

# The Making of Modern Ukraine

## 02 - The Genesis of Nations

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LaEmaMAkpM>

- 00:00 But today is a kind of second introductory lecture where we're gonna be thinking about the origins of the nation in particular, as with last time, I'm gonna toss you some what I think are softballs, but also feel free to raise your hand and interrupt, because that can help me when I understand that something's really not coming across or something is unclear.
- So just feel free to interrupt and ask a question anytime you want.
- So this lecture is called The Genesis of Nations, and it's about a question, which I raised last time, which has kind of been a question puzzling philosophers from the beginning of philosophy, which is how do you get from something to nothing? At some point there wasn't a Ukrainian nation and at some point there is a Ukrainian nation.
- How does that happen? How do you get social forms to come into existence that didn't exist before? It's a really interesting question.
- 01:07 And you can ask it with other social formations as well.
- There didn't used to be classes, but now we don't have any difficult-- I don't mean the classes that you're in.
- I mean, social classes, right? Economic classes.
- Those didn't use to exist either, but now we don't have much trouble identifying, oh, he's middle class.
- Actually we're in America, so everybody's middle class.
- Thinking that everyone's middle class is part of the class struggle, I'm sure you know that.
- So if you all think you're middle class, that means you're already in, okay.
- Sorry that wasn't our subject today at all.
- We're gonna move back to nations.
- Although the Marxists are gonna get a little shout out later on because actually Marxists were some of the first people to think about the nation.
- But when we're thinking about this social form of the nation, what makes it particularly tricky is that the nation, once it exists, lays claim to the past.
- So the nation didn't always exist but once it comes into existence, it tells a story about the past and the story that the nation tells about the past is wrong.
- 02:10 That's the short version.
- It tells a story which clears out the past and that story calls itself history.
- Although it's not really history, it calls itself history.
- And so this new social form has a story about how it's very old and that confusion is confusion that basically everyone lives their whole life with.

Unless you're American.

If you're American, then your national story is that you're new and you're fresh and you're all about the future, which is ironic because the American nation is actually comparatively speaking, quite old.

It's funny, right? It's actually older than most of the European nations, but don't tell the Europeans and don't tell the Americans, 'cause that would mess everybody up.

So the trick though is that the nation is modern, but it lays claim to the past in a way which if we ourselves are at all nationally minded and many of us probably are, feels comfortable and right.

03:07 And that makes it very hard to answer this question of where the nation came from because the nation is already giving you an answer.

The nation comes equipped with an answer.

It comes equipped in the most banal and obvious practical sense, which you've already encountered in your lives probably, which is that as you're educated, as you go through elementary school, middle school, high school, if you're in anything like a national educational system, you're given answers to these questions, which seems self-evident as to where the nation came from.

But of course, there's a circular phenomenon here, which is that once there's a national consciousness, once there's a national identity, then the educational system takes on a national character and then reproduces that national consciousness and identity in a way which then starts to seem unproblematic and commonsensical.

So there's a circular quality about this, which is very hard to break out of when you're seven years old.

04:02 I mean, I'm sure all of you are smarter than average and each one of you is smarter than the person next to you.

I'm aware of this, you're Yale students, but when you were seven, you pro-- Okay, six.

When you were six, you probably weren't raising your hand and talking about the constructed character of national-- Right? You probably weren't.

You were probably, I don't know.

Correct me, but I imagine that what they told you about the past in your schools, you were probably either ignoring it or somehow taking it in to some extent, right? Thank you for those nods.

That's very affirming.

So the obvious way that this happens is the institutional way.

The nation takes over the state, the state takes over the education, the education takes over the kids and then the kids believe the things which are commonsensical and 99 times out of a hundred and I say this as a historian who gets trapped in cocktail parties all the time in corners with people who know what really happened in the past, 99 times out of a hundred, you never break free, right? 99 times out of a hundred, you're basically trapped where they pinned you down when you were seven.

05:03 The less obvious way that the nation gets hold of the past has to do not with the institutions, but with the form of the story.

And I'm gonna tell you a couple forms of the story and try to make them seem less commonsensical or less obvious, less natural than they are.

I called this maybe a little bit too preciously, I called this lecture The Genesis of Nations, because now I'm gonna talk about Genesis.

A great story about the nation is that there once was innocence and the innocence was lost.

That is a big story about the nation, especially nations that emerge out of empires.

Especially nations like the Russian.

I'm not gonna talk about too much about America, but it's certainly true of America too.

There's an American imperial story about how things were at some point, the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s.

At some point, things were fine.

At some point, things were good.

And then somehow the immigrants got in and we lost control and now things aren't so good.

06:01 That's a story of innocence.

If you're about making the country great again, like a cycle.

You go back to a cycle where there's a point or the founders are another good example of this.

So some people think that the moment of 1776 or 1789 is a kind of moment of innocence.

The founders got it basically right.

That's a very attractive idea.

The founders thought of everything, they're kind of demigods.

They walk the earth, leaving huge footprints behind them and the footprints were filled with the water and residue of righteousness.

And that's all you have to know.

That's a very attractive view.

Somebody got everything right at one point in time.

Most of the Supreme Court now pretends to believe this at this point.

By the way, you know what the problem with originalism is? I realize this is not our subject at all so you don't have to take notes.

But there's a school of thought called originalism about the American Constitution, which says that you have to take the Constitution only in terms of what it actually says.

But you know what the Constitution doesn't say? It doesn't say that you have to take the Constitution the way that the Constitution actually says.

07:01 That is to say the originalist position is self-contradictory because the original position is not actually in the Constitution, right? Okay. I've blown your minds, right? All right.

(students laughing) But I'm only saying this by way of this general imperial nation problem of wanting to go back to a moment where somehow we got everything right.

In Russia today, this is very evident in the thought of a character called Ivan Ilyin, who for several years Putin read and who takes a view like this, that the world is flawed.

The world itself is flawed, but Russia has a kind of mission of restoring the innocence of the world.

I mean, it's kind of ironic, but very often it's the imperial nations, the post-imperial nations that are focused on innocence.

08:00 They're focused on a time when everything was all right.

Nations that are peripheral or are anti-colonial, anti-imperial very often have a different structure of story, which I wanna try to make seem both familiar and unfamiliar to you if I can.

And that's a three part story.

And again, it's biblical.

So the story of lost innocence is of course, the story of Adam and Eve, the garden of Eden.

There's also a longer story in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament about a people which had a state, but then that mistakes were made or bad people came and they lost their state.

But at some point they're gonna get their state back.

And when they get their state back, everything's gonna be fine.

That's a structural story that's inside the Bible.

People have different views about how it's gonna be right again.

The Christians say Jesus came and then everything was fine.

Zionists might say we made Israel, then everything was fine.

You can be in disagreement about when everything is fine, but there's still the basic three part story of everything was once good, then we lost it somehow.

09:06 Probably not our fault, probably somebody else's fault, but we lost it.

But then there will be a moment of redemption.

So the nation takes over this story very easily.

You've probably heard phrases like national renaissance, a rebirth.

The whole idea of rebirth is if you think about it just for a second, in some kind of literal way, it's a very weird idea.

It's very weird.

If you just think for a quarter of a second, what it would be like to be reborn, wouldn't that be strange, right? Okay, this may be a little too Freudian, you just left home, I know.

But a rebirth is a strange idea if you think about it at all.

So the idea of a national rebirth is that you're going back to that time when everything was right.

You're going back to that golden age.

Usually the nation says we're in some kind of middle period where things have gone wrong, but everything used to be right.

10:04 And if you're an anti-colonial or a post-colonial nation, the story usually has to do with the people.

The people were right and good.

They're still somehow basically right and good and we're gonna restore that rightness and goodness by giving them a state and then things are gonna be fine.

There's been a middle period, which involves a diaspora or an empire or something messing things up.

But in the future, things are gonna be good.

So notice the three part story.

The three part story is very widespread. Very widespread.

Classical examples are the Jewish national story, the Greek national story.

And I mentioned in the last lecture, the Jews and Greeks are actually the oldest documented inhabitants of the territory of Ukraine.

But basically, every national story has cottoned onto this, has followed this pattern.

So I'm gonna say the obvious thing now.

It's not that this is true.

It's not that there ever was a pure nation.

It's not that there was an ethnicity which existed a thousand years ago and still exists today.

11:02 I hope I'm not shattering anybody's illusions, but that never actually happens.

I know I'm breaking something to you now, but somebody has to at some point.

Relationships are a lot more complicated than that, right? Fatherhood and motherhood and

sex.

It's a lot more complicated than a straight line from a thousand years to now.

Okay. I'm glad we had this moment.

I feel like this awkwardness has now been dealt with.

Okay, good.

So I'm not gonna surprise you when I say that that's not how history actually works.

There isn't really a three part.

There isn't really a golden age, diaspora return to gold.

That doesn't really happen.

But the story is reflecting something.

It's reflecting a change that is happening.

It's a way of handling a change which is happening.

And that change is the entrance of the people into politics.

12:01 So the nation and the way we're talking about the nation is a modern form of politics, which involves, if not everybody, it's meant to involve the masses.

It's not feudalism.

It's not the nobility being in charge, right? It's not monarchy, it's not aristocracy, it's not oligarchy, it's not ruled by the few.

The nation means ruled by the many.

Doesn't necessarily mean democracy, but the nation means a form of politics in which the subject of politics is supposed to be the people.

That's an idea which seems very commonsensical now.

I mean, even the people who are against it say that they're for it as you might have noticed.

Basically everybody in the world, as they do away with democracy, they talk about how, yes, the only way to have democracy is to suppress all of these votes.

Only if I count the votes it's a demo-- you know.

But very rarely people say, oh, I'm against democracy.

It's commonsensical. But that's very new, right? The idea that the people are the subject of politics is only a couple hundred years old.

13:01 So these stories are a way of handling a transformation.

They're a way of handling change.

So now I'm moving from what they say about themselves to how they actually work.

The reason that they actually work is that in the 19th century, let's say, more or less, there comes a time when you have to handle a form of politics in which the people now matter, large numbers of people now matter.

And so you need some version of the past which accounts for that.

And the version of the past that you can give is the one that says way back when, the people were in charge and now the people are gonna be in charge again.

Or way back when, the people were virtuous and now they're gonna be virtuous again once we do away with the empire or the diaspora or one of the things which was in the way of this pattern from happening.

So the story is a way of making sense of something, making sense of a challenge, which actually had to be met.

And the challenge is what do you do as the people enter politics? That's a challenge which was met in all kinds of other ways.

- 14:05 Like the Marxists who we're still gonna talk about met the challenge in a certain way. So the people are entering politics, there is some kind of transformation. And I want you to mark this. We'll get to this part of the course here in a few weeks, but think about what is changing. Is it that there's now a big capitalist economy and so people are encountering each other in new ways. Is it that there's now a functional state, which is able to collect taxes and make people perform military service. These are some of the changes that are associated with modernization. But something is changing so that it no longer seems normal to say that the king is just in charge or the nobility is just in charge. Something is changing so that that no longer seems plausible. There's still kings and queens, but they basically serve as the kind of rhetorical cover for welfare states.
- 15:02 They're not what they used to be. Fascinating as they are, the adventures of Harry and Meghan, that's not what royalty used to be like. It was a little like that, but that was never the essence of it. So at a certain point, it stopped seeming plausible that a few people should be in charge and how do you handle that? Well, you handle that with a story. So you have modern politics and modern politics has to have a story about how the people are coming into politics, why the people should come into politics. And this story is displacing other stories. Okay, here comes question time. What's another story? What kind of story would that have been displacing? What's a story that would've made sense? Yeah.
- [Student] So a king is chosen by some religious, like God, right? Now I'm the king and I control society.
  - Yeah, okay. So divine right.
- 16:00 Or you're the king, because how about this? You're the king because your father was king. I mean, that seems ridiculous, right? Just because his father was king he gets to be king? Doesn't that seem insane? Was your father king? - No.
- Okay good.
- 'Cause I get in trouble if I get into revealing your personal life. So if anybody's father is king, I need to know now or in an email preferably, all right. It could be. All right. So that notion, so his father was king and his father, it's absurd, doesn't it seem? But in other historical circumstances, it could have made perfect sense. It obviously did make perfect sense, but not in modern historical circumstances it somehow seems not to make sense, but it's a story. The story of genealogy, the story that his family is better than other families. Perhaps they're half gods, something, right? What's another kind of story that this could have displaced? Yeah.
- 17:02 - [Student] Something related, but just like landowning people or landowning-- - Good. Excellent.

Excellent. That's a very good example as well.

But it can be related because the right to property is inherited.

I mean, that's something which is still true in our system.

And it's commonsensical.

If Jenny has a bunch of land.

If I have a million acres, why shouldn't my children have a million acres? It still seems commonsensical.

But the idea that there's a property class and the right to own property is something special.

So you people over here have the right to own property and the rest of you have the right to work on their property.

That seemed plausible for hundreds of years, but at a certain point around again, around the 19th century, it stopped seeming plausible.

But that story that not just that a person, but that a group is maybe different from another group.

Maybe the nobility thinks that it's descended from other people, it often did, right? Or the nobility has earned rights because historically, the nobility fought the wars or something, but they're different, they have the right to rule and they have the right to own land.

18:09 So those are different stories which are displaced by the national story or challenged by the national story.

And they represent different kinds of political systems.

For example, let's imagine an absolute monarchy or let's imagine a system that we'll come to, like the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the noble class gets to vote and the noble class gets to own land, but other people don't.

And at a certain point, that starts to seem problematic.

So we have a story that brings the people to the center of politics, but doesn't say that directly, right? It seems to make all of history makes sense.

It's a story that brings people to the center.

And this is where I have to talk about Marxism because it might have occurred to you that this whole, I'm not gonna check you on this.

And I don't know how many of you know very much about Marxism or how much that comes across your education.

19:06 When I ask this in graduate classes, there's the guy who raises his hand or the woman, it's like, yeah, I grew up in the People's Republic of China and we studied Marxism.

So you might have noticed that Marxism also has a three part story.

Marxism also has a story about a golden age and about transformation and about the people coming to the center of politics.

In the Marxist story, it used to be that none of us owned any property and that was fine.

And then technology came along and technology created new social relations.

And along with them came private property.

Private property alienated us from ourselves, bad.

But one day we will get rid of private property and we will all seize it together and that will be good again.

Okay, I'm simplifying this a lot.

But there's also a three part story. Interestingly, right? Marxism and the modern idea of the nation actually emerge at about the same time, around the middle of the 19th century.

20:07 And they're very much in dialogue with one another.

And they're actually very similar, one difference being that the Marxist story is about the class.

It's about a non-national class, a working class.

Whereas the national story is about particular nations.

It's about particularities.

Or to put it in a different way, the national story...

Don't hide your phone behind your computer.

The national...

Don't use electronics at all.

The national story is pretends to be just about you.

But in fact, everybody's national story is very similar.

The Marxist story is supposed to be about everyone, but in fact, the Marxist had a terrible time getting the various nations to line up.

So the two stories are our in tension with one another.

Does anyone know what the Marxists say about the nation? What the Marxists thought about the nation, especially at the beginning? Or wanna take a guess? Or not.

21:13 Yeah? - [Student] Did they think it was gonna be a transitional state? - Good, true.

They associated the nation with capital-- either with feudalism or with capitalism, but not with socialism.

So we're gonna get over it. Yeah.

Jack? - [Student] Political and economic revolution.

So transition to this socialism movement.

- That's in the Soviet Union. Yeah.

So the Soviet Union is an attempt to go through all the stages very quickly.

And so in the Soviet Union, the idea is that first, we're gonna do the capitalist style modernization.

And with that, will come the nation, that's in 1920s.

And then in the 1930s we'll have an economic revolution where maybe we'll get through the nation very quickly that way.

So the basic idea that the Marxists have is that the nation is associated with a period of history that's passing.

And this is where they have trouble.

22:00 But if there's capitalism and the capitalism advancing, and there's more nationalism, that's a kind of misunderstanding.

So Marx and Engles had a tremendous problem with actual workers because actual workers were very often in favor of imperialism, for example.

They had a tremendous problem with actual workers who were influenced by the national politics, who had turned out, were as nationally oriented or more nationally oriented than the middle classes or the nobility.

So nationalism has a tremendous problem or sorry, Marxism has a tremendous problem with nationalism.

And as a result of this, some of the first people who theorized about the nation in an interesting way, were Marxists who were trying to deal with this problem.

Around the year 1900, there were several Marxists who said essentially, look, modernization isn't doing away with the national question, on the contrary, modernization is bringing about



the nation and we have to deal with that.

23:11 The nation isn't actually part of the feudal past, it's part of the modern, even the proletarian future.

And so this was a Pole, his name was Kelles-Krauz.

And then he was in dialogue with several people called Austro-Marxists.

They made the argument, an interesting argument, that if you have capitalism that uproots people from their local traditions and forces them into a kind of melting pot in the city where the lowest common denominator might be their language.

And so on the basis of their language and feeling alienated because they're uprooted, they might seem to think, okay, we're part of a nation or they'd be vulnerable to politicians who made that argument.

They also said the modernizing state, the modernizing state is going to make people literate.

This is what the modernizing state does.

24:01 It educates people. It makes people literate.

At the end of the 19th century, early 20th century in European countries, you go from very low literacy to very, very high rates of literacy very quickly.

But literacy can also mean not identifying with an imperial center, but identifying with a nation because you're reading perhaps in your own language or you learn to read in one language, then you learn to read in a different language.

And so these guys made this argument, which was then repeated in the 1980s by a number of national theorists or these kinds of arguments were made in the 1980s by some important interesting national theorists called Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson.

Who also said that the nation is not ancient, but it's a result of certain kinds of modernization.

So that's the short course on the theories of where nations come about.

What I'm trying to say is that this argument about the theory of how nations come about, goes back almost as far as the nation, right? So the position that nations aren't old, they're new.

25:11 People have been saying that for more than a hundred years.

National theorists will generally say oh, everyone who talks about the nation, they're stupid.

They're unaware of the fact that it's politically constructed.

No, no, no.

There's been awareness that it might be politically constructed for almost as long as there's been the nation itself.

This discussion that we're having now has been going on for almost as long as the nation has existed.

Oh, by the way, this Kelles-Krauz guy.

I mention him partly because he gives two interesting examples for his argument that the nation is all about modernity and not about tradition.

And his example are the Jews and the Ukrainians.

So at the time when he was writing, which was the early years of the 20th century, he died in 1905.

26:02 So the very early years of the 20th century, the idea that Jews were a nation was generally seen as absurd because they lacked what were thought of then as the objective attributes of a nation.

For example, territory.

And so Jews can't be a nation.

Ukrainians were thought not to be a nation because they lacked another objective attribute, which was a historical political class.

So if your theory of the nation is that there is certain durable stuff, like land or like a political class, and that those make up the nation, then you look at the Ukrainians and the Jews in 1904 and you'd say, no, they're not nations.

The Hungarians maybe, the Poles maybe, the Germans certainly, but not the Ukrainians and the Jews.

What Kelles-Krauz said is think about it in a different way.

Bracket what you think about the past, look at the way modernization affects people right now and it turns out it doesn't matter he argues, whether or not there are these "objective attributes" or not.

27:03 All that matters is that modernization is gonna generate the processes, the alienation, the urbanization, which are gonna lead people to these new forms of solidarity.

And so when he said that the Jews and the Ukrainians were gonna be modern nations in the early 20th century, that was a very radical argument, but it was consistent with the theory of the nation, which says that the nation is a result of modernization.

So that ends the part about the theory of the nation.

I want to close by talking about how some of our Ukrainians thought about the nation.

So we've talked about the nation in general, we've talked about theories of the nation.

Now we're gonna talk about some of how the Ukrainians thought about the nation.

And it's important to be clear that this whole thing is a very self-conscious process.

The people who made nations knew what they were doing.

28:04 They knew what they were doing.

The way they talked about it might be a little different than how we would talk about it, but no one slept-walked into nationhood.

That didn't happen that way.

There were larger processes in the background, I think.

We can keep talking about this.

I think the modernization people are right, that larger processes in the background like urbanization, like capitalism, like literacy made it likely that some new form of solidarity would emerge.

But where, and for whom? Where and for whom? Why these nations and not other nations? So again, going back to the point I made at the beginning, nations mess with the past.

Once they're created, they mess with the past.

They make it very hard for people to process the past.

29:00 It's like the periodic table's invented and then it says everybody do alchemy.

They mess with the past.

And one of the ways the nations mess with the past, maybe the most profound one is that they convince everyone that their own existence is self-evident.

So if you're in Poland and you grow up in the Polish educational system, many things might be uncertain, but the existence of Poland is not called into question.

Even in the United States where there's so many obvious contingencies.

So many obvious contingencies.

It's very difficult to argue that the United States, that the revolution of 1776 had to happen or that the Americans had to win or in 1812, they had to win.

I mean, they should have lost in 1812.

We, sorry, should have lost in 1812.

You know, the Louisiana Purchase.

All this stuff, it obviously didn't have to happen, or the border with Canada, totally arbitrary.

I don't mean that in an aggressive way, if there are any Canadians out there.

It's cool. It's cool.

It's fine with me.

But even if you come to an American school system, the existence of America isn't gonna be called into question, right? The first class, the teacher's not gonna say, "By the way, America didn't have to be.

30:11 Maybe it shouldn't have been.

Maybe that would've been cool.

What if the British Empire had been here longer? Maybe that would've been better." I'm gonna guess that didn't happen in any of your classes, right? All right. So we'll find out where you went to school.

But the basic idea is the nation makes itself self-evident.

But it isn't, right? It isn't.

So when we study Ukraine, we're gonna be studying the formation of a political nation.

But what I don't want to think is, wow, Ukraine is really special 'cause it's political and all the other nations are real.

That's a lesson that I don't want you to draw.

I want you to think 'hah, this is interesting' how the Ukrainian nation is maybe a little more self-consciously political or maybe it's been forced into circumstances which reveal the political character of the nation to our eyes a little more clearly than with the French or the Americans or whatever.

31:03 But I don't want you to think, oh yeah, the Ukrainians are kind of funky, but everyone else has a rock solid tradition.

I don't want you to think that.

I want you to think, oh, as we've studied the Ukrainian nation, we're gonna see patterns which maybe actually help us to understand the Poles better or the Russians better, or even the Americans and the British and the French better.

So how did the Ukrainians think about themselves? In the 19th century, the main move in the Russian Empire and don't worry, this is all gonna become clear when the Russian Empire starts and when it ends and so on.

For now I just need you to know that in the 19th century, most people who spoke the Ukrainian language were in the Russian Empire.

And in the Russian Empire in the 19th century, the second half, there was this idea of going to the people which was called populism.

So not populism in the sense that you're used to, populism now means, I don't know what it means, honestly, but it means something like if you...

32:00 Okay, I'm not gonna go down that road.

When people say populism, they generally mean something that's not liberalism that we don't like.

But populism in this sense meant going to the people and trying to figure out who the people were.

It was an urban movement in the Russian Empire associated with the science of what was then called ethnography that we now call anthropology.

Very influential in literature.

Dostoevsky starts out being this way and then goes to prison and actually meets people and changes his mind about how great they are, which is an interesting story.

So going to the people and so one source of the Ukrainian national identity is this empirical contact with the people in the Russian Empire where you realize, huh, their folklore and their songs and their language are different.

They're different.

They just are different than the peoples further north, the people who we now call the Russians.

And so you go to the people and you discover that the society, if you take it on its own terms, is just a little bit different and you start thinking about that.

33:11 That populism leads to something which we now call social history, where you locate the nation.

That's the Ukrainian historian who did this, where you locate the nation its own self-understanding, in its customs, in its songs, in its stories, in its language.

So in the 19th century, that's a very strong movement.

And so you then say, okay, the nation has always been there or it's been there for a really long time, but it's not politically represented and that's the problem.

That's the problem.

So you're replacing the kinds of legitimating political stories we talked about before with a different political legitimating story.

34:03 So it's not the czar or the Polish landlords who should control politics, it should be the people because they've been here for a long time and look how numerous they are.

And if you look at their customs, you can see that they're in fact a unity.

That's populism, that's social history, that's going to the people.

And of course Mykhailo Hrushevsky wrote the very, very long history which justifies all this.

There's a stage in the 19th century where you have to write a very long history in order to establish-- I don't mean to make it sound like a joke, 'cause it's not easy, but you have to write a long history to document the continuity of the people where social history is in the foreground and the political history is in the background and that's a radical reversal.

Until then, generally you could write history with just the politics and the people didn't have to be present really at all.

Now, the weakness of this or a tendency within this is that it will tend to move you towards an ethnic understanding of what the nation is.

35:04 Because where you're identifying the nation is in its customs and its language and so on.

Well, what if there are other people, I've already mentioned the Greeks and the Jews, there are probably others in Ukraine, we'll get to them.

But what if there are other people who don't speak the same language or who have markedly different customs? What do you do with them? That's the problem of ethnicity.

That if you define the nation in terms of customs, then that always is going to raise the question of what about the other people? And then here comes the interesting part.

It's not that nobody noticed this at the time.

The people who came up with the ethnic notion of the nation, this is a little logical point here, but ethnicity didn't exist, it was being created.

So the people who came up with the ethnic notion of the nation were not ethnic themselves.

They couldn't have been because the idea was just kind of coming into being.

And even if you don't buy that and you believe, okay, there was a thing called ethnicity at the time, they were very often themselves coming from what we would think of as a

minority position.

36:08 So Hrushevsky, as the Ukrainian historians might not tell you, had a Polish mom and that is very typical.

Very typical.

If you look at the people who invented the populism, the social history, and sometimes later the ethnic nationalism, all across Eastern Europe, it is very often people who were from a Jewish minority or a German minority, or some kind of minority who themselves adopt the ethnic position or create the ethnic position.

I say that not because it's like a clever paradox, but I say that to alert you to the fact that the very thing which is supposed to be the most eternal and unchanging is not, right? The very notion of the eternity and the unchangingness, is created by people who are very often changing themselves in some way.

37:02 Not that they dropped all the sophistication that came from the background that they had.

Being multicultural and multilingual certainly helps you as a historian to write history books.

But they're keeping that and they're saying history is really about the people who are in this one language.

So that leads us to a debate.

That's a position, that's a debate.

And on the other side of this debate is a character, Okay, I really should have made a sheet for today, I guess.

Is a character called Viacheslav Lypyn'skyi.

And Lypyn'skyi says basically, hey, Hrushevs'kyi, look at Ukraine.

The cities are full of Russian speakers, lots of Jews, lots of Polish nobles.

How are you gonna make your state out of that? You're not just gonna be able to say the Ukrainian people, the masses and the peasants.

38:03 You need this very commonsensical point.

We need the cities and we need the taxpayers and those traditional historical, going back to these traditional stories, the people who are from the traditional stories, what are we gonna do with them? Are we just gonna eliminate them? Or maybe we should give them a different role.

So Lypyn'skyi answers Hrushevsky by saying fine, the people are coming into politics, but if we're going to have a nation, the nation itself going to have to be politically savvy enough to say, okay, there's a place for the Polish nobility.

Maybe they don't get to own the land anymore, but they get something.

There has to be a place for the Jews.

There has to be a place for the people who used to own the land.

We can't just imagine them away.

It's beautiful to say that the essence of the nation is in the countryside and the people who tilled the soil and look at the sunset and the beautiful mounds of hay.

39:00 You've seen the art that arises from all this.

Look at that beautiful image.

There's a beautiful woman and there's her beautiful daughter and look, they've have a scythe and that's the nation, right? It's beautiful, it's very persuasive.

But what are you gonna do about the people who live in the cities? What do you do about all the other people and you can't have a nation without the cities.

So what do you do? So Lypyn'skyi has an answer to this.

Lypyn'skyi has an answer.

Lypyn'skyi in his turn, and don't worry, we're gonna do all this history many, many times over.

Lypyn'skyi in turn-- Oh, did I mention he was from a Polish noble family? He was from a Polish noble family.

Lypyn'skyi in turn is answered by a guy called Dontsov.

Now we're getting into the 1920s and 1930s and Dontsov is the most important ideologist of Ukrainian far right wing politics.

In fact, fascism.

And Dontsov is very much inspired by the Italians.

40:05 Dontsov says no, no, it is really all about the people and the people really should be homogenous.

And the people really should rebel against all these other traditions.

Dontsov...

I'm gonna let you guess.

Okay, I won't let you guess.

He had a brother who was a Bolshevik and that Bolshevik brother was a Russian, right? So it's an example of how the people who are maybe even the most radical on the ethnic side of things, they're not coming from the ethnicity.

They're choosing something, at the beginning you have to choose.

Because at the beginning, the nation is still coming into being, so you have to choose.

So Dontsov is answering Lypyn'skyi.

These guys are enemies and the Dontsov tradition of what we call ethnic nationalism is important.

It matters in Ukrainian political life.

41:02 And it matters in Ukrainian diaspora, it continues in North America.

But Dontsov in turn was answered by this guy that we're supposed to be reading.

Now, I'm aware that his book turns out not to be in the bookstore.

I put the first essay up online and we will keep putting the essays up online.

And we're reading Ivan Rudnyts'kyi because he is a foundational political historian of Ukraine and he lays out some of the major issues.

But in context, Ivan Rudnyts'kyi is trying to handle this argument which says that the Ukrainian nation is only about people who speak Ukrainian.

And that somewhere out there, at least aspirationally, there's a homogenous Ukrainian nation.

Ivan Rudnyts'kyi is trying to handle that.

42:01 What he's arguing, and as you read him, I want you to read him to learn about Ukrainian history, obviously.

He's good at setting up the major questions, but he's also coming into this debate about what the nation actually is supposed to be.

And Ivan Rudnyts'kyi takes the position that the nation is fundamentally a political act.

It's fundamentally about political commitment.

So modernization matters, modernization matters, sure.

The traditional landowning classes, they matter, sure.

The presence of the Jews matters.

This all matters, but the nation is fundamentally a political act directed towards the future.  
That doesn't mean it's voluntarist and you can do anything.  
You can't make it up.

You can only act on the basis of what really is and he mostly wrote about the past.

But the nation itself was a political act directed towards the future, which means that in principle, anyone can take part in it.

Anyone can take part.

43:02 So I'm now just gonna say one word about who Ivan Rudnyts'kyi was.

So, oh, very important.

He wins.

He wins the argument, which is kind of fascinating.

If there's any person who wins the argument, I mean, maybe in the 22nd century it will look different, but looking at it from the point of 2022, he wins the argument in North America and he also wins the argument in Ukraine.

Although as we'll see, there are many reasons in Ukraine why his arguments are gonna seem plausible.

But he wins the argument about what Ukraine should be like.

And that in turn has very important implications for what Ukraine is like, because theorizing the nation is not an abstract action.

It's also about how you form the nation.

So 30 seconds and I'll tell you who Ivan Rudnyts'kyi is and we'll return to that.

44:00 So Ivan Rudnyts'kyi was Halachically Jewish.

His grandmother was born Ida Spiegel in the Habsburg monarchy.

She married a Ukrainian and they had five children.

He died early, the husband, and Ida Spiegel, who was alienated from her family and took the name Olga, raised the children to be Ukrainian.

The common language in the family was...

Anybody wanna take a shot at that? Common language? We're in the Habsburg monarchy.  
Not bad.

We're in Galicia in the Habsburg monarchy.

- Polish? - Polish.

Polish, Polish. Common language between-- I mean, her mother tongue was Yiddish and his mother tongue was Ukrainian.

Although he had Polish grandparents, but their language between themselves was Polish.

45:00 The kids' best language for a long time was also Polish.

So there were five kids with this Jewish mother.

All five of them became very important figures in Ukrainian national movement, we'll talk about that.

But there was one daughter, Milena.

Milena was a feminist and a very prominent parliamentarian in the Polish parliament.

She did some extraordinary things that we'll talk about later on, but Milena Rudnytska was the mother of the Ivan Rudnyts'kyi.

So his mother's mother was self-identifying Jewish.

Everybody who's taking part in these conversations, regardless of their position, is coming

from all over the place.

But there's a conversation where Rudnyts'kyi ends up being the most influential figure and that conversation shapes not only this class, it very much shapes the way that Ukrainians are talking about nationality now.

46:02 I'll leave you with that and I'll see you again in a week's time, map quiz on Thursday.  
Thanks.