



Common Misunderstandings About Russo-Ukrainian Relationships

by Kateryna Savienkova
September 20 2022 10:40 AM

Note: Kateryna Savienkova is a Jersey Community High School senior and Future Leaders Exchange Program student from Ukraine.

JERSEY COUNTY - Over the years, people from countries far from Ukraine have been treating it with a particular misconception, established by misleading news, articles, books, and political views. The point of this article is not to shame somebody for lack of knowledge or a different opinion but to tell the truth from the perspective of a Ukrainian. Here's the list of mistakes that I've heard the most during my exchange year.



1. Ukraine has always been a part of Russia and got its independence only in 1991

No. The best way to prove this is to find a map of Europe in the 5-10th centuries. It can be seen that Kyivan Rus' existed in its shape in the years 882-1240, separately from the Moscov Kingdom. Kyivan Rus' is the Ukrainian oldest cultural ancestor, this state was

almost twice as big as modern Ukraine and was ruled by Rurik Dynasty until Golden Horde came in the 13th century.

This is when Kyivan Rus' fell apart into several smaller kingdoms which still were codependent in many ways. The moral of the story is not to give a full history lecture but to emphasize that Ukraine's history can be traced back into time. The first written mention of "Ukraine" was in 1187 in the "Kyiv Chronicle" (the author is unknown).

The biggest misunderstanding happens here because in Ukrainian and Russian "Rus'" (short for Kyivan Rus') and "Rosiya" (translation "Russia") sound similar. Because of that Russian government is trying to claim that we are "the brother nations". But we are not. Another proof of that would be any ethnolinguistic map of the 6-9th centuries. Ukrainians and Russians are coming from slightly different ethnic brunches which can be explained by the Great Migration (happened in Europe between 300 and 700 CE) when people coming from North-East settled in Eastern Europe.

2. Ukrainian and Russian are the same languages

And no. Ukrainian has existed as long as the Ukrainian people did. This misconception may be coming from the fact that both languages use Cyrillic alphabets. No one says that English and Spanish are the same languages because of that reason, so let's not do that to other languages.

Ukrainian is a unique language and, even though you might find words that sound similar to Russian, they can be referred to as words that are international, like "mother" or "no". Otherwise, you cannot learn one language and speak both. You also can always recognize Ukrainian by its "?" and "?" letters in the alphabet, while Russian has "?".

3. The Ukraine

For some reason, many English speakers make this mistake. I've seen these mistakes in a lot of English-language history books that were released during the times of the Soviet Union. Maybe, because Ukraine was a part of it, it somehow impacted the article that goes with the name. Anyway, you don't put "the" before France, Cameroon, or Brazil - it's the same rule for Ukraine.

These would be the three most important things you want to keep in mind if talking about Ukraine. They are just about being polite and aware. They are your first step to being a global citizen - a person who cares about the world as well as about his or her own country.