

MY OPINION ON POLISH*UKRAINIAN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS.


The complexity of Polish-Ukrainian relations resulted to a large extent from the fact that modern Ukrainian nationalism developed around two entirely different centers: Kiev and Lw^ow. In Kiev, the historical capital of the Ukraine, the movement was directed against Czarist Russia which controlled most of the territory of the Ukrainian people but denied their very existence as a separate nation. There was no direct reason for any conflict with the Poles who suffered under the same oppressor. On the other hand, Lwow, a predominantly Polish city was the capital of Austrian Poland, the province of Galicia which as a whole had a Polish majority and during the last fifty years before World War I enjoyed a large degree of autonomy. The Ukrainian part of the population, predominant in the rural areas of Eastern Galicia, was sometime played off against the Poles by the central authorities in Vienna, but tried in vain to obtain an administrative division of Galicia into a Polish and a Ukrainian part.

When the Habsburg Monarchy disintegrated in October 1918, the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia, not without Austrian support, tried to establish there a so-called Western Ukrainian Republic. The Polish population strongly resisted, particularly in the city of Lwow, and by the end of June 1919, after hard fighting, the restored Poland was again in the possession of the whole of Galicia.

In the meantime, the Ukraine proper, after proclaiming her independence in the course of the Russian Revolution of 1917, was fighting a desperate struggle against the Bolsheviks who wanted to bring her under a Communist regime directed by Moscow. In order to obtain Poland's help in that war, the Ukrainian Government of Petlyura, in April 1920, made an agreement with Pilsudski, according to which Eastern Galicia and the western part of the neighboring province of Volhynia were recognized as belonging to Poland which being already in war herself against Bolshevik aggression, now joined the Ukrainian forces and succeeded in liberating Kiev. Soon, however, the

7. Red Army retook the offensive and pushed back the Poles to the gates of Warsaw. Poland proved strong enough to save her own existence but having found no adequate support in the allied Ukraine, being exhausted herself, and knowing that the Western powers wanted her to make peace with Russia as soon as possible, did so in the Riga Treaty of March 1921. That peace of compromise gave Poland an eastern frontier which in the southern sector exactly coincided with the line fixed in the agreement with Petlyura, and which recognized the independence of the Ukraine but under the Communist regime which was to join the Soviet Union in the following year.

Even those Ukrainians who had favored cooperation with Poland, resented that solution, especially as the Soviet regime, after an initial phase of "Ukrainization", treated Ukrainian nationalism with the utmost ruthlessness. The comparatively small part of the Ukrainian people (the statistics are highly controversial) which the treaty of Riga left under Polish rule, ~~were~~^{was} in many respects in a more favorable situation but, of course, far from being satisfied with their role as a minority in a country against which they had been fighting a few years ago. They were particularly disappointed when the Polish Government did not grant them the territorial autonomy which had been occasionally promised, and failed to establish a Ukrainian University. The requested autonomy was, however, difficult to organize, since precisely in Eastern Galicia where the Ukrainians were indeed fully prepared for self-government, they were so inextricably mixed with the Polish population that in turn the rights of the latter would have had to be protected in the autonomous area. As to the University, the Ukrainians wanted it to be opened in the city of Lwów where they constituted only about one fourth of the inhabitants and where the co-existence with the old Polish university of that city might have created serious troubles.. Finally, only a few chairs were given to Ukrainian scholars in the Universities of Cracow and Warsaw, and in the latter city a Ukrainian Scientific Institute was created, serving as a center of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation.



Cultural and economic organizations of the Ukrainians freely developed in Eastern Galicia also, but the political tension continued there, varying or in degree, throughout the twenty years of Poland's independence. Insignificant was the Communist "irredentists", looking towards the Soviet Ukraine. But few were also the Ukrainians ready to cooperate with the Polish authorities, taking advantage of the representation which they always had in the Polish Parliament. Most of their political leaders were in strong opposition, any constructive reform program lacking unfortunately on either side. Furthermore, the activities of some extreme nationalists were so obviously subversive and even terroristic that they provoked, in 1930, an attempt to "pacify" Eastern Galicia by police measures which were carried out with the brutality usual on such occasions. On the other hand, Ukrainian terrorists murdered the following year precisely the one of the Polish political leaders, Mr. Hołowko, who was most sincerely working for an improvement of the situation, and in 1934 another political murdered, that of the Minister of the Interior Mr. Pieracki, whom *(in spite of his rather sympathetic attitude towards their troubles)* the Ukrainians held responsible for ~~severe police measures~~, marked the climax of the latent crisis. In reaction against a danger which seemed very real, the only concentration camp ever existing in Poland, was created to check nationalist agitation from any quarter. Much more efficient was indeed a more conciliatory attitude adopted by both sides on the eve of the general European crisis. Even under the new, less democratic Constitution of 1935, eighteen seats were secured to the Ukrainians in Parliament and occupied by more moderate leaders who declared their full solidarity with the Polish people at the hour of the German aggression. And while in the earlier years the great spiritual leader of the Ukrainians, the Uniate Archbishop of Lwów Mons. A. Szeptycki, had had some difficulties with the Polish authorities, relations later became quite satisfactory and the Uniate Church, though closely associated with Ukrainian nationalism and therefore persecuted by all Russian regimes, could have played an important role in a reconciliation of the Ukrainians with Catholic Poland, if more time had been left to both peoples to work out their problems in peace.

J. Halacki