-war evolution of US scholarship concerning Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Eurasian Origins

At the outset of his career, George Vernadsky did not prioritise Ukraine in his scholarly pursuits, even though the milieu of Russian-Ukrainian identity had a strong presence in his family upbringing. As a student at Moscow and later St. Petersburg Universities, he delved into topics such as the Russian colonisation of Siberia, the influence of the Mongols on the Eastern Slavs, and the history of Freemasonry in Russia.[8] His early professional endeavours did not foreshadow a deep interest in Ukraine, as he taught in Perm and later at the Simferopol branch of Kyiv University. Vernadsky also served in the press department of Pyotr Wrangel's government and eventually joined the emigration of fellow "White" movement members

[4] S. Glebov, *From Empire to Eurasia: Politics, Scholarship, and Ideology in Russian Eurasianism, 1920s–1930s* (Ithaca, 2017), pp. 116–25.

[5] Ch. Halperin, 'Russia and the Steppe: George Vernadsky and Eurasianism', *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, no. 36 (1985), pp. 55–194. A highly partisan view of Vernadsky as the 'Russian' historian, see A. Дворниченко, *Русский историк Георгий Вернадский: Путешествия в мире людей, идей и событий* (Санкт-Петербург, 2017).

[6] M. Filipowicz, *Emigranci i jankesi: O amerykańskich historykach Rosji* (Lublin, 2007), pp. 243–44.

[7] BAR, George Vernadsky Papers (GVP), box 50, G. Vernadsky to L. Myshuha, 20 Apr. 1940.

[8] Г. Вернадский, *Из воспоминаний*, *Новый журнал*, no. 100 (1970), pp. 196–221.

to Constantinople in December 1920. During his youth, he identified strongly as a Russian patriot; a sentiment underscored in Volodymyr Vernadsky's statement: "My son is an Orthodox and a Russian, devoid of any Ukrainian sympathies".[9]

Several transformations occurred in George Vernadsky's life after relocating to Prague in 1922. There, he underwent a profound shift in his beliefs, becoming a fervent Orthodox Christian and establishing close ties with Eurasianists Piotr Savitskii and Nikolai Trubetskoi. During this period, Vernadsky succumbed to what is often referred to as the "Eurasianist temptation", leading to the development of his unique philosophy of history. Even after securing a teaching position at Yale in 1927, his association with the Eurasianist circle persisted. However, it is fair to assume that the movement's reconsideration of the national question did not immediately manifest itself in Vernadsky's early publications. His works penned in Europe during the mid-1920s aligned with the conventional Russian historical framework. These writings upheld the belief that the ancient Rus' state was exclusively Russian, emphasised Russia's historical mission of unifying all "west Russian" territories, adhered to a Moscow-centric narrative, and viewed Ukrainian national movements as the result of Polish or German intrigues.[10] In his work "Outline of Russian History" (1927), written from a Eurasianist standpoint, Vernadsky vehemently opposed the idea of a "split" within the Russian nation and advocated for Russian state unity, denouncing the separatist aspirations of some Ukrainian and Belarusian figures. Like the liberal nationalist Pyotr Struve and most Russian émigrés at the time, Vernadsky rejected the notion of a distinct Ukrainian cultural identity. He dismissed the cultural divide among the "Russian people" as a "political fiction" and asserted that, from a historical perspective, "there can be no doubt that Ukraine and Belarus are the descendants of a single Russian nation".[11] It is important to note that the tone of these works was markedly different from Nikolai Trubetskoi's more moderate publications, particularly when compared to his well-known debates with Ukrainian historian Dmytro Doroshenko.[12]

Father's criticisms appear to have played a role in influencing George Vernadsky to moderate his Slavophile interpretation of history. Volodymyr Vernadsky also offered guidance by suggesting that he delve into the works of scholars such as the "Ukrainian-Pole" Viacheslav Lypynsky, the historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky, and the orientalist Ahatanhel Krymsky.[13] As early as 1933, Vernadsky communicated

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[9] Torbakov, 'Becoming Eurasian', p. 121.

[10] Г. Вернадский, '"Соединение церквей" в исторической действительности', in: *Россия и латинство* (Берлин, 1925), pp. 80–120; Г. Вернадский, *Начертание русской истории* (Прага, 1927).

[11] Г. Вернадский, *Начертание русской истории* (Москва, 2008), pp. 285–87.

[12] Н. Трубецкой, 'К украинской проблеме', in: *Евразийский современник* (Париж, 1927), pp. 165–84.

[13] '"За СССР выявляется лик исстрадавшейся России". Письма В.И. Вернадского детям', Природа, no. 1 (2004), pp. 66, 76.

a shift in his approach to his parents: "In my overall concept of Russian history, I endeavour to give more attention to Western Rus' and Ukraine than I had done previously. […] I am currently reading Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, which I had previously only encountered in fragments. It significantly contributes to my understanding of the medieval Rus'".[14] The frequent interactions with his family not only prompted certain changes in his personal identity but also gradually influenced his scholarly perspectives. As far back as 1924, Volodymyr Vernadsky made note of the "Ukrainian tendencies of [his] son".[15]

George Vernadsky's relocation to the United States in 1927 marked a distinct phase in his career. Over time, albeit with some initial challenges, he gradually integrated into the American scholarly community, which softened the anti-Western tone that had characterised his earlier writings. Michael Karpovich, a liberal historian at Harvard, played a pivotal role in facilitating this transformation. While in America, Vernadsky wholeheartedly embraced Eurasianist principles in relation to Ukraine, despite his physical distance from Eurasianist hubs in Europe and the broader crisis facing the movement by the late 1920s. In a note from 1937 on the Eurasianist perspective of history, Vernadsky argued in favour of studying the "borderlands" of Russia, positioning himself as a follower of Mykhailo Drahomanov. In this context, Vernadsky defined Russian history as "the history of all peoples within the East Slavic (Russian) family (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians), viewed against the backdrop of their interactions with Eurasia and based on Eurasia as a Russian developmental space [*месторазвитие*]".[16] The reference to Drahomanov was deliberate, as Vernadsky saw in him an intellectual soulmate who identified as both Russian and Ukrainian. He also recognized Drahomanov's emphasis on "Western Rus'" – the dynamic quadrant of relationships between Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.[17]

Aside from these influences, Vernadsky's evolving worldview was significantly shaped by the international context of the late 1930s, particularly the increasing relevance of Ukraine in European politics. His trip to the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Zurich in 1938, where he interacted with Ukrainian historians, provided a valuable opportunity to immerse himself in the escalating international tensions in Europe. It is worth noting, however, that a Ukrainian participant at the congress, Myron Korduba, pointed out that Vernadsky "is not a Ukrainian and speaks only English and Russian".[18] Vernadsky's European tour

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[14] '"Очень горько мне…": Письма Георгия Вернадского к родителям', *Источник: Документы русской истории*, no. 1 (1999), p. 17.

[15] В. Вернадский, *Дневники. 1921–1925* (Москва, 1998), p. 176.

[16] BAR, GVP, box 96, Г. Вернадский, 'Краткое изложение евразийской точки зрения на русскую историю', pp. 1–2.

[17] Г. Вернадский, *Русская историография* (Москва, 1998), pp. 178, 180.

[18] О. Рубльов, *Західноукраїнська інтелігенція у загальнонаціональних політичних та культурних процесах, 1914–1939* (Київ, 2004), p. 267.

coincided with the passing of his friend and fellow Eurasianist Nikolai Trubetskoi in June 1938. In an essay discussing Trubetskoi's worldview, Vernadsky underscored the significance of Ukraine in the context of "Russian self-knowledge". Like his father, he lamented the "complete suppression of the Ukrainian nationality and its subordination to Russian models". He also criticised the positions held by "extreme independentists", recognising the potential harm they could pose to both the "all-Russian" and "Ukrainian" causes. In contrast to many of his liberal contemporaries, Vernadsky possessed a nuanced understanding of the complexities within the Ukrainian movement, which Bolshevik nationality policies had further exacerbated. Consequently, he advocated for moving away from "mechanical and coercive unity [*единство*]" in favour of a "voluntary and unanimous union [*единение*]". This approach emphasised the importance of each nation recognising the value and freedom of the other's culture, promoting mutual respect, and recognising mutual interests.[19]

In December 1941, Vernadsky reiterated his call for improved mutual understanding and emphasised the concept of "union" in a letter to Pavel Ignatiev, the minister of education in pre-revolutionary Russia. In addition to advocating for the "recognition of the equality of Ukrainian and Russian languages and cultures", the historian underscored the importance of a more profound comprehension of Ukraine's history by Russians and Russia's history by Ukrainians.[20] Vernadsky had already developed this approach in the 1930s, particularly in connection with his research on seventeenth-century Muscovy, where he examined how Western cultural and political influences were conveyed through Ruthenian intellectuals who had been shaped in Poland-Lithuania. This period saw Nikon's reforms and the impact of the Kyiv Mohyla circle in Muscovy becoming integral aspects of Vernadsky's scholarship.[21]

Part of his motivation for this shift in focus was the growing interest in the question of Russian and Soviet nationality within American historiography. This interest culminated in a separate session dedicated to the nationality policy of the Romanovs at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) in December 1939, during which the possibility of including a paper on Ukraine was even discussed. When initially proposed to Michael Karpovich, he suggested contacting Ukrainian economist Volodymyr Tymoshenko from Stanford University or the Ukrainian-Jewish lawyer Arnold Margolin as potential contributors to the discussion.[22] With Russian émigré support, both Tymoshenko and Margolin found their way into the Research and Analysis branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a wartime precursor of the CIA, where they brought expertise

[19] BAR, GVP, box 96, Г. Вернадский, Кн. Трубецкой и украинский вопрос, p. 1.
[20] Ibid., box 164, G. Vernadsky to P. Ignatiev, 12 Dec. 1941.
[21] Ibid., box 6, G. Robinson to G. Vernadsky, 19 June 1938.
[22] Ibid., box 4, M. Karpovich to G. Vernadsky, 16 June 1939.

on Soviet economy and nationality questions. Their advancement can largely be attributed to the influence of informal networks that had formed around Russian exile intellectuals in the Ivy League universities.[23]

War-Time Romance with Ukraine

These emerging trends were directly linked to the eruption of European conflict following the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact on 23 August 1939. Stalin capitalised on the nationality issue as a pretext for justifying the annexation of Eastern Poland, a region with a predominant Ukrainian and Belarusian population. Once again, history was manipulated to serve purely political objectives. The seventeenth-century narrative of the Cossacks' valour, which reconciled Ukrainian and Russian mythologies, led to a partial abandonment of earlier criticisms aimed at "Ukrainian national prejudices". Nikita Khrushchev, the new leader of the Ukrainian Communist Party, even allowed Bohdan Khmelnytsky to be reinstated as a "gatherer of Russian lands", a concept that aligned with the renewed geopolitical ambitions of the Soviet Union.[24]

Vernadsky was keenly aware of the Soviet propaganda campaign. Possibly influenced by this shift in Soviet policy, he penned the first English-language scholarly biography of Khmelnytsky in the summer of 1939, but failed to find a publisher.[25] Simultaneously, the Ukrainian National Association (UNA), the largest Ukrainian American émigré organisation, embarked on preparations for an English translation of Hrushevsky's "Illustrated History of Ukraine" by the late 1930s. In early 1940, Luka Myshuha, the chief editor of the "Svoboda" newspaper and a UNA leader, approached Vernadsky with a proposal to write a preface for this publication. While maintaining the option to distance himself from Hrushevsky's approach, Vernadsky agreed, expressing his perspective as follows: "I identify myself as both Ukrainian and Russian, and I firmly believe that the strength of both the Russian and Ukrainian peoples lies in cooperation, not division".[26] His decision to collaborate may be attributed not only to his growing Ukrainian identity but also to pragmatic considerations, as he needed a platform to publish his biography of Khmelnytsky. Myshuha's commitment to cover the expenses of Vernadsky's book through UNA proved to be a critical factor in facilitating their cooperation.[27]

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[23] Margolin's OSS file in National Archives at College Park, RG 226, Personnel Files (A1 224), box 482. For more, see O. Avramchuk, *Rzeczpospolita uczonych. Powstanie studiów ukraińskich i polsko-ukraiński dialog historyków w Stanach Zjednoczonych, 1939–1991* (Warszawa, 2024), pp. 67–90.

[24] S. Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory. Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 16–23.

[25] BAR, GVP, box 6, Ph. Mosely to G. Vernadsky, 23 Sep. 1939.

[26] Ibid., box 50, G. Vernadsky to L. Myshuha, 12 Jan. 1940.

[27] Ibid., L. Myshuha to G. Vernadsky, 20 Jan. 1940.

From the very beginning, there existed tension between George Vernadsky and Ukrainian émigré institutions. The Ukrainian community had expectations of a preface that would strongly affirm Ukraine's independence, while Vernadsky held a more moderate stance. He viewed Hrushevsky's History primarily through a scholarly, rather than a political, lens and thus chose to focus on the academic merits of the work. In a letter to Myshuha, Vernadsky expressed his sympathy for the Ukrainian cultural movement but was cautious about endorsing a specific political solution, especially given the rapidly changing political landscape in Europe at the time. He left the ultimate decision on whether to publish the preface in its proposed form to Myshuha but stressed the importance of finding a middle ground, given the increasing interest in Ukraine within American scholarship. "Since I am in a sense a pioneer of both Russian and Ukrainian history in this country", Vernadsky noted, "my cooperation, even in case you do not share all of the opinions I present, might help somewhat to introduce the book to larger circles of American readers".[28]

Luka Myshuha eventually accepted Vernadsky's offer, though he never entirely abandoned the hopes of involving Vernadsky in Ukrainian exile politics. In April 1940, Vernadsky politely declined an invitation to speak at the Congress of American Ukrainians in Washington, explaining that he needed to focus on his academic work to better contribute to developing Russian and Ukrainian studies in the United States.[29] However, even this cautious approach did not shield Vernadsky from criticism among his fellow Russian émigrés. Boris Bakhmetiev, the former ambassador of "white" Russia to Washington and a prominent émigré politician, accused Vernadsky of unnecessarily supporting "separatists", a charge allegedly tied to the publication of the foreword.[30]

Vernadsky's sincere efforts to have Hrushevsky's History and his biography of Khmelnytsky published by Yale University Press (YUP) demonstrated his commitment to implementing a more complex approach to Eastern European studies. With the Second World War outbreak, Vernadsky's authority and influence rose significantly within American academia. The publisher would not have accepted the manuscript without Vernadsky's involvement, and Oliver Frederiksen, a historian from the University of Miami and, after the war, an important player in the ranks of US Cold War hawks, provided valuable editorial assistance. Upon reviewing the initial translation version, YUP's editor, Eugene Davidson, identified numerous linguistic and content-related issues in both the translation and the original text (sic!). More concerning was the publisher's requirement that anything that might appear "exaggerated or foolish" to American readers be removed from publication.

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[28] Ibid., G. Vernadsky to L. Myshuha, 20 Apr. 1940.

[29] Ibid., G. Vernadsky to L. Myshuha, 15 May 1940.

[30] Ł. Dryblak, *Szermierze wolności i zakładnicy imperium. Emigracyjny dialog polsko-rosyjski w latach 1939–1956: Konfrontacje idei, koncepcji oraz analiz politycznych* (Warszawa, 2023), p. 96.

These publishing concerns highlighted the challenges associated with establishing historical terminology for Ukrainian history in American scholarship while also addressing the difficulty of challenging existing assumptions about Eastern European history. For example, the publication's initiators insisted on using unconventional terminology for Western scholarship, such as referring to "Ukraine" without the traditional article "the"; in English, the use of the article typically accompanies the names of regions rather than states and implies a lesser political status. Additionally, the term "Rus'" was introduced to describe the medieval Rus'ian state to avoid getting embroiled in the politicised debate over whether it was Ukrainian or Russian.[31]

While Hrushevsky's History argued for exclusive Ukrainian claims to the Kyivan Rus' legacy, Vernadsky contended that the medieval period was a "common period of […] political and cultural life" for Ukrainians and Russians. According to him, the linguistic, cultural, and political emancipation of Ukrainians began in the twelfth century and reached its zenith in the mid-seventeenth century with Bohdan Khmelnytsky's "revival of the independent Ukrainian state", which Vernadsky considered a legitimate successor to the early Kyivan princes. He also asserted that the union between Ukraine and Great Russia profoundly impacted the development of "Russian civilisation", even though the Hetmanate lost its political autonomy in the eighteenth century. By exploring the historical roots of the "Ukrainian question", Vernadsky provided substantial support for its legitimacy. He emphasised the significant implications of southeastern Polish territories joining Soviet Ukraine for the ultimate consolidation of the Ukrainian people, who had demonstrated a remarkable commitment to defending their unity, freedom, and civilisation over centuries. This commitment, Vernadsky argued, bore witness to the "tremendous vitality of the nation".[32]

Although Vernadsky did not explicitly endorse Ukrainian independence, he did affirm the legitimacy of separate Ukrainian studies. In a letter to the publisher, Oliver Frederiksen highlighted the book's focus on the "relationship between medieval Ukrainian and Russian history".[33] This particular aspect of the book generated the most controversy among reviewers. Alfred Skerpan, for example, characterised Hrushevsky as a "product of nineteenth-century romantic nationalism" and criticised the anachronistic use of the term 'Ukraine' for the period up to the seventeenth century while stating that Kyivan Rus' was "an episode in the history of all eastern Slavs".[34] Another reviewer, John Shelton Curtis, described the book

[31] Ibid., box 32, Memorandum on the spelling of names sent to O. Frederiksen, 10 Sep. 1940.
[32] G. Vernadsky, 'Preface', in: *A History of Ukraine*, ed. O. Frederiksen (New Haven, 1941), pp. X–XIII. For more details, see T. Prymak, *Gathering a Heritage: Ukrainian, Slavonic, and Ethnic Canada and the USA* (Toronto, 2018), pp. 107–111.
[33] BAR, GVP, box 32, O. Frederiksen to E. Davidson, 19 Oct. 1940.
[34] Alfred Skerpan in: *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1942), pp. 92–95.

as having an "anti-Russian and separatist character".[35] Michael Florinsky from Columbia University, the son of Timofey Florinsky, a prominent member of the Kyiv Club of Russian Nationalists, also expressed reservations about the book. While acknowledging its value as an informative work, he associated Hrushevsky's approach with the viewpoint of "extreme Ukrainian nationalists".[36] These critical evaluations were balanced by more nuanced reviews from Stuart R. Tompkins and George Simpson. However, even these reviews did not conceal the evident biases present in Hrushevsky's scholarship.[37]

The hypercritical reviews of the book complicated the reception of Hrushevsky's scheme within American historiography. Nevertheless, the prestige of YUP and the preface written by a prominent historian drew the attention of the scholarly community to the intricacies of East Slavic history. Despite the book's shortcomings, it became a foundational textbook on the history of Ukraine for American universities. A series of Ukrainian lectures held at Columbia during the spring semester of 1941, sponsored by the UNA with the support of a Slavic scholar, Clarence Manning, further contributed to integrating Ukrainian studies into mainstream American historiography. In February 1941, Vernadsky delivered a lecture on "The Kievan and Kozak Period in Ukrainian History", where he emphasised the pivotal role of the "Kozak Revolution" in shaping the modern Ukrainian national movement. In contrast to the Russian "traditional scheme", Vernadsky argued for the continuity of Ukrainian history from the ancient Rus' period to the present day, with the Cossack state serving as a synthesis of various historical traditions.[38] He reiterated the main points from Khmelnytsky's biography, published by YUP in 1941, where he referred to the Cossack Hetman as "the father of modern Ukraine" and specifically highlighted the "Revolution of 1648" as the catalyst for the birth of the modern Ukrainian nation. Given the dominance of Poland-Lithuania, Vernadsky argued that the Ukrainian Cossacks sought allies, making the Pereyaslav agreement with Moscow in 1654 a necessary step. Consistent with Ukrainian historiography, he depicted the "tragic history of the gradual erosion of Ukrainian freedoms", which commenced after Khmelnytsky's death in 1657 and was exacerbated by conflicts among Cossack elites. In addition to internal weaknesses, Vernadsky attributed the success of Muscovite centralisation to the lack of cooperation between the Zaporozhian Host and Don Cossacks, particularly during the Stenka Razin uprising of 1671. He argued that only a democratic union of Ukraine and Great Russia could replace the Tsarist monarchy, emphasising the urgent need for such a "democratic union" of Ukrainians and Russians.

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[35] John Shelton Curtiss in: *American Historical Review*, vol. 48, no. 2 (1943), pp. 316–17.

[36] Michael T. Florinsky in: *Russian Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1941), p. 110.

[37] Stuart R. Tompkins in: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 219, no. 1 (1942), pp. 176–77; George Simpson in: *Journal of Central European Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1942/43), pp. 94–97.

[38] BAR, GVP, box 96, The Kievan and Kozak Period in Ukrainian history.

Vernadsky did not shy away from mentioning the positive outcomes of Russian-Ukrainian rapprochement, such as the colonisation of Southern Ukraine and the consolidation of territories with a predominantly Ukrainian population, which he credited to the USSR, noting that "the Ukrainian people united for the first time since Khmelnytsky".[39]

Despite Vernadsky's tendency to glorify Russian-Ukrainian cooperation, his book garnered positive reviews from Ukrainian readers. They appreciated that Vernadsky acknowledged Ukraine's distinct history and highlighted the uniqueness of the Ukrainian language, literature, history, and political thought. "His last Columbia lecture", one review admitted, "left no doubt about the separateness of Ukrainian history and the political struggles of Ukrainians".[40] Upon announcing the book's forthcoming publication, Luka Myshuha expressed hope that it would make a valuable contribution to American Ukrainian studies and benefit those seeking to address international problems by adhering to "moral principles and life truths of the past".[41] In contrast to the mixed reception of Hrushevsky's History, Khmelnytsky's biography received significantly more favourable reviews. Even John Shelton Curtis, a critic of "Ukrainian separatism", while acknowledging Vernadsky's idealisation of Khmelnytsky, agreed with his vision of an alliance with Moscow as a "logical course for Ukraine to follow".[42] Alexander Nikolaev, a Russian émigré who contributed to "The New York Times", similarly characterised the book as compelling evidence supporting the inevitability of Ukrainian-Russian unity.[43]

Philip Mosely and Michael Karpovich, two of Vernadsky's closest friends, wrote positive reviews of the book, though they noted the overidealisation of Khmelnytsky and the exaggeration of the uprising's national aspect.[44] Oskar Halecki, a Polish émigré historian, criticised Vernadsky for excessively emphasising the detrimental influence of Poland-Lithuania on Ukraine while not adequately considering the negative consequences of Khmelnytsky's policies.[45] Some Russian reviewers praised Vernadsky but were critical of the Ukrainophile aspects of his interpretation. Sergei Zenkovsky accused the author of unjustifiably using the term "Ukraine" and offering overly apologetic assessments of Khmelnytsky, whom Zenkovsky himself accused of pursuing an ambiguous policy toward Moscow.[46] One of the book's most critical reviews came from the *Jewish Daily Forward*, which criticised the author for neglecting to address anti-Jewish pogroms during Khmelnytsky's time.

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[39] G. Vernadsky, *Bohdan, Hetman of Ukraine* (New Haven, 1941), pp. 121, 123–25.

[40] 'Виклад проф. Юрія Вернадського з історії України', *Свобода*, 19 May 1941, p. 2.

[41] BAR, GVP, box 50, L. Myshuha to G. Vernadsky, 9 Sep. 1941.

[42] John Shelton Curtiss in: *American Historical Review*, vol. 48, no. 2 (1943), p. 317.

[43] A. Nikolaieff, 'Bohdan, a Colorful Ukrainian Leader', *New York Times*, 27 May 1942, p. 67.

[44] Ph. Mosely, 'An English life of Bohdan Khmelnitski', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1943), pp. 269–70; M. Karpovich in: *Yale Review*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1941), pp. 424–27.

[45] O. Halecki in: *New Europe*, vol. 2, no. 10 (1942), p. 315.

[46] С. Зеньковский, in: *Новый журнал*, vol. 99 (1970), p. 259.

In response to this criticism, Vernadsky acknowledged the existence of violence against Jews but denied that the Cossack Revolution was inherently anti-Semitic.[47]

The initial American publications on Ukraine and the subsequent discussions surrounding them exposed prejudices against the Ukrainian cause. A particularly significant episode in this regard was the reaction of the American Sovietophile press. "The Hour", a weekly publication associated with Albert Kahn, a member of the Communist Party USA, launched a campaign against Yale University Press and Vernadsky himself in late 1941. They accused Hrushevsky of "praising the pro-German Ukrainian Fifth Column" and presenting Nazi racist myths about the Ukrainian people while also alleging that those involved in the book's publication were spreading Nazi propaganda.[48] In response to these serious allegations, Vernadsky intervened to defend the book and its author. He emphasised that Hrushevsky enjoyed unblemished international authority, as evidenced by his quotations in Soviet medievalist publications, particularly those of Boris Grekov.[49] It is possible that the Soviet intelligence service played a role in these attacks, given that Albert Kahn had been a collaborator of the MGB since 1942 and was involved in compromising Ukrainian exiles who opposed communism.[50] Regardless of the reason, the Communist insinuations caused significant trouble for Ukrainians, leading to the freezing of UNA accounts and FBI searches of the "Svoboda" office in January 1942. These controversies illustrate how challenging it was to support Ukrainian studies and the Ukrainian cause, even in what was supposed to be an apolitical academic environment.[51]

Vernadsky's shift toward Ukrainian studies was closely tied to the significant events in Europe and the increasing interest in the "Ukrainian question". Ukrainian-Americans saw the war as an opportunity to bring Ukraine back onto the world stage, and they believed this could be achieved through both political and scholarly efforts. The idea of establishing a Ukrainian Scientific Institute (USI) had been in discussion since at least the late 1930s, and Vernadsky's support for the USI,[52] as anticipated by the project's initiators, would have lent it greater academic credibility. Volodymyr Tymoshenko, a Ukrainian economist at Stanford and an OSS analyst, actively persuaded Vernadsky to endorse the creation of a scientific institute once he learned about his Ukrainian projects. Tymoshenko had plans to introduce Ukrainian history at Columbia University, although these plans were never realised due to the neglect of Eastern European national issues by Geroid Robinson, the leading authority on Russian studies and head of the OSS Soviet

[47] Halperin, 'Russia and the Steppe', p. 162.
[48] *The Hour*, no. 122 (30 Dec. 1941), p. 2.
[49] BAR, GVP, box 164, George Vernadsky's statement, 10 Nov. 1942.
[50] J. Haynes, H. Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, 1999), pp. 254–55.
[51] Avramchuk, *Rzeczpospolita uczonych*, pp. 119–51.
[52] Л. Винар, А. Атаманенко, 'Олег Кандиба і Український Науковий Інститут в Америці: 1937–1939', *Український історик*, no. 3–4 (2004), no. 1 (2005), pp. 88–148.

Division.[53] Vernadsky himself was enthusiastic about the idea of a Ukrainian Institute and even advocated for establishing an independent centre for Ukrainian studies and publishing an English-language journal in the spring of 1941.[54] This led him to develop a close relationship with Mykola Chubaty, an émigré from Galicia who proposed a similar initiative for an "apolitical platform" representing Ukrainian scholarship on an international scale. Chubaty described Vernadsky as "a good man, a scholar of high personal culture, a true gentleman, and a 'weirdo' from a national perspective". However, he noted that Vernadsky was politically "Russified" despite acknowledging his Ukrainian roots.[55]

The idea of establishing a Ukrainian research centre ultimately fell apart due to conflicts among émigré institutions. Simultaneously, George Vernadsky's enthusiasm for Ukrainian studies waned significantly due to relentless attacks from American communists. Tymoshenko wrote to Vernadsky that his association with Ukrainian institutions had caused him considerable trouble. Luka Myshuha regretfully noted concerns about the "Black Hundred campaign of the worst sort" that had targeted Vernadsky.[56] Mykola Chubaty believed that Vernadsky's distancing from Ukrainian public life in the US resulted from these attacks. Chubaty suggested that someone had misused Vernadsky's name to defend themselves when American authorities began investigating connections between Ukrainian nationalists and Nazi Germany.[57] Furthermore, the controversies surrounding UNA harmed plans for Columbia to expand its Ukrainian agenda, which Slavist Clarence Manning had fostered in close collaboration with Ukrainian institutions.[58]

Mechanisms of Paradigm Change

Despite his earlier challenges and a more tempered Ukrainophile stance, Vernadsky continued to support newly arrived Ukrainian exiles in the US. His efforts to secure a university position and funding Chubaty's research on Church history in Eastern Europe did not yield much success.[59] However, Vernadsky supported scholarship applications for Lev Okinshevych, a Belarusian-Ukrainian historian of law who impressed him with his work on the Hetmanate's political and legal systems.[60]

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[53] BAR, GVP, box 32, V. Tymoshenko to G. Vernadsky, 10 June 1940.

[54] 'Vernadsky on Ukrainian History', *Ukrainian Life*, vol. 2, no. 4 (April 1941), pp. 6–8.

[55] BAR, GVP, box 26.

[56] Ibid., box 164, V. Tymoshenko to G. Vernadsky, 6 Nov. 1941; L. Myshuha to G. Vernadsky, 5 Nov. 1941.

[57] М. Чубатий, *Автобіографія*, in: *Український Католицький Університет ім. св. Климента Папи в першому п'ятиліттю свого постання і діяльності 1963–1968* (Рим, 1969), p. 115.

[58] BAR, GVP, box 164, L. Myshuha to G. Vernadsky, 27 Nov. 1941.

[59] Ibid., box 5, Ph. Mosely to G. Vernadsky, 4 Oct. 1941; Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford, Mykola Chubatyj Papers, box 2, M. Chubaty to L. Dobriansky, 1 Nov. 1961.

[60] Shevchenko Scientific Society's Archives, Lev Okinshevych Papers, folder 8, G. Vernadsky to L. Okinshevych, 1 Sep. 1955.

Another noteworthy episode in Vernadsky's Ukrainophile turn was his support for Arnold Margolin in publishing his memoirs through Columbia University Press in 1946.[61] Margolin's memoirs covered his public activities in the late Russian Empire (including his defence of Mendel Beilis in the 1913 infamous trial), his participation in the Versailles Conference as a delegate for the Ukrainian People's Republic, and his career as a State Department lawyer and Eastern Europe expert. Vernadsky, known for his expertise in Ukrainian-Russian relations, reviewed the manuscript and strongly recommended its publication despite disagreements on interpretations. Margolin even referred to Vernadsky as the 'godfather' of his book.[62] The publication received attention in academic journals and was seen as pioneering in educating American readers about the complexities of Ukrainian-Russian relations in the past and present.[63]

A significant element of Vernadsky's academic network was his enduring friendship with Philip Mosely, a US expert on Eastern Europe. It is highly likely that Vernadsky's influence played a role in shaping Mosely's unique sympathy for Ukrainian émigré scholars, including his support for the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences (UVAN) in the 1950s. This friendship began to take shape in the late 1930s when the Vernadskys provided crucial support to Mosely as he grappled with depression following his divorce from his Russian wife.[64] Mosely's position and influence in the field of Eastern European studies at the time are well-documented. In 1939, he was elected secretary of the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies and later served as deputy editor of the "Slavonic and East European Review".[65] Significantly, during his tenure as the journal editor, Mosely did not limit its scope to Russian (Soviet) topics. He actively fostered collaboration with Polish and Czech exile intellectuals, including figures like Oskar Halecki, Wacław Lednicki, and Otakar Odložilík, to establish a multinational perspective on Eastern European studies. Ukraine was prominently featured in the early issues of this journal, and in this endeavour, Mosely relied on the support and contributions of George Vernadsky. Mosely himself wrote about Ukraine, including a review of Vernadsky's book on Khmelnytsky. When the US entered the Second World War in December 1941, Mosely joined the OSS, where he was responsible for Eastern European expertise, including Ukrainian affairs. Remarkably, even in this intelligence role, he maintained connections with the academic community and anti-Communist exiles. In the summer of 1942, at Vernadsky's request, Mosely met

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[61] A.D. Margolin, *From a Political Diary: Russia, the Ukraine, and America, 1905–1945* (New York, 1946).

[62] BAR, GVP, box 27, Ch. Proffitt to G. Vernadsky, 6 March 1945; ibid., box 49, A. Margolin to G. Vernadsky, 19 May 1945, 1 Aug. 1945.

[63] H. Kohn, 'A Ukrainian's Views', *New York Times*, 21 July 1946, p. 10.

[64] BAR, GVP, box 6, Ph. Mosely to G. Vernadsky, 14 June 1939, 23 Sep. 1939, 11 Oct. 1939.

[65] For more see D. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York, 2012), pp. 15–16, 38–40.

with Mykola Chubaty, whom he considered a potential candidate for the position of instructor of Ukrainian language and literature at Columbia. This demonstrates the intersection of academic, scholarly, and intelligence efforts during that period and Vernadsky's informal role in supporting Ukrainian exiles.[66]

As an example of a "managerial scholar", Mosely played a significant role in establishing the Russian Institute at Columbia in 1946 and served as the head of the Council on Foreign Relations from 1952 to 1956. As one of the most influential figures in Russian studies in the 1950s, he collaborated closely with the Rockefeller and Ford foundations to expand Eastern European and Soviet studies in America. Under Mosely's guidance, the establishment of the Free Russia Fund, later renamed the East European Fund, and the development of the Columbia Research Program on the USSR played a pivotal role in shaping post-Second World War Ukrainian studies and knowledge on non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union. As a member of the Princeton Consultants, a network of scholars organised by the CIA, Mosely orchestrated these academic initiatives. It was primarily through his proactive efforts that the UVAN received substantial support for its publishing activities from 1951 to 1961, including the publication of the "Annals of UVAN", a flagship journal of the Ukrainian liberal intelligentsia.[67] When the Research Program in the USSR introduced a scholarship program in 1951, it provided a valuable opportunity for numerous young Ukrainian intellectuals to conduct research in America. A significant portion of program participants, accounting for nearly a quarter of the total, were Ukrainian scholars. This initiative served as a launching pad for distinguished figures in Ukrainian scholarship in North America, including George Luckyj, Ivan L. Rudnytsky, Ihor Ševčenko, Yevhen Pyziur, and Vsevolod Holubnychy, marking the beginning of their academic careers. With Mosely's unwavering support, American university presses played an integral role in disseminating knowledge about the modern history of Ukraine. Notable publications emerged from this effort, including works by John Armstrong, which delved into Ukrainian nationalism; John Reshetar, who explored the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920; and George Luckyj, who examined the literary developments in Soviet Ukraine from 1917 to 1934. These publications made significant contributions to the field of Ukrainian and Soviet studies. Mosely's support proved to be even more crucial because the Ford Foundation displayed a certain reluctance when it came to providing assistance to exile groups that were not of Russian origin.[68]

While Philip Mosely contributed to the early development of American research on Ukraine, George Vernadsky, unlike his friend Michael Karpovich, did not actively engage in these academic initiatives. Nevertheless, Mosely considered Vernadsky

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[66] BAR, GVP, box 6, Ph. Mosely to G. Vernadsky, 26 July 1942.

[67] Ю Луцький, *Роки сподівань і втрат: щоденникові записи 1986–1999 років* (Львів, 2004), pp. 180–83.

[68] BAR, Mykhailo Vetukhiv Papers, box 29; Ю. Луцький, *На перехресті* (Луцьк, 1999), pp. 57–58.

a potential advisor for Ukrainian publications funded by the Ford Foundation. In the summer of 1951, Mosely entrusted Vernadsky with advising the preparation of the English-language translation of the "Survey of Ukrainian Historiography" by Dmytro Doroshenko, which was being prepared for publication by a Ford grantee Oleksandr Ohloblyn. Vernadsky was initially supposed to assist Ohloblyn in adapting the text for an American audience, but due to health issues, he had to withdraw from the project. Several years later, when assessing the academic contributions of the Research Program on the USSR, Vernadsky referred to the "Survey" as "a great contribution to the field of Russian and Ukrainian history".[69] Mosely greatly appreciated Vernadsky's work, exemplified by an interesting episode involving Ukrainian exiles. When Ihor Ševčenko questioned Vernadsky's scholarly output, suggesting he had not produced truly scholarly works, Mosely reminded Ševčenko of Vernadsky's "good book on Khmelnytsky". George Luckyj witnessed this conversation and recalled a subsequent meeting with Vernadsky, during which Vernadsky bid him farewell in Ukrainian.[70]

Volodymyr Miyakovsky, a literary critic and a central figure at UVAN, had a more nuanced understanding of George Vernadsky's identity. Their connection stemmed from their shared educational background: from 1908 to 1911, Miyakovsky studied at St. Petersburg University, where Vernadsky later defended his dissertation. Their paths crossed again during a UVAN conference in the early postwar years when Dmytro Chyzhevsky, another figure on the Ukrainian-Russian intellectual borderland, presented a paper on Volodymyr Vernadsky. Upon learning of Vernadsky's interest in Ukraine, Miyakovsky invited him to contribute to the magazine "Ukraine", published in Paris. Encouraged by Vernadsky's enthusiastic response, he proposed the possibility of his collaboration with UVAN. Aware of potential "nationalist attacks on the all-Russian theory of the origins of the Ukrainian nation and state", Miyakovsky hoped that Vernadsky would adopt the perspective of a Ukrainian historian, focusing on the history of the lands and people within the modern borders of Ukraine, rather than considering it as "Southern Russia". Essentially, Miyakovsky expected Vernadsky to depart from the traditional narrative of Russian history.[71]

Vernadsky consistently declined invitations to join UVAN despite multiple requests from Miyakovsky. His explanation for this decision was that he preferred not to be involved in public life, even as an inactive member of the Academy, as it would entail responsibilities for its operations.[72] This choice may have been influenced by Vernadsky's less-than-positive experiences working with Ukrainians

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[69] BAR, GVP, boxes 6, 27, Ph. Mosely to G. Vernadsky, 3 Aug. 1951, 17 Aug. 1951, 6 Sep. 1951; ibid., George Vernadsky's remarks on the Research Program on the USSR, 7 Dec. 1953.

[70] Луцький, *На перехресті*, p. 61.

[71] BAR, BVP, box 49, V. Miyakovsky to G. Vernadsky, 14 Jan. 1949.

[72] Ibid., G. Vernadsky to V. Miyakovsky, 27 Sep. 1967.

during the war, although he also refrained from engaging in Russian émigré circles.[73] While Vernadsky did not actively participate in UVAN, he occasionally appeared on its agenda, often in honour of his father, the first president of Kyiv's Academy of Sciences. In 1956, Vernadsky donated a portion of his library to UVAN. Around the same time, at Miyakovsky's request, he wrote his first autobiographical essay.[74] He also maintained connections with the President of the Academy, Mykhailo Vetukhiv, an open-minded geneticist with solid connections to US psychological warfare operations in the early Cold War. Generally, George Vernadsky kept his distance from UVAN's activities and other Ukrainian émigré institutions, even though the Academy was led by individuals he knew, such as Dmytro Chyzhevsky from their time in Prague, and George Shevelov, who was a distant relative of the Vernadsky family.

A Lasting Intellectual Impact

George Vernadsky's scholarly work played a significant role in advancing the legitimacy of Ukrainian studies, even though his approach was primarily Russocentric. John Basarab noted his innovative viewpoints on Eastern Europe in the 1980s. Vernadsky was seen as the first English-language historian to integrate the history of Ukrainians with that of Russians, while his emphasis on Ukrainian aspects of Eurasian history was "eye-opening for scholars in the English-speaking world" who had not previously consulted original Slavic sources.[75]

Students of George Vernadsky's intellectual biography have long recognised the strong presence of Ukraine in his work.[76] His contributions align with the revisionist view of Russian history, acknowledging the significance of ethnic nationalism in modern times and striving to establish an intellectual platform for a multinational history of "Russia-Eurasia". Vernadsky's thinking was influenced by figures like Drahomanov and Kostomarov, who contributed to both Russian and Ukrainian thought.[77] In his comprehensive five-volume work "History of Russia", Vernadsky dedicated significant attention to Ukraine, particularly in the last two volumes covering the period from the mid-fourteenth century to 1682 (1959, 1969). Unlike many American historians of his time, he frequently referenced Ukrainian historiography. He approached the origins of the Cossacks in the late

[73] Ibid., box 3, G. Vernadsky to R. Gul, 9 Oct. 1953.

[74] Ibid., box 49, V. Miyakovsky to G. Vernadsky, 15 Dec. 1957, 16 Oct. 1963, 5 June 1969.

[75] J. Basarab, *Pereiaslav 1654: A Historiographical Study* (Edmonton, 1982), p. 149.

[76] Halperin, 'Russia and the Steppe', pp. 151–65; Гыйдел, 'Об „украинофильстве" Георгия Вернадского, pp 340–46; Torbakov, 'Becoming Eurasian', pp. 131–36; F. Sysyn, 'English-language historiography in the twentieth century on the Pereiaslav Agreement', *Russian History*, vol. 32, no. 3/4 (2005), pp. 524–26.

[77] Вернадский, *Русская историография*, p. 116.

fifteenth century with a perspective aligned with the traditional Ukrainian scheme, drawing from scholars like Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Dmytro Doroshenko, Borys Krupnytsky, and Soviet Ukrainian historian Volodymyr Holobutsky. Vernadsky explained the Cossack phenomenon by considering Poland-Lithuania's social and religious context while emphasising its national dimension. Although Vernadsky acknowledged the issue of church unity disrupted by the Brest Union in 1596, he moderated his assessment of the union's negative consequences.[78]

In his work on Khmelnytsky's "Ukrainian Revolution", Vernadsky continued to exalt Khmelnytsky as a prominent statesman, as he had done in his previous writings. He delved into the Treaty of Pereyaslav (1654), a topic that had sparked intense debate over its interpretation, particularly given the Soviet policy of celebrating the "reunification of Russia and Ukraine". Vernadsky noted the varying perspectives of scholars like Lypynsky, Hrushevsky, and Okinshevych but refrained from presenting his own comprehensive interpretation. When discussing the status of the Cossack state in relation to Moscow, Vernadsky used the term "protectorate" and ultimately asserted that the agreement marked a pivotal moment in Eastern European history, signifying the beginning of Muscovy's transformation into the Russian Empire.[79] This viewpoint aligned with the Eurasianists' emphasis on Ukraine's political, cultural, and religious significance in the formation of Russian statehood. It also echoed the inclination of some Ukrainian intellectuals to highlight the role of Ruthenian intellectuals in the development of the Russian Empire, a perspective exemplified by George Shevelov's essay 'Moscow, Maroseika'.[80]

Vernadsky's work was known for this feature, although it received varying assessments. Samuel Baron argued that a focus on Tatars, Cossacks, and Poland-Lithuania had somewhat overshadowed Russia's internal history.[81] Alan Fischer offered a more positive evaluation of Vernadsky's work, arguing that his rejection of "a mono-cultural perspective" in favour of a study of Moscow's non-Russian neighbours sets his work apart from other works in English.[82] Medievalist Marc Szeftel, who also had Ukrainian roots, commended Vernadsky for maintaining a high "degree of objectivity" in his work by drawing from Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, and Soviet sources.[83] Ukrainian authors, such as Volodymyr Miyakovsky, appreciated Vernadsky's work for its impressive use of literature and broad exploration of an "intriguing epoch" that held particular significance for Ukrainians.[84]

The terminology used by Vernadsky in his scholarship deserves separate consideration. He often employed the term "west Russian", a common usage

[78] Id., *Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age* (New Haven, 1959), pp. 249–68.
[79] Id., *The Tsardom of Moscow, 1547–1682*, part 1 (New Haven, 1969), pp. 432–81.
[80] Ю. Шевельов, 'Москва, Маросейка', *Нові дні*, no. 50 (1954), pp. 8–10.
[81] Samuel H. Baron in: *American Historical Review*, vol. 75, no. 3 (1970), p. 889.
[82] Alan W. Fisher in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1971), p. 105.
[83] Marc Szeftel in: *Slavic Review*, vol. 29, no. 4 (1970), pp. 691–93.
[84] BAR, GVP, box 49, V. Miyakovsky to G. Vernadsky, 14 July 1969.

in Russian imperial historiography, to describe Ukrainian territory. However, his use of this terminology was inconsistent. For instance, he referred to ancient Rus' as "Kievan Russia", while "West Russia" appeared alongside terms like "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian". This inconsistency reflects Vernadsky's ambivalent perspective. His overall approach remained Russocentric, but he did depart somewhat from Eurasianist principles in his treatment of Ukraine. Piotr Savitskii, a veteran of the Eurasianist movement with whom Vernadsky discussed the final volume of his major work, pointed out what he considered anachronistic use of the terms "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian lands". Savitskii also disagreed with Vernadsky's view of the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian language, which he regarded as a "dialect" resulting from the influence of Poland-Lithuania. Savitskii urged Vernadsky to include this reservation in his book, "at least in the most careful form",[85] but Vernadsky chose not to follow this advice.

A Ukrainian Island in a Eurasianist Sea

Ukrainian émigré historian Borys Krupnytsky, who studied Russian political thought of the nineteenth century, was among the first to note a surprising neglect of the imperial provinces in Russian historiography. "It appears," he argued already in 1952, "that historians have deliberately ignored those territories, those local elements that have played an important, sometimes decisive role in the history of Russia, and even more so of Eastern Europe. Therefore, Russian historiography remained largely centralist, with no one willing to elaborate on territoriality and thus on [anything] regional, foreign, non-Muscovite, autonomous, of federal nature".[86]

George Vernadsky's scholarship displayed true innovation when viewed through this lens. He did not adopt a "centralist" stance, leaning towards Moscow, or exhibit indifference to the fate of the "borderlands". While his fascination with Eurasianism may offer some insight into his interest in Ukraine, it is reasonable to assume that his approach was a response to various intellectual and political influences. Beyond his family background, marked by his father's Ukrainian heritage and the prevailing political context where Ukraine held significance in international politics, another noteworthy personal factor emerges: his interactions with the network of Eastern European exile intellectuals during and after the Second World War. Vernadsky played a role in a significant methodological debate concerning Eastern Europe's status as a distinct historical region. An intriguing perspective on this matter can be found in the introduction to the second volume of *History of Russia* (1948), where he referenced the ideas of Oskar Halecki and Jaroslav Bidlo, Polish and Czech intellectuals who strongly emphasised the distinctiveness

[85] Ibid., box 10, P. Savitskii to G. Vernadsky, 29 May 1967.
[86] Б. Крупницький, *Теорія III Риму і шляхи російської історіографії* (Мюнхен, 1951), p. 11.

of Eastern European history. In contrast to the Eurasianist viewpoint, Vernadsky depicted Eastern Europe as a mosaic of peoples heavily influenced by Polish culture, a characterisation that extended to include Ukraine. Although Ukraine was once part of the "Russian Federation" in the old Rus' era, it became absorbed into the cultural and political sphere of Eastern Europe with the arrival of Poland-Lithuania. Vernadsky showed a degree of sympathy for Eastern European émigré scholars and encouraged them to establish Eastern European historiography as a separate and recognised field of academic study.[87]

It would be unjust to overlook the fact that Vernadsky viewed Ukraine through the lens of an "all-Russian" perspective.[88] In 1967, Nikolai Andreev, a Russian professor at Cambridge, pointed out to Vernadsky: "In whatever language you publish, you have always approached Russian history with a distinctly Russian viewpoint".[89] Still, even Vernadsky's most cautious discussions of linguistic, cultural, and national identities were conducted during an era of rising national independence. This period coincided with the gradual disintegration of imperial orders worldwide, often called the "Wilsonian moment".[90] Vernadsky's scholarly contributions established a significant precedent for the multi-national history of Russia, offering valuable tools for re-evaluating Eastern Europe, even though this approach lacked internal unity and consistency. However, within the context of the evolving American perspective on Eastern Europe, which commenced in the 1960s, Vernadsky's precedent played a role in the initial efforts to deconstruct the "traditional framework" of Russian history, a never-ending objective as today's realities testify. While Vernadsky did not establish a prominent school of historical thought, his influence on scholars with Ukrainophile interests, such as Michael Karpovich and Philip Mosely, was more than substantial. His most influential disciple was Oswald Backus, a leading authority on the early modern history of Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy. Under Vernadsky's guidance, Backus directed his attention to examining the role of "minority peoples" in the history of Muscovy and Russia. In his research on the "Western Russian" aristocracy of Poland-Lithuania and its relationship with the Muscovite state, Backus heavily relied on Ruthenian (Ukrainian) sources. He became the first American historian to work at the Kyiv branch of the Central State Archives of Old Acts during the summer of 1957. He quickly became the foremost American authority on the early modern history of Eastern Europe.[91] During his tenure at the University of Kansas from 1950 to 1972, Backus emphasised the importance of exploring national issues within the context of Russian and Soviet history while establishing an

[87] G. Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia* (New Haven, 1948), pp. 9–13.
[88] Filipowicz, *Emigranci i jankesi*, p. 271.
[89] Вернадский, *Русская историография*, p. 116.
[90] E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, 2007).
[91] BAR, GVP, box 21, O. Backus, 'Area Studies Application'.

influential Slavic Studies centre. Between 1966 and 1968, he served on the executive committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, provided advisory input to the US Department of Education regarding Eastern European affairs, and, following in Vernadsky's footsteps, held Ukrainian émigré scholars such as Lev Okinshevych in high regard. An adept administrator, Backus orchestrated academic exchanges between the US and the Socialist bloc and skilfully negotiated university partnerships between the University of Kansas and the University of Kharkiv.[92] Consequently, it is unsurprising that Backus was eventually considered a potential candidate for a visiting professorship in Ukrainian history at Harvard, a position established in 1968. As the driving force behind this chair, the internationally renowned Ukrainian orientalist Omeljan Pritsak aimed to provide the new position with the necessary credibility to establish Ukrainian studies as an independent academic field.[93]

Given that the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute played a pivotal role in reshaping Eastern European studies from the 1960s to the 1980s, it is noteworthy that Vernadsky's works found their way into the curricula of Harvard's inaugural courses on pre-modern Ukrainian history. Professors in Ukrainian studies, Omeljan Pritsak and Ihor Ševčenko grappled with a shortage of academic literature in English, prompting them to turn to Vernadsky's publications. Although Vernadsky did not collaborate directly with the Harvard Centre, his influence on its approach and success was implicit and far-reaching. Even Vernadsky's obituary in a Ukrainian daily hinted at the possibility that had Ukrainian academic chairs been established at Harvard earlier, he might have become an integral part of Ukrainian scholarly life, contributing significantly to Ukrainian and global scholarship through his research on the history of Ukraine and Eastern Europe. However, as a "victim of circumstances", Vernadsky became an unwitting "patriarch of Russian history" in America.[94]

From today's vantage point, the overt celebration of Vernadsky's Ukrainophilia may seem somewhat absurd, even though the idea of portraying him as a straightforward "Russian historian" is no longer convincing. His struggle with the identity of being "both Ukrainian and Russian" left a unique imprint on his intellectual journey. His recognition of Ukraine's distinct cultural and linguistic independence positioned him within the ranks of Russian critics of imperialism at any cost. As a "Ukrainian of Russian culture", Vernadsky's perception of Ukraine evolved over time. In the 1920s, he displayed hostility towards what was seen as "separatism", transitioning to a progressively non-political interest in Ukraine during the Second World War, and ultimately experiencing a partial departure from

[92] Ibid., box 21, O. Backus, 'Future Development of Russian Language and Area Studies at Kansas, 1960s'; P. Backus, 'Report on Travel and Research on Russian Legal History, July–October 1960'.

[93] Harvard University Archives, Papers of Omeljan Pritsak, box 1, O. Pritsak to O. Backus, 15 Oct. 1971.

[94] 'Жертва обставин', *Свобода*, 12 July 1973, p. 2.

Ukrainian scholarship in the post-war years. However, his commitment to the concept of a Ukrainian-Russian "union", achievable through enhanced mutual understanding and scholarly collaboration, remained unwavering. By refusing to reduce the history of non-Russian peoples within Russia to a mere supplement to the imperial narrative, Vernadsky initiated something that, in these days of Russia's war against Ukraine, is called the "decolonisation" of Russian history. This unintentional consequence of his essentially Russocentric perspective posed a direct challenge to the established Russian narrative of East-Slavic history. Vernadsky's approach set the stage for re-evaluating early-modern Eastern European history in the US, offering a deeper understanding of Russia's national complexities. In this regard, he served as a precursor to the "new imperial history" exemplified by the pioneering works of scholars like Andreas Kappeler, who openly acknowledged Vernadsky's influence on his intellectual development.[95] In Vernadsky's worldview, Ukraine was not relegated to the status of a doomed Atlantis, forever lost within the vast expanse of the Eurasian Sea.

Abstract

George Vernadsky (1887–1973) is a crucial figure in Russian historiography within the English-speaking academic sphere. As a prominent Russian émigré intellectual with a long-standing professorship at Yale University, Vernadsky played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for English-language scholarship on Eastern Europe and promoting Eurasianism among Russian political exiles. In this article, I shed light on a previously overlooked aspect of Vernadsky's contributions, e.g. his significant involvement in advancing Ukrainian studies within the American academic context during and after the Second World War. Drawing from exploring Vernadsky's archives, I trace his extensive intellectual journey, which evolved from a radical anti-Ukrainian standpoint in the 1920s to a firmly Ukrainianophile perspective in the 1940s and 1950s. This transformation is evident not only in his public declarations but also in his scholarly works.

An examination of George Vernadsky's network of émigré connections offers compelling evidence of the evolution of his stance regarding the Ukrainian cause. He actively endeavoured to promote his vision within the Russian exile community. Recognising his Ukrainian heritage – his father, Volodymyr Vernadsky, was a distinguished biologist and the first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences – George Vernadsky referred to himself as "half-Russian, half-Ukrainian". By delving into the intricate identity of this Eurasianist thinker, I emphasise the inherent inconsistencies within the Eurasianist ideology and the paradoxes within the Eurasianist program. Furthermore, I underscore the less evident impact of non-Russian exiles on the shifting attitudes of certain members of the Russian émigré community in the US in the post-war era.

[95] Torbakov, 'Becoming Eurasian', p. 241.

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