

## Lecture Timothy Snyder (Yale University, Fall 2022)

# The Making of Modern Ukraine

## 19 - Oligarchies in Russia and Ukraine

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N2BDGKI0L8>

00:00 Okay, greetings.

We're getting towards the end of this class, so I wanted to remind you that there is a second exam.

You know that.

And I also want to remind you that there is a brief written assignment for this class as well.

It's not meant to be complicated.

You don't really need to do any additional research for it.

It's essentially about looking at the reading that you've got and finding some kind of a theme that you think is interesting in Ukrainian history.

Ideally, not a theme which is identical to one of the lectures.

Ideally a theme where you've connected some of the dots yourself.

It doesn't have to be an incredible brainstorm, just a theme, Just an idea that unites other ideas.

And talk to your TFs about it, that's what they're there for.

So this is not meant to be tricky.

01:00 It's just meant to be for a way to try to rethink the class diagonally, make some connections that maybe I didn't make or the reading didn't make.

Try to connect different parts of the reading with one another in a way which maybe I didn't do.

Talk about it amongst yourselves, not right now, but talk about it amongst yourselves.

That's a good way to think of ideas, is to brainstorm what some of these things could be.

Might even be fun, meet your classmates.

Invite that person you always wanna invite for tea.

Here's your chance.

(student chuckling) Who knows what will happen? (student chuckling) speaking of who knows what will happen, it appears that a couple of Russian missiles just fell on Polish territory, which leads us nicely into our theme today.

What I'd like to do today is I actually wanna take a step back and talk at greater length about the Polish factor, just as I did a couple of lectures ago about the German factor.

02:06 I wanna do properly what I meant to do last time, which is to give you a sense of how Polish policy after 1989 helped Ukraine to become the state that Ukraine has become.

I would use that to lead into the main subject, which is the 1980s, the 1990s, and the formation of a Ukrainian state.

So from today's point of view, November 15th or so, 2022, where Poland is Ukrainian staunchest supporter, or one of Ukrainian staunchest supporters.

Where there have been millions of Ukrainian refugees in Poland in the last nine months.

It's very difficult to remember that in fact, Ukrainian national identity when it formed,

was formed against Poland.

Against Poland.

And so the Cossack legend, the struggling peasantry, the battle for land, all of that is chiefly about, not Russia, but Poland.

03:09 It's about Poland.

And then the Polish Ukraine encounter over the centuries has also created a lot of the concepts, a lot of the underlying political notions that are taken for granted in Ukraine today and has been creative in lots of other ways.

So I just wanna start by reminding you of that.

I know that you know it, 'cause one of the basic themes of this class has been that nations don't come from nowhere.

Humans evolved once in Africa.

None of us is truly autochthonous, groups come into contact with one another.

The alphabet was only invented once.

I can do this all day, So when we look at a nation, the gut instinct of a state is very often to say there was ethnogenesis and a people formed a thousand years ago, and maybe there was a baptism or like some magical event where we all started, cherry tree was cut down, whatever, constitution, you name it.

04:05 Like some moment where everything is like, you get a clean, fresh start.

But that's not the way history actually works.

Nations are par excellence, international events.

And so in order to explain Ukraine or any other country, you have to get all the international factors into the picture.

This is something that Roman Szporluk who was and is a great Ukrainian historian, always insisted on.

And it's true for everybody.

It's true for Russia, it's true for China, It's true for America.

If it weren't for the particular configuration of British-French relations having to do with the Seven Years War, no America or some completely different version of America.

All right, so I wanna just remind you how important the Polish factor has been for Ukraine.

You know that it was Lithuania, which very quickly thereafter formed a personal union with Poland, which swept up most of the territories of old Ruse, including Kyiv.

05:00 You know that it was Lithuania, which very quickly merged with Poland in a personal union, which perpetuated much of the cultural attainments of Kyiv, including the language of law.

And much of the law.

You know that because of the Polish-Lithuanian state or the Lithuanian-Polish state, Kyiv becomes a major center of European trends such as renaissance, reformation, counter reformation.

Kyiv along with Chernihiv, a couple of other places, if this were a class in Belarusian history, we'd be talking about some other characters like Tsarina.

But Kyiv is one of the places where an orthodox world, an eastern Christian world, is bouncing up against these Western trends.

And that's because of the Polish connection or the Lithuanian connection.

The idea of a republic, which is very important, (speaking foreign language) The idea of a republic comes from Poland.

06:03 It's not coming directly from Rome of course, it's coming from Poland.

The idea of political rights in a republic which may not be held by everybody.

And of course the dispute between the Cossacks and the Polish nobility back in the 16th

century, 17th century is largely about who belongs to the republic.

Who actually has rights? If the republic means the common matter, who is the public?  
Who has access to rights.

Both at the micro level and at the macro level, the Cossacks rebellion of 1648 is largely about that.

If Bogdan Hmelnytsky had had better access to justice by way of courts, if he'd been seen as a noble, then probably no rebellion, at least not at that time.

The Cossacks themselves, this particular formation of Cossacks anyway around Zaporizhzhia is a result of Polish power...

Encounter of Polish power with the Crimean Tatars.

07:00 They're living in the zone between Polish power and the Crimean Tatars and they're learning from both, adapting to both.

So Poland-Lithuania loses the Left-Bank.

I've gotten all kinds of directions from email about what I should do with my hands when I talk about Left-Bank and Right-Bank.

They say, when you talk about the Right-Bank, move your left hand and then the students will understand.

But I'm just assuming you guys don't actually don't even know your left from right.

So it doesn't matter what I do.

I'm assuming you're like my kids.

They're like, if I say left, they go right, They go da, da, da, da.

So I'm just gonna do whatever I want with my hands when I talk about...

But the eastern part of Ukraine, Poland loses, the Left-Bank is lost in the 1660s, 1670s.

The Right-Bank is lost about a century later when Poland is partition 1770s, 1790s.

There are four or 500 years here that one has to account for where the Polish factor is very, very direct.

And even after Poland no longer exists, as we've talked about, it's still the Polish aristocracy that owns much of the land Right-Bank, Ukraine, all the way up to the Bolshevik Revolution.

08:08 So there too, there's an important idea of property rights and the desire of Ukrainian peasants to have to have property.

Then there's also this minor current, which becomes major later on, which is Galicia Volhynia.

Halychyna (indiscernible) Galicia.

Which is part of Poland known as (speaking foreign language) Red Ruthenia.

It's part of Poland from the 1340s onward, and then is part of the Hapsburg monarchy, and then is part of Poland again.

And then that region Halychyna Galicia becomes part of the Soviet Union after the second World War.

And then is much of what we now call Western Ukraine.

So I'm just reminding you, I don't want you to forget any of this when we enter into the modern period.

09:00 'Cause there's this temptation in the 20th century, this kind of unhealthy temptation to say, well something has just happened and now everything else is gone.

Like the first world wars, the war to end all wars, And the second World War was thought to reset everything.

And then the Cold War came to an end and history itself supposedly then also came to an end.

All these mental resets.

But there's no way to understand Ukraine without this long trajectory.

Which of course can be interpreted in various ways.

But it's uncontroversial, and I think incontrovertible to say, without the Polish factor in the long run, there wouldn't be a Ukraine of the kind that we now have.

So what I wanna explain now is the thing that I was very hasty about the last time, which is how Polish foreign policy and Polish thinking about Ukraine had a decisive and I would even venture to say world historical effect in the 80's and in 1990s.

And to do this, I need to draw your attention to a certain...

I'm gonna have to make a certain anti-imperial point, which is this.

10:03 When people talk about the period '89 to '91, now they talk about Moscow and Washington, which is already problematic, because what happened in '89 to '91 had a lot to do with Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Vilnius, a lot of other places.

But more than that, people talk about Moscow and Washington as though they knew what they were doing.

Especially with respect to Washington.

There's this very strange view which holds that...

The Soviet Union broke up in 1991 because the Americans, and they were all powerful and they machinated...

is that a word? It was all (indiscernible) like they were behind everything and somehow there was a plot and they wanted to break the Soviet Union up.

And that's just not so.

That's just not so.

American policy at the time was to hold the Soviet Union together.

11:01 And the period '89 to '91 was a series of one unexpected event after the other, which people reacted to sometimes very skillfully.

The Bush Administration reacted very skillfully to an unexpected situation, especially with respect to the unification of Germany.

There were some good diplomats at work, no denying that, but basically nobody expected the East European revolutions of '89.

And even after the East European revolutions of '89, very, very few people expected the Soviet Union to fall apart in 1991.

And the American political class was working with great determination in the opposite direction to try to keep Gorbachev in power and to try to keep the Soviet Union together.

I mention all that because this is not a class about the Cold War, although Arnie Vesta teaches great classes about this.

This is a class about Ukraine.

But it's very important to see that these countries, which where people lose focus, what people remember about '89 to '91.

12:02 I mean, what's one image from '89 to '91? - [Student 2] The fall of the Berlin Wall.

- Yes, David Hasselhoff.

Sorry that joke did not work.

That joke was totally out...

You know who David Hasselhoff is? So you know that he played on the Berlin Wall.

Yeah, so David Hasselhoff here is like KITT and Knight Rider.

That was Knight Rider, yeah.

Because in Germany he's a rock star.

And in Austria he's a rock star.

And so when the Berlin wall fell, David Hasselhoff went and played...

You don't need David Hasselhoff, but the image is the Berlin Wall falling.

Which A, it didn't fall.

It's a very dramatic image, The people... And then it fell.

It didn't actually fall.

They opened the gates and they opened the gates, because an Italian journalist asked a question and the East German official gave an ambiguous answer and people went to the gates and the border guards opened them and then they charged into...

But that's not how communism really came to an end.

The reason why we like Berlin Wall is because it's very dramatic, right? And because it's Germany and Germany's a big important country.

13:03 But the real action at the end of the Cold War was not actually in Germany.

The real action at the very end of the Cold War was much more in Poland than anywhere else.

And when it comes to the end of the Soviet Union, we can't understand that part without Ukraine.

I'm sure you all get that.

So the point that I wanna make now is that there was an interior development inside Poland, or among Poles that was running against the main current of communism and also against the main current of nationalism.

And if that sounds contradictory, keep in mind that one of the ways that communism was trying to stay in power by the 70s and 80s was as a kind of boring, homogenizing version of nationalism.

A nationalism which looked back to uncontroversial symbols that wouldn't defend the people in Moscow.

A communism that took credit in the Polish case for making the country nationally homogeneous I.e. without Germans, without Ukrainians, and without Jews.

14:05 A communism which seemed like it could go on forever.

And indeed that is what the 70s and 80s felt like.

So in order to... (foot banging on desk) Sorry.

In order to understand the mood shift of '89, one has to grasp that it really did seem like that version of communism could go on forever.

It really did seem like that they were winning, as they put it, the correlation of forces was in their favor.

That they were winning in the third world, that they would keep winning in the third world.

That their economy was big comparable to the American economy.

The CIA thought that the Soviet economy was, in 1975, was 57% of the size of the US economy, which it almost certainly wasn't.

The East German economy was thought of as being...

I forget, but it's like the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, one of the biggest economies in the world, or at least per capita.

Those things were really not true, but that's really how it seemed.

15:02 The version of communism which was going on in Poland, offers a kind of exception.

And that exception was solidarity.

And I have to mention solidarity.

I realize this is a class about Ukraine, not about Poland, but the solidarity movement in Poland.

Which one of your TAs, whose name I won't mention since I've learned I shouldn't mention anybody's name, 'cause then they get like millions of emails.

But one of your TAs who shall now remain nameless, works on this subject.

I'll be very happy to talk to you about it.

And you can guess which one.

So solidarity is very special, because what solidarity does is that it opens a window where discussions of difficult questions having to do with communism and nationalism are possible.

Solidarity is possible, because the Polish workers above all, who gets left outta the story of the revolution? The workers.

16:02 There was only one working class revolution ever, and it was in Poland.

And who gets left out of the story? Poland and the workers.

'89 it's all about the clever guys in the suits.

No, it's fundamentally about a working class revolution, which began in Poland, which made it seem possible that communism could come to an end.

So what was special about Poland was this, in the 70s, the Polish regime was operating basically the way that other communist regimes in Eastern Europe were operating and the way Brezhnev wanted them to operate.

Namely, no discussions of ideology, marxism is dead, no serious attempts to reform the system.

Reform is dangerous, if you try to reform, we can invade you as in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

That's the Brezhnev doctrine.

The country seems to be getting a little bit out of line than fraternal assistance.

So the Polish government, which was led by a man called Edward Gierek took this to its logical extreme and said, this is all about consumerism and nationalism.

17:07 Then what we're gonna do is we're gonna borrow...

And you can see how this is just the next logical step.

We're gonna borrow a lot of money from the West, we're gonna let people travel a little bit more, we're gonna work on refrigerators and cars and consumer goods, try to provide them.

And for about five years, this seemed like it was going very well.

We're talking about the 1970s now.

After about five years of this you get oil crisis, you get Poland not being able to pay back its hard currency debts.

So hard currency debt may sound like a technical term.

And up until the moment when you don't have hard currency.

So if you borrow money in dollars or German marks as they were at the time, you have to be able to pay it back in dollars or German marks, which means that you have to be able to sell something which will give you dollars or German marks, which the Polls were not really in a position to be able to do.

18:03 They over-invested in heavy industry.

They didn't invest in things that they could actually sell like textiles and agriculture.

So they found the economy by 1979 went into the red GDP in 1979 in Poland, was negative.

Solidarity begins as an economic protest against price increases.

But it morphs very quickly into a political movement which demands the right to form a free and independent labor union.

That's what solidarity is, it's a labor union.

But also other political rights like the release of political prisoners and freedom of speech.

Solidarity exists in Poland for about 16 months from August of 1980 until Marshall Law's

declare in December of 1981.

And during the 16 month period, there is a free discussion in the press, in public among people of many difficult questions, including the Ukrainian question.

19:07 And solidarity itself does some very interesting things with respect to Ukraine.

Like for example, express its solidarity with the nations of the Soviet Union.

I'm sure that sounds incredibly...

Like an incredibly bland formulation now.

But in 1981, that was an extraordinary thing to say, to recognize the nations of the Soviet Union.

And I'll talk more about this in a moment, but in solidarity newspapers and even in public discussions, many of the difficult questions of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which we've talked about, like the ethnic cleansing in Volhynia, Operation Fistula, The interwar Poland and its oppressive policies towards Ukrainians.

Many of these things were discussed, Many of the things were worked out.

People in solidarity had the sense correctly that the Ukrainian question was being used against them.

That the Ukrainian question was being used to keep Polls in their place.

20:03 How did they know to do this? And this is the part that I did in 45 seconds last time.

And I wanna spend a few more moments on it.

This is the part about where I was trying to make the point that history doesn't come to an end.

And so you should plan for the future, Which is, I'm sure that's what your mom and dad tell you all the time anyway.

Sorry, I'm not gonna do an in imitation of all of your parents, I have limited time.

I only know some of your parents.

This is being filmed.

The point though and it's a very serious point, is that if you think history is coming to an end or if there's only one destination for history, then political imagination just disappears.

Just disappears.

And if you're in a complaining mood, you might say, oh, this is the story of my lifetime.

Because in the United States, everyone said history came to an end in 1989 and then everyone stopped thinking about the future and here we are.

That may give you an intuitive sense of what I'm talking about.

21:02 But what happened in the Polish case is that a group of...

A very small group of Polish thinkers centered around this journal called Kultura, rethought the issue of Poland and its Eastern neighbors.

And in particular they rethought the issue of Poland and Ukraine.

And the men and women who did this were coming out of a liberal status milia in Interwar Poland.

They didn't come from nowhere.

These were the same people who in Interwar Poland, thought there should be autonomy for Galicia.

We have to take the Ukrainian questions seriously.

Some of them were active in the attempt to create autonomy in Volhynia.

Some of them were thinking about how we might break the Soviet Union apart.

This group survives... Most of them, survives a second World War.

They end up abroad in a suburb of Paris called Maisons-Laffitte which is chiefly known for

its horse races.

22:08 In case you go there, that's something you could do.

The food's also nice.

So they went to Maisons-Laffitte 'cause they couldn't afford the rent in Paris.

And how did they get to Paris? Here's how they got to Paris.

First you serve in the Polish army.

Second Germany invades, third, you retreat to the East, fourth Soviet Union invades, fifth, you get deported to the Gulag, sixth after you deport to the Gulag, Germany invades the Soviet Union.

Seventh, Stalin decides that he needs you to fight after all on his side.

Eighth, you're allowed to form an army, but not one that's gonna fight on the eastern front, only on the western front.

What number am I on? - [Students In Unison] Nine.

- Ninth you form up...

You're released from the Gulag.

You probably leave your wives and children behind.

You're released from the Gulag.

23:02 Men.

You probably leave your wives and children behind the Gulag, You form up...

That part of the story always gets left out.

But if you think about it for just a minute, you realize, well wait a minute, where were the women and children? Oh, they were still in the Gulag.

So you form up...

That's what heroism looks like.

You form up in an army, in a base in southern Russia.

You make your way through Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Northern Africa, you fight on the western front in Italy, take terrible casualties, especially at the famous battle called Monte Casino.

That's the standard trajectory.

And then after having done all of that, of course the Soviets win the war on the Eastern Front, Poland goes communist, you can't go home.

So simple little story.

That's the basic trajectory of a lot of these folks.

They're variations, but that's the basic idea.

So these are people who are very often Russian speakers Jerzy Giedroyc's the most important of them, born in Minsk.

24:06 Russian, probably his preferred language of reading.

Had a Russian wife for a while.

Jozef Czapski, probably the second most important of them.

Born in what's now Belarus.

Very extremely cosmopolitan origins, chooses Polish identity.

These are people who knew Russian, who knew Eastern Europe, who had a sense that Poland...

Their sensibility about Poland was everything opposite.

Everything contrary to the notion that it was some kind of small Central European ethnically homogeneous entity.

But their achievement, their achievement was to think about the future and to imagine



what it would be like to be an independent Poland in Eastern Europe.

In other words, they went beyond the obvious grievance position.

I mean, it is totally obvious.

Poland lost half its territory, It lost millions of people during the war.

25:01 It was an ally...

The whole second World War was fought because of Poland.

And even though it was an ally, it still ends up under Soviet rule.

The entirety of Warsaw is destroyed at the end of the war.

So there are things to have grievances about, but they, if you want, quite calmly or even coldly, moved beyond the grievance.

Oh, and the point is, a lot of these grievances could be directed against Ukrainians.

Ukrainians got Western Ukraine.

That's not what they called it.

Ukrainians got the districts of (speaking foreign language) they got Vohen, the Ukrainians got this territory from us.

So a lot of these grievances could be directed against Ukrainians.

What Kultura did was they moved beyond the grievance position into what they portrayed as a geopolitical position, which is interesting.

They said, okay, if there's gonna be an independent Poland, how is that gonna be possible? How is it gonna be possible? It's gonna be possible with an independent Lithuania, independent Belarus and especially independent Ukraine.

26:02 And the reason why this is so important, this is their argument, is imperialism, imperialism.

Russian imperialism will only be blocked by an independent Ukraine.

Polish imperialism will only be blocked by an independent Ukraine.

There's a very important degree of self-understanding and self-knowledge in this.

When I went to visit Jerzy Giedroyc in Paris in Maisons Laffitte in 1994, for the first time.

He had no idea who I was.

He didn't have a perfectly high opinion of Americans and I was just some kid.

But I told him what I was working on.

At the time I was working on Polish...

Contemporary Polish diplomatic relations with Ukraine and Lithuania.

And he said, he gave me this little speech in which he said, (speaking foreign language) You've probably heard a great deal about the romantic Polish legacy in the East and all of the terrible suffering of the Poles in the East.

27:01 And he said, This is all nonsense.

Which is a very strong thing, to deny the entire frontier rhetoric of your own country.

Very strong position.

To take Polish romanticism and say, just gonna push that aside.

Very strong position, very strong position.

And so they start with the geopolitical logic and the whole time, what they say is, this is all...

Okay, this is all just cold hard geopolitical reasoning.

That's what they say.

But in order to carry this out, in order to make Ukraine real, they engage with Ukraine.

And again, for a lot of them, they've been already doing this for decades.

So Giedroyc took a class in Ukrainian history in I think 1924 in Warsaw.

Okay, so classes in Ukrainian history, they're important.

He took a class in Ukrainian history as a law student in Warsaw.

He was engaged with a Galician question in interwar Poland.

28:02 It wasn't the first time they thought about Ukraine, but they engaged with Ukraine in the sense that they publish, I mentioned this last time, they published Ukrainian writers, They published George Shevelov, who is a brilliant Ukrainian philologist.

They published Borys Levyts'kyi, he was a otherwise unknown, but very talented sovietologists or contemporary historian in the Soviet Union.

They publish a thousand pages of what Giedroyc calls the 'Executed Renaissance,' which is the murdered or some of them committed suicide.

But the murdered or exiled Soviet Ukrainian writers of the 20s, the 20s and early 30s.

In 1952, they publish a letter.

I mentioned this last time.

They publish a letter saying, let the blue yellow flag fly over the (indiscernible) which is an extraordinary... At the time, an extraordinary thing to say.

And then they back that up over the course of the 60s and 70s with a long series of geopolitical articles.

29:01 But the entire time they're doing this, they're also publishing.

And here comes the slightly...

The part which is slightly impalpable, but they also befriend Ukrainian writers.

They befriend Ukrainian writers.

Ukrainian writers become part of their milia over the course of the decades, these friendships build up and Ukraine becomes real for them.

So the entire time they're saying this is just like a cold-hearted, you know, we're just cold-hearted geo politicians, we're just doing this in the interest of the Polish state.

And that's some of the truth, maybe even most of the truth.

But that calculation, I mean, you might even say that geopolitics was only possible with the help of the personal dimension.

They couldn't have done it themselves.

They needed to do it with the Ukrainians, And so a lot of Ukrainians found their voice.

Oh and I almost forgot to say, the person, he only published one article in Kultura to my knowledge.

But the person who was often guiding Giedroyc about who to publish on the pages of Kultura was this fellow Ivan Rudnyts'kyi who I mentioned towards the beginning of the course.

30:06 Ivan Rudnyts'kyi who comes from this Ukrainian family, Jewish origin.

His mother was Milena Rudnyts'ka, powerful orator, parliamentarian interwar Poland.

It was Ivan Rudnyts'kyi who in the 60s and 70s in particularly was winning the debate in the diaspora about what kind of nation Ukraine was.

He was also advising Giedroyc about who to publish in Ukraine.

Rudnyts'kyi, you know who Rudnyts'kyi is, because you're doing the reading, right? I don't have to tell you who...

You're doing the reading.

Yes, I like the smiles when I say that.

I'm not gonna think too hard about what those smiles mean, but I like them.

So, Rudnyts'kyi who's the most influential voice on behalf of the argument that Ukraine is a political nation and not an ethnic one, is involved with Giedroyc, who has a very similar idea.

A very similar idea about nationhood, which is its fundamentally a political commitment, fundamentally about political action.

- 31:06 So why am I dwelling on this so much? I'm doing this so much because you've seen in this class how Ukraine is a result of, and sometimes the victim of various imperial powers.
- You can't make sense of Ukraine without the Ottomans, the Crimean Tatars.
- You can't make sense of Ukraine even without the Swedes, if only briefly.
- The Austrians certainly matter quite a lot.
- And the Germans matter, definitely, especially in the 20th century.
- The most important imperial powers would be the Russians and the Polls.
- If you look at the situation as the Soviet Union is coming to an end in the late 1980s, you're down to only two possible imperial power...
- Well, let's be nice to everybody else.
- Only two possible imperial powers.
- The polls and the Russians.
- And the Polls take themselves out of the picture.
- 32:01 The Polls take themselves out of the picture.
- The Polls in fall of 1990, before Ukraine is an independent state, before the Soviet Union has ceased to exist, they make up this thing of a treaty with a country that doesn't exist.
- Diplomacy can be more interesting than you think.
- They make up this instrument, which is a kind of treaty with Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which says we each recognize each other's borders.
- It could seem trivial, right? But it's not at all trivial.
- What they're doing is they're putting the border question off the table preemptively.
- And when they do this, I should mention solidarity again, they're following the debate, which has been happening in solidarity in the 1980s.
- So the solidarity debate all moved in that direction.
- So when comintern came to an end in Poland, it wasn't like in other countries where suddenly all the historical questions rushed out at once and were very hard to handle.
- 33:02 That was true for the Soviet Union by the way.
- In Poland it was a bit different.
- The historical questions, many of them had already been set up like the Ukrainian question.
- And so then when there was suddenly a sovereign independent Poland, they could make policy based upon a previous discussion which had already happened.
- So by the time that Ukraine does become independent in December of '91, there is no Polish question, there is no Polish question.
- The Polls have already declared that they are in favor of an independent Ukraine, which means that from December, 1991, to the present day, the only potential imperial power and of course now real imperial power.
- But the only potential imperial power is Russia.
- So you see where I'm going with this.
- The part of the making of modern Ukraine is the encounter with Poland.
- Part of the making of the Ukrainian state as we know it now, has to do with Polish-Ukrainian relations, which since 1991 have certainly had their ups and downs.
- But the recognition of Ukraine as an independent state and Ukrainians as a separate people has always been a constant.
- 34:06 So in Ukraine itself, I wanna mention three influences on political thought in the 70s.

So as you've noticed, I think the 70s are very important for where we are now, because the 70s were when a certain generation, which is still in power in Russia, and Belarus was formed.

And what's crucial in Ukraine, I think, is that that generation is no longer in charge in Ukraine.

The people who run Ukraine now are in their upper 30s and and lower 40s.

They're from a different generation.

This generation, which in the Soviet Union was called stagnation or in Czechoslovakia normalization, this generation of the 70s, this generation where...

This time when ideas were thought not to matter.

When history, as I talked about last time was thought to be over when ideologies were all thought to be discredited and where cynicism was the dominant mood that people had to try hard to come up with some way to think outta the box.

35:08 So at a time when East Europeans are being invited to just say all that really matters is your personal...

We know, we agree with you.

There's gonna be no glorious communist future.

We agree, we know, we admit it.

This is really existing socialism and this is good as it gets.

But look, cars, maybe some foreign travel, refrigerators, television, television was very important to this.

Television programs.

We'll give you that and it's just gonna go on forever.

There aren't any alternatives, that's the deal.

How do you think your way out of that? And so this idea of normality.

In Poland, this is important, to be abnormal in the 70s and 80s politically, was to be Jewish or Ukrainian.

Not really to be Jewish or Ukrainian.

I mean some of them were Jewish.

But it meant...

So normal was like, you're with the crowd.

36:01 You belong to the majority nation.

You're not causing trouble, you're with us.

And the dissidents were all categorized Jewish, Ukrainian, Jewish, Jewish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Jewish, Jewish, Jewish, Ukrainian.

'Cause that's what the secret police really liked.

They like to have them on the outside.

So you're supposed to be normal.

You're not supposed to raise your head, you're not supposed to raise your hand, you're not supposed to raise your eyes, you're not supposed to have ideas.

You're just supposed to go along with this kind of consensus that we're day after day we're gonna have the same thing.

Human rights was an answer to that.

Directly an answer to that.

Directly, directly.

Because Brezhnev in 1975 wanted recognition of the status-quo.

So Brezhnev in 1975, along with the Americans, the Canadians, the Europeans held a conference in Helsinki.

Very important conference, things are still named after it today.

People still find it very motivating.

What Brezhnev wanted was more the same forever.

37:00 So what he wanted was for the Western powers to acknowledge the Soviet borders and the borders of the East European states.

So those borders were never recognized by anybody.

There was never a peace treaty after the second World War in Europe.

So what he wanted was effectively a late peace treaty that would legalize, codify the status quo.

The ironic outcome of all of this is something else.

He gets that, he gets that.

But in exchange, there are a few...

If you read it, it's an interesting document.

If you read the Helsinki Final Act, there are a few paragraphs in there kind of buried, about human rights.

And what the East Europeans did was they said, oh, we're gonna take this extremely seriously.

The East Europeans said, well that's now the law of the land.

And of course they knew that they weren't in rule of law states and they knew that their leaders didn't really mean it.

But nevertheless the idea of human rights became very fruitful.

Because with human rights, you can always find a gap between what the state says it's doing and what it should be doing.

38:02 With human rights you always have an argument coming from the person outwards or from human dignity outwards about the way things should be.

It gives you a different kind of language of evaluation.

So all across Eastern Europe, the Russians did this.

the Russian dissidents had already been publishing since the late 60s, something called the Chronicle of Current Events, which was using human rights language.

The Czechs did this, Charter 77 launches the distinct career Vaclav Havel who eventually becomes president.

The Poles did this, they had a committee, something called the Committee to Defend the Workers.

Ukrainians did this.

In 1976, they formed something called the Ukrainian Helsinki Committee.

And Ukrainian Helsinki Committee.

I'm sorry, I have to be so hasty about all this.

We're doing a thousand years and these are fascinating figures, but Ukrainian Helsinki Committee makes the interesting argument that the nationality is part of human rights.

So it's not that the nation is an ethnic group, but the fact that I wanna speak my language or that I wanna be able to sing my songs or I wanna be able to wear my shirt.

39:10 These things are part of my life as an individual.

And so that national rights are actually individual rights, human rights.

They said lots of other things that were much more universalistic and conventional.

But this is a point that they made.

It's a very telling point that the nation doesn't have to be a collectivity, the nation could be something which resides in people.

And you can violate their rights by not letting them speak their language.

So taking my school books away, which is what happened in the 70s in Soviet Ukraine.  
The de facto not letting me go to university in my own language.  
Not hiring me, because I'm known to be somebody who speaks Ukraine in public.  
That these are violations of human rights.  
And so the Brezhnevian language is all technical efficiency.  
History's over, it's all about how, it's all about efficiency.

40:03

So why don't we all just speak Russian.  
'Cause that would just be easier.  
How do you answer that language? You can only answer that language with some kind of why, with some kind of normative position.  
And human rights gave people that language.  
So one source of the political thinking, which is gonna inform Ukraine later on are the dissidents.  
And the dissidents...  
This is predictable.  
The dissidents end up in the Gulag.  
The Gulag is much smaller by the 70s and 80s, but it still exists.  
There are two major camps that Ukrainian dissidents are sent to.  
And in these camps, they encounter Ukrainian nationalists, because those people were sentenced to 25 year terms.  
Sometimes repeatedly.  
And so Ukrainian nationalists who were sentenced in the 40s, 50s, were fairly regularly still in the Gulag in the 70s and 80s and there were conversations in the Gulag about what kind of future Ukrainian nation there would be.

41:00

And again, I wish I could go into more detail with this 'cause it's fascinating.  
But the basic drift is that the political nation argument wins out.  
That the ethnic national argument is seen for what it is.  
And certainly the dissidents in general have respect for the nationalists for having taken risks, which they certainly did and having resisted Soviet power which they certainly did.  
But the argue, the general drift is towards the political characterization of the nation.  
The third place that this is happening is in the diaspora in Canada, in the United States especially where it's the same...  
Interestingly it's the same two sides.  
Where many of the people, and this remains true, many of the people who are very active in the Canadian-American diaspora come from West Ukrainian families who are associated with nationalist politics.  
But over the decades, the argument becomes more about the Ukrainian state and about how this thing, which is Ukrainian-Soviet socialist republic and its present boundaries will become an independent state and what the politics of that will be like.

42:10

And although this is not easy for people, the reality of Soviet Ukraine is that many people speak Russian.  
It's a multinational country, making an independent state with just the idea of ethnic Ukrainians is gonna be pretty tricky.  
And so the argument that Ukraine is basically political, and this is not trivial.  
Also interesting...  
You don't have to tell me that you love the reading.  
You don't have to tell me you love the reading.  
But at the time at least, the adventures that Ivan Rudnyts'kyi was making in intellectual

political history, they were interesting.

I know I sound so defensive for assigning you this stuff.

But it wasn't just...

You'll notice he's not just writing about how there were Ukrainian people and look at their songs and it lasted forever.

That was my parody of Hrushevsky.

It's about interesting combinations and individuals and surprising currents that meet each other.

43:02 And it's also about contact between Ukrainians and others.

It's international history.

So political nation means interesting history.

It means you're working for an interesting account of where you came from and maybe where you're going.

And so again, I'm abbreviating these decades of debates.

But again, it's the political notion of what Ukraine is gonna be like that wins out.

And wins out before '91.

Wins out before '91, which is very, very important, because the Ukrainian territory which is inherited in '91, is indeed a complicated and messy business.

I have to be very brief about this, unfortunately.

So how did Ukraine become an independent state? Ukraine becomes an independent state, because Gorbachev messes up his attempt to reform the Soviet Union.

Understandably.

Gorbachev has the idea that communism can be reformed.

44:01 As he tries to reform communism, he realizes he has to consolidate his own position, because the Communist Party is full of defacto reactionary lobbies that will drag their feet and defend their interests.

So he tries to build up a Soviet state.

This is from '85 to '91.

He tries to build up a Soviet state where he's going to shift being basically the president.

He's gonna be the head of state and that's gonna matter.

As he does this, the question is raised about the federal structure of the Soviet Union.

So as you know, going back back to 1922, essentially the Ukrainian question means that the Soviet Union has to be or has to look like a federal state with these national units.

By summer of 1991 as a new state treaty is being discussed, this question of how centralized or decentralized the Soviet Union is going to be is the thing which pushes Soviet Conservatives against Gorbachev and brings about a coup where people try to bring down his rule in August of 1991.

45:02 As a result of that, Gorbachev is pushed into the background.

So the hero then...

His name's not even on here, but you know.

The hero then of that little episode is a Russian communist called Boris Yeltsin.

And what Yeltsin does is he sees this occasion, he leads the resistance to the coup.

Gorbachev is in his dacha.

That's where you are during a coup.

If you were read your lines, it's coup, okay go to dacha, read book, wait for the knock on the door, stay in dacha, that's how it goes.

So Gorbachev is in his dacha, Yeltsin gets on top of a tank, famously at that age, he could still get on top of tanks.

And the Russian military...

The Soviet military hesitates and the coup plotters lose.

Yeltsin takes advantage of this to pull Russia out of the Soviet Union, which leaves Yeltsin in charge.

That's the way the Soviet Union comes to an end.

Russia pulls itself out.

The second most important actor in all of this is Ukraine.

46:03 The Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian leaders of the Russian, Ukrainian Belarusian parties meet in a forest in Belarus.

They meet because they're the heads of the three republics of 1922, which still exist in 1991.

So the constituent republics of the Soviet Union that still exist meet to dissolve the Soviet Union.

Now the Ukraine...

So the man who does that is Leonid Kravchuk and Kravchuk is a party Apparatchik.

He had been responsible for ideology born in interwar Poland actually in the 30s, 1934 thereabouts in Volhynia which was then in Poland.

Kravchuk represents the most important current in the beginning of independent Ukraine, which are the slightly national communists.

47:03 Because you see by...

Ukraine from 1972...

Soviet Ukraine from 1972 to 1989 had been ruled by the first Secretary Vladimir Vasilyevich who was a conservative and a russifier.

Ukraine had been one of the least reformed republics during the Gorbachev period.

(indiscernible) was against Perestroika, He was against Gorbachev's reforms.

When the Chernobyl nuclear reactor blew up in 1986 in Ukraine, this made it seem like Gorbachev's reforms were meaningless.

One of his reforms are called Glazunov which means transparency.

But the reactor blew up and nevertheless, they went out for the mayday parades and irradiated themselves in Ukraine, because Gorbachev didn't want anyone to know that there had been this terrible accident.

So Gorbachev's reforms both in appearance and in reality were much slower in Ukraine than elsewhere.

48:00 So there was a very brief interval before the Soviet Union came to an end for Ukraine to get its politics in order.

The result is that the way that Ukraine comes to an end is that the Communist Party is still the main force and there are people shifting at the top of the Communist Party.

This fellow Kravchuk gets in charge.

He sees his opportunity after the coup.

He has a referendum on Ukrainian independence.

I guess this is important today.

There's a referendum on Ukrainian independence, which a majority votes for in every region of Ukraine, including Crimea by the way.

More than 90%...

This is 1991.

More than 90% in the country as a whole.

And they also have presidential elections.

And Kravchuk turns out to be president, wonderful.



So he works this out very well.

But what he represents is the most important current in Ukrainian politics at the beginning.

Which are the communists who are able to ride this wave and reestablish themselves in positions of authority inside Ukraine.

So I didn't quite get to Paul Manafort.

49:01

You guys can remind me.

Make sure we get to Paul Manafort.

Paul Manafort will probably appear in the next lecture, which Professor Shore is giving about Maidan.

She'll also be getting the bad news that she has to do 15 years before Maidan.

'Cause I only got as far as I got.

Please make sure to read her book, I think it's the only assigned reading this week.

Please make sure to do the reading before the lecture.

Thank you very much.