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*The Soviet Ukraine in Historical Perspective*¹

IVAN L. RUDNYTSKY

The study of the contemporary Ukraine is the domain of political science rather than of history, and most research in this field has been done by political scientists. Some valuable works, written from a "sovietological" viewpoint, have appeared in recent years.² The present writer is not a political scientist, but a student of history. It is, however, his hope that a historian can contribute to a better understanding of the contemporary scene by applying to it his sense of the temporal perspective and of the dynamic aspect of events. This historical approach seems to be particularly fruitful in dealing with the nationality problems in the USSR, since the current empirical data on which political scientists base their findings are incomplete and often inconclusive.

To an outside observer the USSR offers an essentially uniform appearance. A foreign traveller who passes through the republics of the Union will find everywhere the same political and social system, the same pattern of institutions, the same curricula in schools, the same propaganda slogans, and very similar living conditions. Thus the Soviet Union gives the impression of a homogeneous country, and this is the point of view adopted by most Western students. In their opinion, differences of nationality in the USSR are primarily linguistic, and they are assumed to possess no great political relevance, particularly in consideration of the ever advancing spread of the Russian language in all parts of the Union.

One must, however, not forget that the nations which compose the Soviet Union are ethnic and cultural entities with a long past, predating by many centuries not only the October Revolution, but also the time when the respective peoples originally fell under the domination of

¹ Revised text of the Shevchenko Memorial Lecture delivered at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, on 23 March 1970.

² Two substantial studies should be specifically mentioned: Jaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine After World War II* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964); Borys Lewytzkyj, *Die Sowjet-ukraine 1944-1963* (Cologne and Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1964). Both works, however, appeared too early to include information on the recent intellectual ferment in the Ukraine which has gained momentum since the middle of the 1960's.

tsarist Russia. Thus the linguistic variety, which is to be found in the Soviet Union, expresses underlying differences of collective mentality, ingrained social attitudes, and of intellectual and political traditions. It is difficult to appreciate fully the implications of the multinational character of the USSR unless one is familiar with the history of the peoples of the area. But this familiarity has been missing in most cases, as Western scholars usually approach the past of that part of the world from a centralist perspective, as the history of the growth of the imperial Russian state and of the metropolitan Russian society and culture.³

To the Ukraine belongs the pride of place among the Soviet Union's nationality problems. In size, population numbers, and economic output the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic ranks with the larger countries of Europe. Geographically, the Ukraine occupies an intermediary position between Russia proper and the so-called satellite countries of Eastern Europe. It can be said without exaggeration that the status of the Ukraine has a direct bearing on the structure of the USSR and the whole socialist bloc, and on the position of the Soviet Union as a world power. This should warrant an interest in the Ukrainian problem on the part of the Western scholarly community.

THE NATURE OF SOVIET UKRAINIAN STATEHOOD

The Ukrainian SSR can be best understood if we look at it as the embodiment of a compromise between Ukrainian nationalism and Russian centralism — of course not in the sense of a formal, negotiated agreement, but rather of a *de facto* balancing of antagonistic social forces neither of which was strong enough to assert itself completely. If the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-21 had been able to run its own natural course, the logical outcome would have been an independent nation

³ In a review of a collection of essays published in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution (*The New York Times Book Review*, 5 November 1967) Hugh Seton-Watson observed that "a survey of the Soviet Union which from the outset excludes 45 per cent of its subjects cannot be regarded satisfactory. . . . The main non-Russian nations still live in compact territories which have been their homeland for centuries and possess highly developed national cultures that are quite distinct from the Russian." The color blindness of many American scholars to Soviet nationality problems is to be explained, in Seton-Watson's view, by the circumstance that "the United States grew great as a melting-pot of ethnic elements." Americans tend to project the melting-pot concept on the former Russian empire and the USSR.

state. But the strength of the Ukrainian liberation movement was unequal to this task, and the Ukraine had to acquiesce in the continued overlordship of Moscow. As a counterpart, Lenin — who prior to the Revolution had many times expressed his preference for large, unitary states, and his rejection of federalism — was obliged to recognize that the national rebirth of the Ukraine (and of the other non-Russian nationalities of the former tsarist empire) was a fact of life, and that this fact had to be reckoned with. There can be no doubt that the willingness to make concessions to the non-Russian nationalities was a major factor in Bolshevik victory over their Russian competitors.⁴

The terms of the compromise can be described in the following manner: Russia retained political control over the Ukraine and, by virtue of that, the position of the paramount power in Eastern Europe. The Ukraine preserved, from the shipwreck of her greater hopes, the status of a nation (denied to her by the tsarist regime) and a token recognition of her statehood in the form of the Ukrainian SSR. A formal expression of the compromise was the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of which the Ukraine became a constituent member. Thus Soviet federalism is of a “dialectical” nature. On the one hand, it assures Russian domination over the non-Russian borderlands; on the other hand, the existence of the union republics preserves and even consolidates the national identity of the respective peoples.

According to official doctrine, the Ukrainian SSR is a sovereign state, federated on a footing of equality with Russia and the other fraternal Soviet republics. The theoretical sovereignty of the Ukraine finds an expression in her membership in the United Nations and the constitutional right of secession from the Union. A Soviet Ukrainian legal scholar stated:

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a union state, where sovereignty belongs to the federal union as well as to every union republic which is a socialist state within this union. One of these sovereign union republics with

⁴ This thesis has been incontrovertibly established by the émigré Russian historian of the Civil War, General N. N. Golovin, in *Rossiiskaia kontr-revoliutsiia v 1917-1918 gg.*, 4 vols. (n.p.: supplement to *Illustrovannaia Rossiia*, 1937). “In every instance when Bolshevism was defeated, this was only on the soil of ‘nationalism.’ It occurred in all sections which separated from Russia.” (I, 121). The rigid adherence of the White Armies’ leaders to the program of “Russia, one and indivisible” alienated the non-Russian nations and even the Don Cossacks and Siberians, who were ethnically Russian but strove for regional autonomy.

equal rights within the USSR is the Ukrainian SSR. . . . The union of sovereign states within one Soviet socialist federation did not affect their sovereignty, since this union was voluntary. . . . The rights of a union republic as a sovereign state cannot be determined by anyone save by the republic itself.⁵

The reality, of course, departs drastically from theory. The Ukrainian SSR is today deprived of nearly all attributes and functions of a self-governing body politic. The list of deficiencies the Soviet Ukraine suffers from is so long that it would be redundant to dwell on the details. Let us just mention a few examples, chosen at random. This nominally sovereign state does not control the railroads on its territory, does not possess a separate currency, or even postal stamps; it does not have any independent revenue, nor a citizenship legally distinct from the all-Union citizenship; offenders, tried in Ukrainian courts, serve their terms in prisons and labour camps outside the republic; the Ukrainian SSR does not entertain diplomatic relations with any foreign country; the Ukraine participates in international scholarly meetings, cultural events and sport competitions, as a rule, only through joint delegations of the USSR.

Even more important than these specific disabilities, the Soviet Ukraine lacks the most essential trait of any self-governing state: the ability to formulate and to pursue policies of its own. The power of the central government in Moscow is all-pervasive, and it does not leave to the organs of the Ukrainian Republic any sphere of independent jurisdiction. Any decision made in Kiev can always be overruled by Moscow. Thus the supposedly sovereign Ukrainian SSR reveals itself in practice as an administrative subdivision of a monolithic empire, endowed with a modicum of linguistic-cultural autonomy. And even the latter is being subverted by strong Russification pressures.

At this point, the reader might be tempted to jump to the conclusion that the statehood of the Ukrainian SSR is nothing but a sham. But this is not the view taken by the Ukrainian people under Soviet rule who, according to all available evidence, place a high value on the nominal sovereignty of their republic. For instance, they are proud of their country's membership in the United Nations. This does not mean that

⁵ G. Riaboshapko, "The Ukrainian SSR — a Sovereign State," *Radians'ke pravo*, 1966, No. 12; quoted from the *Digest of the Soviet Ukrainian Press*, XI, No. 3 (New York, 1967), 1-2.

Ukrainians are unaware of the realities of the existing power structure. But the paraphernalia of statehood which the Soviet Ukraine enjoys, and which an outside observer will easily dismiss as an empty gesture, are cherished by the Ukrainian people as a symbol of their nation's imprescriptible rights.

American authors, trying to explain the unfamiliar with the aid of the familiar, have often likened Soviet Union republics with the component states of their own country. Thus one can find comparisons of the Ukraine with Texas ("the Ukrainians are the Texans of Russia"), or even with Pennsylvania. But the supposed parallel is thoroughly misleading. American federalism is purely political, its function is to assure a decentralization of power, and it has nothing to do with ethnic and nationality questions.⁶ Soviet federalism, on the other hand, is obviously ethnic, and is a concession to the multinational nature of the USSR, without any decentralization of political power. A Soviet union republic is at once less and more than an American state. Less, because the monolithic power structure in the USSR does not leave to the constituent republics any independent sphere of jurisdiction. More, because the Soviet republics, among them the Ukraine, are residual nation states.

This situation is loaded with built-in tensions. An appearance of universal concord and solidarity of all Soviet peoples is being officially cultivated, but beneath the surface a stubborn tug-of-war goes on relentlessly, year after year. Neither of the parties has accepted the existing compromise as a final settlement. Moscow continues to press for greater centralization, for levelling down of national distinctions, to the point of complete absorption of the non-Russian nationalities. The program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union sets the goal of a gradual "drawing closer" and an eventual "merger" of Soviet nationalities.⁷ The

⁶ What has been said of the American states applies also to Canadian provinces, save Quebec. The latter is a special case: the only instance in North America of the problem of political federalism being compounded by a nationality problem in the ethnic-cultural sense.

The practical implications of the program of "merger of nationalities" can best be seen on the example of the areas of compact Ukrainian settlement which have been incorporated in the Russian SFSR. For instance, in the *stanitsa* (Cossack village) Platnirovskaja in the Kuban *krai*, "at the present, as the inquiry had shown, not only the newcomers but also all the local inhabitants call themselves Russians, while as recently as in 1926 there were in the *stanitsa*, according to the All-Union census, 83.5% Ukrainians and only 13.4% Russians." (K. V. Chistov, ed., *Kubanskiie stanitsy* [Moscow: Nauka, 1967], p. 29.) The number of the Ukrainians dropped, between the census of 1926 and 1959, in the southern zone of the Central Black Soil Region from 1,633 1000 to 262 1000, and in Northern Caucasia from 3,162 1000 to 370 1000

Russians, of course, are not expected to merge with the Chinese, but the non-Russians of the USSR are encouraged to merge with the Russians. But the non-Russian nationalities continue to pull in the opposite direction. Many of them still cherish the dream of complete independence, and in the meantime they avail themselves of every opportunity to strengthen their respective cultural identities and to expand the autonomy of their republics. It could seem that all the advantages in this protracted conflict are on the side of the centralist trend which is backed by the organized might of a totalitarian regime. But, after more than half a century of Soviet rule and despite terrible losses suffered during the Stalin era, the non-Russian nations of the USSR continue to live, and they have even become in many ways stronger and more consolidated than they were in 1917. Perhaps in no other part of the Soviet Union is the struggle more dramatic and pregnant of far-reaching historical consequences than in the Ukraine.

To recapitulate: the nominal statehood of the Ukrainian SSR is, in terms of contemporary political reality, a sheer myth manipulated to the advantage of the rulers. But a myth which has entered the consciousness of a people becomes a latent force. The clever manipulators may well find themselves some day in the position of the sorcerer's apprentice, unable to master the genie whom they have conjured.

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOVIET UKRAINE

Due to tsarist repression and other unfavourable circumstances, the process of nation-building was slow in gaining momentum in the Ukraine. Prior to 1917, there was a Ukrainian ethnic community and a Ukrainian national movement with supporters mostly among the intelligentsia, but no fully developed Ukrainian nation. The peasant masses, profoundly Ukrainian by all their objective ethnic traits, possessed only an embryonic national consciousness, while the cities of the country were

(Volodymyr Kubiiiovych, "Natsional'nyi sklad naselennia URSR za perepysom 1970," *Suchasnist'*, No. 9 [Munich, 1971], p. 77.) The Ukrainian population of the Russian Republic, deprived of schools and all cultural facilities in the native language and exposed to strong administrative pressure, is undergoing a process of Russification which may lead to the loss to the Ukrainian nation of about one fourth of its total ethnic territory. In Soviet sources, such as the book *Kubanske stanitsy* cited above, this is being praised as a "progressive, internationalist trend." There can be little doubt that, circumstances permitting, the regime would gladly apply this kind of "internationalism" to the entire Ukrainian people.

strongly Russified.⁸ The underdeveloped condition of Ukrainian nationhood was, undoubtedly, the chief reason why the experiment of an independent Ukrainian state failed in 1917-21. However, the stirring events of the years of revolution and struggle for independence mightily accelerated the process of transformation of the Ukrainian ethnic mass into a modern, sociologically and culturally mature nation. The elemental drive of the Ukrainian people toward nationhood, which did not find its completion during the revolution, was carried over into the Soviet era.

The 1920's were the happiest period in the history of the Ukrainian SSR.⁹ Under the auspices of the New Economic Policy industrial production had more or less returned to the pre-revolutionary level, while the peasantry, still uncollectivized, enjoyed a modest prosperity. This was also the time when the Ukrainian Republic possessed genuine autonomy in cultural matters. Ukrainian achievements in the fields of education, scholarship, literature, and the arts were truly impressive. The cities of the country began to lose quickly their former Russified appearance. By 1930 the Ukraine was approaching the condition of a fully developed, culturally mature nation.

The scene changed radically in the 1930's.¹⁰ Stalin's reign of terror weighed heavily on all the peoples of the Soviet Union, but the dictator's fury was directed particularly against the recalcitrant Ukrainians. As a result of the enforced collectivization of agriculture, and the artificial famine of 1933, the Ukraine suffered staggering losses in human lives. "Unofficial estimates of the death toll resulting from the famine comprise

⁸ The author has discussed the main problems of the development of the pre-revolutionary Ukraine in his article, "The Role of the Ukraine in Modern History," *Slavic Review*, XXII, No. 2 (June 1963), 199-216.

⁹ No definitive history of the Ukraine during the Soviet era exists so far, but the following works may be consulted with profit: Clarence A. Manning, *Ukraine Under the Soviets* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953); Basil Dmytryshyn, *Moscow and the Ukraine, 1918-1953* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956); Robert S. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics and the Ukraine, 1917-1957* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962). The historical chapters of *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopaedia*, edited by Volodymyr Kubijovyc, 2 vols. (Toronto: University Press, 1963, 1971) provide reliable information. Indispensable for the understanding of the cultural scene in the 1920's and early 1930's is George S. N. Luckyj's, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956). The best treatment of "nationalist deviations" in the CP(B)U during the early years of Soviet rule is to be found in a recent article of Janusz Radziejowski, "Kwestia narodowa w partii komunistycznej na Ukrainie radzieckiej," *Przegląd historyczny*, LXII, No. 3, (Warsaw, 1971), 477-497.

¹⁰ See Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: A Study of the Decade of Mass Terror (1929-1939)* (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1960).

at least 10 per cent of the population (over 5 million), but if the reduction in the birth rate and the increase in mortality were included, the figures would run, by some accounts, into 5 to 7 million, when extrapolated to the 1939 census."¹¹ Stalinist terror had also destroyed the Ukrainian civic and intellectual elite of two formations: the populist-liberal intelligentsia of pre-revolutionary origins which had accommodated to Soviet conditions and which in the 1920's continued to play an active part in the country's cultural life, and, secondly, the Ukrainian Communist leadership which had directed the republic during the first decade of its existence. One result of Stalinist policies was to stop, or even reverse, the process of Ukrainian nation-building. An expression of this was a return to bilingualism, which had been nearly eliminated by the end of the 1920's, and a restoration of the pre-revolutionary dichotomy between the Russian-speaking cities and industrial centers and the Ukrainian-speaking villages and rural towns. Ukrainian cultural activities were relegated to a subordinate and distinctly provincial level, while all the more prestigious forms of intellectual work were channeled into the "All-Union," i.e., Russian, sphere.

Little wonder that the Ukrainian people were looking forward to the coming great international conflagration with hope; and in 1941 hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers of Ukrainian nationality voluntarily surrendered to the Germans, greeted as liberators. This was not an expression of sympathy for the Nazi system of whose nature the Ukrainian people, isolated from the outside world, had hardly any perception. The Germans were looked upon as representatives of the admired European civilization, and the Germany of Hitler was visualized in the image of that of William II. It was remembered that in 1918, at the time of the first German occupation, the Kaiser's army had behaved in a civilized manner. Ukrainian patriots expected that Germany would again, as during the Brest-Litovsk era, support Ukrainian national aspirations in her own self-interest.

It is hardly necessary to note that these hopes were totally disappointed. The horrors of the Nazi colonial regime in the Ukraine confirmed and surpassed the most lurid predictions of Communist propaganda, and made even the restoration of Soviet rule a preferable alternative. There can be little doubt that Nazi policies in the occupied

¹¹ V. Holubnychyi in *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopaedia*, I, 822. Similar results have been arrived at by Dana G. Dalrymple, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934," *Soviet Studies*, XV, No. 3 (January 1964), 250-284.

Soviet territories, and especially in the Ukraine, were a major factor in the outcome of the German-Soviet campaign. In the words of a former Nazi high official: "Hitler led his armies not into a war of liberation, but into a campaign of colonial conquest, in which they bled to death."¹²

There are grounds to assume that Stalin and the Soviet leadership were much concerned during the war with the possibility that some foreign power might raise the Ukrainian issue.¹³ Fortunately for them, these apprehensions were quite unfounded. The Germans threw away the Ukrainian trump-card, while Western powers never thought of interfering with what they considered an internal affair of their Soviet ally. One of the ironies of World War II was the fact that of all the world's leading statesmen it was Stalin — the perpetrator of unspeakable crimes against the Ukrainian people — who showed the greatest awareness of the potentialities of the Ukrainian problem. It was in the name of the Ukraine, and not of Russia, that Stalin successfully claimed vast territories west of the pre-1939 frontier, thus extending the USSR into central Europe and the Danubian valley.

THE EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR II

From the viewpoint of Ukrainian national interest, the results of World War II were profoundly discouraging. It is true that the danger of colonial enslavement by Nazi Germany was avoided, but otherwise there was no improvement. For the price of terrible suffering, destruction, and losses in human substance, the Ukraine received only a restoration of the same tyrannical rule which the country had experienced

¹² Peter Kleist, *Zwischen Hitler und Stalin* (Bonn: Athenäum Verlag, 1950), p. 229.

¹³ "Molotov's statement [to the German ambassador, Werner von der Schulenburg, in connection with the intended Soviet annexation of Bukovina, in 1940] reflected the real apprehension behind much of Soviet foreign policy of the last few years: in any possible war the Ukraine was the Achilles' heel of the Soviet Union. . . . As everything since Stalin's speech at the Eighteenth Party Congress had indicated, the Ukrainian issue was felt to be the critical element in any internal danger within the integral parts of the Soviet Union." (Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-67* [New York, Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968], pp. 299-300). The war-time ambassador of the Polish government-in-exile to the USSR reported, on 3 January 1942: "During his farewell call [Sir Stafford] Cripps mentioned that Stalin has a feeling of great success, believes the Germans will be completely shattered, and above all is concerned that Russia, even at this stage, should be assured of strategically safe frontiers and such as will guarantee the annihilation of the Ukrainian movement." (Stanislaw Kot, *Conversations with the Kremlin and Dispatches from Russia* [London: Oxford University Press, 1963], p. 175.)

before the war. The goal of liberation and national independence was as distant and unobtainable as ever.

The above pessimistic view, although plausible, is only partly correct. As a matter of fact, the war had caused some profound changes in the condition of the Ukraine. But the impact of these new features asserted itself only gradually, and their effects today are still far from exhausted.

The greatest change resulting from the war was the annexation to the Ukrainian SSR of the so-called Western Ukraine, i.e., of the ethnically Ukrainian lands which were previously held by Poland, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia. This added to the population of the Soviet Ukraine about eight million new citizens, nearly all of whom were ethnic Ukrainians, thus partly compensating population losses in old Soviet territories and upholding the rate of Ukrainian nationals in the whole republic.

The qualitative effects of these changes were even more important than the statistical. For the first time since the Middle Ages, all Ukrainian lands found themselves united within one body politic. This implied, in the first place, the levelling-down of the social and cultural peculiarities of the western territories. It is hardly necessary to mention that this forcible *Gleichschaltung* was a painful process, and that it involved many victims. But the territorial consolidation was an old goal of Ukrainian nationalism. The unification of Galicia (then organized as the Western Ukrainian People's Republic) with the Ukrainian People's Republic on the Dnieper had been first proclaimed on 22 January 1919. This attempted unification foundered in the general collapse of Ukrainian independence. But what the independent Ukrainian state had failed to accomplish during the revolutionary era, was now fulfilled by the Soviet regime. This meant a tremendous step forward in the process of nation-building. The adjustments resulting from territorial consolidation were by no means a one-way affair: they implied not only an assimilation of the population of the Western Ukraine to patterns prevailing in the Ukrainian SSR in its old frontiers, but simultaneously also a subtle but profound psychological mutation of the people in the central-eastern Ukraine. This latter aspect of unification is obviously played down in official pronouncements, but it is nevertheless a major factor in the life of the post-war Ukraine. One has to keep in mind that the western territories (with the exception of Volhynia and the Ukrainian sections of Bessarabia) had never belonged to tsarist Russia. The majority of Western Ukrainians had been Roman Catholics of the Eastern Rite, and the traditional cultural ties of the whole area were with central Europe.

It is well known that, due to the more favourable circumstances of the Austrian constitutional system, nationalism developed faster in the western than in the central-eastern Ukraine. Already by the late nineteenth century Galicia had become the stronghold or, as it used to be said, "the Piedmont" of the Ukrainian national movement. There an active and militant national consciousness had penetrated the masses, down to the last village. Conditions were similar in the small neighbouring province of Bukovina. During the interwar era, Galician-type nationalism expanded to the remaining sections of the Western Ukraine: Volhynia and Transcarpathia.¹⁴ For the last quarter of a century this West Ukrainian leaven has been acting on the people of the central-eastern Ukraine. The effects of this influence cannot be easily measured in empirical terms, but I am willing to surmise that they are deep, and that they possess a considerable long-range political significance. The emergence of a vocal national dissidence in the Ukrainian SSR in the course of the 1960's is difficult to account for without taking into consideration the Western Ukrainian factor. At the same time, it is worth noticing that among the prominent dissidents we find natives of literally all parts of the Ukraine, including such strongly Russified areas as Donbass and Odessa. These are symptoms of the "psychological mutation," which has been alluded to before.

The unification of Ukrainian lands within the boundaries of the Ukrainian SSR has had another important result. A major past handicap of the Ukrainian independence movement was the division of the nation's forces between the anti-Russian and anti-Polish fronts. The Ukraine was not in the position of those comparatively fortunate stateless nations, such as the Irish, the Czechs, and the Finns, who had to face only one adversary. It has been said before that by the late nineteenth century Galicia had become the stronghold of the Ukrainian national movement. But Galicia's potential could be brought only partly into play in the field of Ukrainian-Russian relations because of the entangle-

¹⁴ Volhynia used to belong to tsarist Russia, and Transcarpathia (also known as Hungarian Rus', Subcarpathian Ruthenia and Carpatho-Ukraine) to the Hungarian half of the Habsburg empire. Prior to World War I both areas were backward, and were little affected by the Ukrainian national movement. The progress of nationalism in those territories is illustrated by the fact that in 1938-39 an autonomous Ukrainian administration came into existence in Transcarpathia, while Volhynia served during the German occupation as the base of a patriotic anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet guerrilla force, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

ment with Poland.¹⁵ This situation not only caused a dispersal of the available physical resources, but was also conducive to the outbreak of debilitating internal dissensions within Ukrainian ranks about the order of priorities in dealings with Russia and Poland.¹⁶ The incorporation of the Western Ukraine into the Ukrainian SSR, post-war population exchanges which removed the troublesome Polish minority from Ukrainian soil, the geopolitical re-orientation of Poland towards Silesia and the Baltic Sea — all this ended the ancient Ukrainian-Polish conflict, thus “unfreezing” considerable Ukrainian forces. The very fact that the entire Ukraine has been united under the rule of Moscow enables the Ukrainian nation to concentrate on the one, paramount issue: a revision of the present Ukrainian-Russian relationship.

In this connection, I would like to refer to an illuminating precedent. The eminent Polish political thinker, Roman Dmowski (1864-1939), in trying to formulate a foreign policy program for his nation in the years prior to the outbreak of World War I, stated that Poland's restoration would have to proceed in two stages. The first stage was to be the unification of all the sections of partitioned Poland under the auspices of Russia; this, in turn, would lead to a shift in the balance of power between Poland and Russia, forcing the latter country to concede to

¹⁵ A striking proof of this contention is provided by the events of the winter of 1918 to 1919 and the spring of 1919. This was the critical moment in the war between Soviet Russia and the Ukrainian People's Republic. The best Ukrainian military force was the Galician Army, which in that chaotic era was distinguished by its exemplary discipline and imperviousness to Bolshevik propaganda. It is likely that an intervention of this force in the Russian-Ukrainian war would have decided the contest in favour of Ukrainian independence, but the Galician Army was tied down because of the necessity of defending the Western Ukraine against a Polish invasion.

¹⁶ This occurred for the first time in the second half of the seventeenth century, in the era which in Ukrainian history is known as *Ruina*, or “the Time of Ruin.” The struggle of Muscovy and Poland for domination over the Ukraine led to civil wars between pro-Muscovite and pro-Polish Cossack factions. This tragic situation was reenacted in 1919-20. All Ukrainian patriots wanted their country independent and united. But as this optimal goal was no longer possible to achieve, they divided among themselves over the issue whether concessions were to be made to Russia or to Poland. The chief-of-state of the Dnieper Ukraine, Symon Petliura, determined to carry on the war against Soviet Russia at all costs, entered into an alliance with the Poles, while declaring his *désintéressement* in the fate of Galicia. But this surrender of their native land was unacceptable to the Western Ukrainians, for whom the traditional primary enemy was Poland. Thus the Ukrainian Galician Army went over first to Denikin, and later to the Bolsheviks. In both the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries the final outcome was a partition of the Ukraine between Russia and Poland.

Polish demands of an autonomous status.¹⁷ Actually, the rebirth of Poland occurred in a different manner which nobody could have predicted before 1914: through the simultaneous collapse of all three partitioning powers. During World War II the Ukrainians hoped that this miracle would be repeated for their benefit: that first Germany would defeat Soviet Russia, and then the Western allies would defeat Germany. These hopes were not to be justified by the course of events. But it seems as if Dmowski's forgotten formula in our times is finding an application in the case of the Ukraine.

The Second World War has led to an extension of the Russian sphere of influence over all of Eastern Europe. This has profoundly affected the Ukraine, and must be considered the second major change in the position of that country, besides territorial consolidation. One must keep in mind that the Ukrainian SSR has common boundaries with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, and, across the Black Sea, also Bulgaria. The socialist countries of Eastern Europe have at all times, and especially in the post-Stalin era, enjoyed an incomparably higher degree of intellectual freedom than the USSR. Polish, Czech, etc., books and journals serve the Ukrainian intellectual elite as a major source of information about the outside world. An important role as cultural intermediaries has been played by the small but active Ukrainian minorities in Poland and Czechoslovakia.¹⁸ As far as communications with the outside world are concerned, the Ukraine was, from the 1930's, in a worse situation than Russia. Russian scholars and writers in Moscow and Leningrad had at least a limited access to foreign books and sources of information, while the Ukraine was kept in almost complete isolation. Thanks to the existence of the socialist bloc, conditions have improved in this respect. The Iron Curtain has not been removed, but it has developed many cracks and holes.

Politically, the imposition of Soviet domination over Eastern Europe brought an end to the terrifying Ukrainian-Russian *tête-à-tête*, as it had existed during the interwar period. Moscow's solicitude is now divided

¹⁷ Roman Dmowski, *Niemcy, Rosja i kwestya polska* (Lviv, 1908); French translation, *La Question polonaise* (Paris: Librairie Armand Collin, 1908). For a discussion of Dmowski's views, see Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, I (Paris: no publisher, 1953), 211-213.

¹⁸ The evidence on the connections between Ukrainian cultural groups in Czechoslovakia and the intellectual ferment in the Soviet Ukraine has been assembled by Grey Hodnett and Peter J. Potichnyj, *The Ukraine and the Czechoslovak Crisis* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1970).

among more objects, and therefore it cannot devote to the Ukraine the same exclusive attention as before. The apprehension that a return to a Stalin-type mass terror in the Ukraine might provoke a panic reaction among the Eastern European "allies" makes an application of former methods less likely. The establishment of the socialist bloc has strongly increased the number of people who have a vital stake in the change of the *status quo* in Eastern Europe and the USSR, and thus has given to the Ukraine potential allies.

And, finally, the emergence of the socialist bloc has deprived the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of its ideological legitimacy. The rationalization for the formation of the USSR was the necessity of a close alliance of socialist nations in the face of a hostile capitalist encirclement. In the case of the Ukraine, at least, this argument is no longer valid. The Ukrainian SSR is surrounded not by capitalist powers, but by friendly socialist states. There is nothing in the teachings of Marxism-Leninism which could justify the Ukraine's inferior status, a country larger and more populous than any of the East European nations. In the early years after the October Revolution, when the Communists believed that a proletarian revolution was imminent also in the West, they envisaged a system of Soviet republics embracing Germany, Hungary, and various other countries. Nothing was said at that time that the Soviet republics built on the ruins of the former tsarist empire should be formally differentiated from those which were to spring outside its boundaries. In fact, Soviet power found itself limited to the successor states of Russia. The formation of the Soviet Union amounted to a restoration of the Russian empire, but this fact was disguised by a supra-national name and a quasi federative structure. The USSR could never admit overtly to being a continuation of the Russian empire, because this ran counter to the principles of internationalism and anti-colonialism which are an inherent part of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The contradiction has been brought into the open by the establishment of the so-called socialist bloc.

Many will think that in a world where politics are shaped by power relations philosophical antinomies are of little practical importance. But the experience of history suggests that a government which is entangled in insoluble contradictions with the principles from which it derives its legitimacy cannot endure for very long. What is going to endure, of course, is Russia which is, and will remain, one of the great nations of the world. But in the present age of break-up of colonial

empires, the USSR amounts to an anachronism. Only when Lenin's slogan, "self-determination to the point of separation," has ceased to be a fraud, will it become possible for the Ukraine and Russia to live as good neighbors.

The problem has been correctly stated by Arnold Toynbee:

It will be seen that Stalin's administrative map of the Soviet Union was not to be taken at its face value; but a moral commitment cannot be wiped out through being dishonored by its makers; and, in the world that had emerged from the Second World War, Stalin's map might live to be translated, after all, from the limbo of camouflage into the realm of reality if, on either side of the dividing line between a Russian and an American demi-monde, the letter of the Soviet Union's federal constitution were one day to be applied in the spirit of the Pan American Union of Republics and the British Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁹

¹⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, IX (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 551.

RÉSUMÉ/ABSTRACT

The Soviet Union in Historical Perspective

La position de la R.S.S. d'Ukraine, en tant qu'état membre de l'Union Soviétique, est le résultat d'un compromis entre deux tendances antagoniques de la période révolutionnaire: celle du nationalisme ukrainien et celle du centralisme russe. Ces deux tendances existent jusqu'à ce jour. La souveraineté nominale de la R.S.S. d'Ukraine, bien qu'elle soit à présent dénuée de tout contenu politique réel, est pourtant significative en tant que symbole.

Après un bref examen des différents stades du développement de l'Ukraine Soviétique, le problème des effets à long terme de la seconde guerre mondiale sur la position de l'Ukraine est discuté en profondeur. L'unification avec la R.S.S. d'Ukraine des territoires de l'Ukraine occidentale, autrefois partie intégrante de la Pologne, de la Tchécoslovaquie et de la Roumanie, est un fait d'une importance historique majeure. Le rassemblement du peuple ukrainien en un seul état a été la cause de changements psychologiques non seulement dans les régions nouvellement annexées, mais aussi en Ukraine centrale et orientale (l'ancienne Ukraine soviétique). La R.S.S. d'Ukraine a aussi été affectée par l'établissement du bloc dit socialiste. L'extension du contrôle soviétique sur l'Europe de l'Est a mis fin à l'isolement de l'Ukraine par rapport au monde extérieur et a donné au peuple ukrainien des alliés en puissance.

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