

## РЕЦЕНЗІЇ / REVIEWS

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**UKRAINIAN HISTORIANS ON “HISTORIOGRAPHIC FRONT”  
OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR (review on the book: TURNING POINT:  
Russia's War against Ukraine in the Time Layers and Spaces of the Past. Dialogues  
with Historians. Editor-in-Chief Valeriy Smoliy; editor: Hennadiy Boriak, Oleksiy  
Yas, Svitlana Blaschuk. Kyiv: National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Institute  
of History of Ukraine, 2023. Book 3. 844 pp.; ill.)**

**УКРАЇНСЬКІ ІСТОРИКИ НА “ІСТОРІОГРАФІЧНОМУ ФРОНТІ” РОСІЙСЬКО-  
УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ (рецензія на книгу: ПЕРЕЛЮМ: Війна Росії проти України  
у часових пластах і просторах минувшини. Діалоги з істориками. Відпов. ред.  
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Since the outbreak of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian War, the Ukrainian historians have intensified the study of the Ukrainian-Russian relations, and at the same time, what is

especially important, they have begun an active opposition to the Russian propaganda, which operates on distorted historical narratives, and have also taken up criticism of the scientific and pseudo-scientific concepts of the Russian historians (The Russian-Ukrainian war, 2022).

During the first weeks of open Russian aggression against Ukraine, Academician Valeriy Smoliy, the director of the Institute of the History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, took an active position, and presented the article “The Historian and the War”, in which, in particular, he emphasized the following: “Every Ukrainian historian, regardless of a physical location, should do his job – support the Armed Forces of Ukraine in every possible way, conduct professional research, communicate with foreign colleagues, spread objective and correct information about Ukraine and its past in the mass media and the world wide web, compete with Moscow's ideologues and falsifications. This is the only way to defeat an insidious and ruthless enemy!” (Smoliy, 2022). Therefore, V. Smoliy outlined a wide panorama of objectives in the field of scientific historical research, which must be realized by the Ukrainian historians, primarily by employees of scientific institutions of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

In 2022, on the initiative of the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, two volumes of the collection of articles “TURNING POINT: Russia's War against Ukraine in the Time Layers and Spaces of the Past. Dialogues with Historians” (PERELOM, 2022a; 2022b). In 2023, the third volume was published, which covers a wide range of issues of the Ukrainian past from medieval times to modern times. Like the previous books, it is written in a popular science (to a certain extent journalistic) format and is aimed at bringing the scientific achievements of the Ukrainian scholars to a wide range of readers in an “accessible language”.

In Chapter I “From Russia to Ukraine-Hetmanship, or the Russian-Ukrainian Confrontation in the Space of Traditional and Modern Competition” there were articles written by historians on various aspects of the history of Ukraine in the 10th – 18th centuries. Among them, we should note Tetiana Balabushevych's essay on the Slavic, Western and Moscow understanding of the name “Rus” (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 19–21), Olena Rusyna's reasoning about the impact of disintegration of Kyivan Rus on the political development of the Eastern Slavs (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 22–26) and a number of articles by Ya. Vermenych about the formation of the Ukrainian-Russian border (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 27–39, 123–126). Other articles focus on various facts and events of the Ukrainian history in the context of mainly military coexistence of ancient Ukrainians/Cossacks and Muscovites.

Chapter 2 focuses on the “imperial era of the Ukrainian history”, which covered the “long” 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the few articles in this chapter, there are interesting essays by Oleksandr Reyent about the Russian Black Hundred movement in Ukraine (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 228–276), in which there are answers to questions about the tasks of the Black Hundreds in the Ukrainian provinces and the psychological impact of this movement, which was actively supported by the imperial authorities, on the local population. On the other hand, in this chapter, there are published articles that cause surprise with their unjustified theses. Olha Honchar's article is meant about the Cyrylo-Methodiyev Brotherhood, which supposedly “hammered the first nail into the coffin of the Russian Empire” (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 153–156). Such statements do not stand up to criticism. Volodymyr Melnychenko's article about a long-known description of Russia by the French Marquis Astolph de Coustin in 1839 does not make a very pleasant impression either (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 143–152). In general, it is full of quotes and retellings of de Custin's thoughts, but the author assumes

(albeit not originally) that Taras Shevchenko was familiar with the French nobleman's book owing to O. Bodianskyi.

Chapter 3 is the smallest in terms of volume, which contains seven essays on the history of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917 – 1921. The majority of them were written by the historian Ruslan Pyrih, who focused on various aspects of the history of the Ukrainian State under the rule of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 309–328), in particular, regarding the inclusion of representatives of the Russian party of cadets in the Hetman's government.

Chapter 4 “The Soviet History as the Past of the Evil Empire: Receptions, Reflections, Reconstructions” is not much larger. In this chapter, Oleh Razyhrayev presented an interesting study, showing how the Russian Bolsheviks used “hybrid” methods to fight against the Polish authorities on the territory of Volyn in the first half of the 1920s (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 339–342). Vasyl Ilnytskyi, a historian from Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, outlined the forms and methods of the struggle of the Soviet security agencies against the Ukrainian educational movement in the 1940s (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 343–348). A famous historian Tamara Vronska tried to answer the question: is it possible to identify the perpetrators of deportations in Western Ukraine (1944 – 1953)? Having analyzed the sources and published works of the Ukrainian scholars, in her opinion, it is only possible to summarize information about the Soviet apparatus of violence and to identify the perpetrators of deportations at various stages of their implementation (p. 359). Oleh Bazhan outlined the influence of the policy of Russification on the social and political situation in Ukraine in the 1950s – 1980s (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 373–378). In our opinion, Mykhailo Kirsenko's articles about the common features of the resistance of the Ukrainians and other enslaved peoples of the USSR (the author did not provide a detailed analysis of these common features) and about the specific role of Ukraine and Russia in the collapse of the Soviet Union are too abstract (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 379–383).

In Chapter 5 there are presented the scholars' reasoning about ethno-cultural differences, historical demarcations between the Ukrainians and the Russians. Tetiana Balabushevych published a series of short intellectual essays (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 387–402), which comprehends the motives of the changes of the Ukrainian-Russian border, the use of different ethnonyms and self-names of the Ukrainians and the Russians, the difference in the historical fate of the Ukrainian and Russian Cossacks, and also compares the Ukrainian and Russian nationalism. However, in our opinion, the author failed at presenting common and distinctive features of the Ukrainian and Russian nationalisms. T. Balabushevych only limited herself to the phrase: the Ukrainian nationalism had always a protective orientation against external danger, while the Russian nationalism, on the contrary, pursued the goal of a territorial expansion, exploitation and discriminatory assimilation with the absorption of people of other faiths and foreigners (PERELOM, 2023, p. 402). A historian Yaroslava Vermenych expressed a number of valid considerations about the dangers of the Ukrainian-Russian border. The researcher, in particular, emphasizes that Ukraine is a frontier civilization, through whose soul and body the split came along with statehood and adoption of Christianity. Its civilizational marginality can be characterized by the “looseness” of a behavioral stereotype, the presence of “a prodigal son” syndrome, rootlessness, a kind of nostalgia for foreign cultural images, and a tendency to imitate everything. In the border regions a territorial identity functioned as a measure of loyalty to a greater extent than in the central ones, and the loss of a sense of social security manifested itself in distorted self-identifications (PERELOM, 2023, p. 403). Olha Honchar briefly outlined the history of the myth of the “three brotherly nations” and

expressed the opinion that with the outbreak of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian War, this myth died finally (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 421–423). Unfortunately, we are not entirely sure of this, because myths live as long as their bearers live. The same section also contains an article by Oleksiy Yas on the importance of ethnopsychological studies for understanding the content of the Ukrainian-Russian relations. The researcher emphasized that the current war with Russia clearly required cultural and historical distinctions formulated in the field of ethnopsychology in order to understand the nature and essence of the centuries-old Russian-Ukrainian confrontation (PERELOM, 2023, p. 436).

Chapter 6 “Racism, Fascism, Nazism: Totalitarian Imperial Origin and Comparative Historical Projections” consists of articles by Vasyl Tkachenko mainly, who reflects on the content of modern racism ideology and shows its bizarre ideological origins. At this point, we should note that the interesting historical origins of Putinism were traced by V. Ilnytskyi, V. Starka and M. Haliv (Ilnytskyi, Starka & Haliv, 2022). V. Tkachenko confidently asserts that Stalinism has never been overcome in Russia (on the contrary, the rehabilitation of the Stalinist regime in the eyes of the public was being carried out), explains the process of the fascisization of Putin's regime. The historian is convinced that fascism is emerging in Russia. “It seems that when Putin leaves the political arena, the people and the system he created will remain. And at the same time, the formed attitude towards Ukraine will remain, according to which the right of the Ukrainian people to live in their own independent and sovereign state is questioned” (PERELOM, 2023, p. 508), – summarizes V. Tkachenko. A similar opinion was expressed by a historian Volodymyr Lytvyn, who believes that even after the collapse of the criminal Putin regime in Russia, racism will not cease to be an indispensable companion of the Russian mentality.

Chapters 7 and 8 of the reviewed book focus on various aspects of the current Russian-Ukrainian war and cover issues ranging from social guarantees to combatants to international politics and position of various countries of the world in Russia's war against Ukraine. The reflections of Alla Kyrydon and Serhiy Troyan about the possibility and options of the trauma of a lost war for Russia are interesting. The researchers talk about three expressions of the trauma of the lost war, and do not give a final answer to the question of whether after the defeat in the war against Ukraine in the Russian space, the cultural and traumatic discourse, the result of which is repentance, will gain an advantage (following the example of German society after the defeat of Hitler's Third Reich in World War II). For this, at least two things are necessary: the first is the unconditional victory of Ukraine in the war, the liberation of all temporarily occupied territories and accession to the EU and NATO. The second thing is the condemnation by a special International Tribunal, similar to the Nuremberg one, of the crimes of Russians and the Russian state. In the case of such a “trauma of a lost war”, the inhabitants of a soullessly cold space with an area of more than 17 million sq. m. km there will be a chance for repentance (PERELOM, 2023, p. 579). We doubt this thesis: the multi-ethnic population of Russia, obsessed with the imperialist idea and convinced of the omnipotence of the “nuclear cudgel”, is hardly capable of repentance.

The researchers A. Kyrydon and S. Troyan try to formulate a number of lessons of the modern Russian-Ukrainian War for Ukraine and the civilized world. Among them there are the following: the era of great wars has not gone into the past; the main strategic goal of Russia's war is the subjugation or destruction of Ukraine as a state and the Ukrainian ethnic group; a powerful and effective factor of success is the strength of the nation, united against the invader; the policy of pacifying the aggressor, as in previous times, is false and ineffective;

the powerful security belt of the world, the core of which is the consolidated West, still does not see a clear perspective of the new world security architecture; Ukraine's post-war security can be ensured only as a result of its accession to NATO; during the Russian-Ukrainian War, the incapacity of certain international organizations (for example, the UN Security Council) became apparent; defeating Russian militarism requires the consolidation of actions: military, information, sanctions, cultural, diplomatic (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 580–585). In our opinion, the following lesson should be added to this: in the current and future polarized world, there will always be countries that will directly or indirectly, constantly or episodically support the aggressor, not caring about humanistic morality, but pursuing their own interests, which they will proudly call “national”.

In Chapter 8, the historian Stepan Vidniansky presented the results of his analysis of the attitude of Hungary, Romania, Moldova, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland to the war in Ukraine (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 637–642, 653–680). Andriy Martynov made the same review for China, India, Iran, Austria, Serbia, Bulgaria, Belarus, Germany, France, Turkey, the Baltic countries, as well as Caucasian, Central Asian, African and Latin American countries (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 711–766, 776–781). These articles are rich in a selective factual and statistical material, although behind their promising headlines in some places there are no answers to the questions posed. Thus, A. Martynov was going to answer the question “what are the prospects of Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine under the conditions of war?” (PERELOM, 2023, pp. 753–758). However, the historian limited himself to a brief summary of the history of NATO and Ukraine's cooperation with this military political bloc, and therefore did not make any predictions regarding Ukraine's membership in NATO.

The last, Chapter 9 of “TURNING POINT...” deals with the “historiographical front” of the Russian-Ukrainian War. In this Chapter all 10 essays were written by Oleksandr Udod, a renowned Ukrainian historiographer. He made several original claims, including that historians, along with politicians and the military, share responsibility for all interstate and civil wars of modern times (PERELOM, 2023, p. 793). The scholar suggests that the Russian historians are to blame for the Russian-Ukrainian War, because as early as 2001, they began to “substantiate historically” Putin's political ambitions. According to O. Udod, the Russian historians, ignoring written and unwritten canons and standards of the historical profession, have turned into historians-propagandists and are directly responsible for the preparation and resolution of the war with the help of the formation of “war symbols”, mobilization of the Russians for heroic violence against the Ukrainians. The Russian historians de facto legitimized the genocide of the Ukrainians, denying the right to existence of the nation and the Ukrainian state (PERELOM, 2023, p. 796). O. Udod also shows convincingly that Putin turns to and appeals to history in order to justify his imperial ambitions. O. Udod's thesis that there is no historical science in Russia today, because the Russian historians abandoned scientific methodology, is controversial (PERELOM, 2023, p. 803). In our opinion, this statement limps on excessive generalization: a huge number of the Russian historians really serve the state propaganda, but there are the Russian scholars, who focus on Ancient Times studies, the Middle Ages studies, and Chinese studies scholars, whose scientific work is based on modern methodological principles of historical science. In this case we can't help mentioning the famous Russian historian Tetiana Tairova-Yakovleva, who did researches on the history of early modern Ukraine and was persecuted in Russia for her clear scientific and civic position.

O. Udod also reflects on the question of expediency of the historiographical understanding of Russia's war against Ukraine, i. e. a modern event that is still ongoing. In general, the

scholar draws an unambiguous conclusion: it is necessary and possible to study the war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine already now, to study it scientifically, with a high degree of historiographic understanding (PERELOM, 2023, p. 824). In his opinion, a number of researched issues are already important and possible for theoretical conclusions, primarily the name of the war, its nature, source base. It should be noted that nowadays there are scientific reflections on the understanding of the nature of war by the Ukrainian scholars (Haliv & Ilnytskyi, 2023). It is also important that O. Udod raises the issue of modernization of modern history education, primarily at secondary school. In addition, the scholar emphasizes the need for the Ukrainian historians to oppose the Russian historical propaganda. The Ukrainian historians are aware of their responsibility for the place and role of scientific history in opposing the Russian historical propaganda. They should ensure the implementation of continuous analysis and monitoring of the Russian state and media historical policy regarding Ukraine, broad informing of the Ukrainian and international public on current issues of Ukrainian history (PERELOM, 2023, p. 821). Of course, one cannot but agree with these opinions. It should be understood that at the same time, the Ukrainian historians do not become “fighters of the ideological and propaganda front”, do not retreat from scientific methodology, but with the help of a critical thinking and scientific analysis, they help to cleanse the public consciousness of the Russian pseudo-scientific inspirations on historical issues. An example of the fulfillment of this task by the Ukrainian historians is the reviewed book.

In general, we congratulate the team of authors of Volume 3 of “TURNING POINT...” on the publication of a necessary and resonant work, which is designed to convey to the broad circles of the Ukrainian society and the international public the results of an in-depth research by the Ukrainian scholars on the complex problems of the Ukrainian-Russian relations. Of course, the book contains several shortcomings, in particular, not always appropriate use of journalistic passages (for example, regarding “wilding of the Russian population” (PERELOM, 2023, p. 479)) and sometimes an abstract presentation of historical facts, which creates the feeling that some texts were written in a hurry. However, these drawbacks can be understood and excused due to an acute sense of justice of the Ukrainian scholars and the need to conduct not only a defensive, but also a quick offensive struggle on the “historiographical front”. We believe that this work should be translated into English, which will make the visions of the Ukrainian historians more accessible for understanding by the international scientific community.

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