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The Ukrainian national minority in the post-war Poland. The case based on programs of political parties and underground organisations (1939–1945)

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**THE UKRAINIAN NATIONAL MINORITY
IN THE POST-WAR POLAND. THE CASE BASED
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AND UNDERGROUND ORGANISATIONS (1939–1945)**

Ukrainians constituted both the most numerous national minorities (ca. 14–16%) in the II Polish Republic (Żarnowski 1973: 374) and one of the biggest challenges to the policy the state formulated and enforced with regard to the issue of nationalities (Chojnowski 1979: 1 and ff). The issue of that national minority as well as a vision of the Polish eastern border was reflected in the programmatic discussions by the political parties and organisations during WW II. Their shape was mostly influenced by the previous programmatic stances taken from the national policy carried out by the occupying forces and the current Polish–Ukrainian relations. The parties and underground organisations often posited the Ukrainian question only in the context of their general attitude to the national minorities or Slav national minorities.

In the Polish political thought of that period, three most fundamental stances must be distinguished in that regard. The first of them entailed securing an entirely equal status of the Ukrainians within the framework of the restituted Polish statehood. The second envisaged granting autonomy to the Ukrainians. The third – preferred turning Poland into a homogenous national state.

The first of those stances was represented by peasant parties (Stronnictwo Ludowe „Roch”, „Orka”, Chłopska Organizacja Wolności „Raclawice”, „Chłopski Bój”), socialist parties (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna „Wolność Równość Niepodległość”, Organizacja Socjalistyczna „Wolność”), Christian-Democratic parties (Stronnictwo Pracy, Unia, Front Odrodzenia Polski, Znak), democratic parties (Stronnictwo Polskiej Demokracji, Polskie Stronnictwo Demokratyczne), syndicalist

ones (Związek Syndykalistów Polskich) and national political groupings (Ruch „Miecz i Plug”).

Stronnictwo Ludowe „Roch” critically evaluated the history of the Polish-Ukrainian relations, maintaining that they could be improved after the war. Not accepting the changed status of the Riga border, that grouping called for providing Ukrainians with conditions enabling their free national development, cultural and economic. In return, they expected loyalty from that minority. In the areas inhabited mainly by the Ukrainian minority, local self-government was to be established as well as schooling in Ukrainian at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The existence of a special bond was stressed originating from a similar social structure between the Polish and the Ukrainian nation. Common economic and cultural institutions were to become the ground on which mutual trust was to be reinforced. The institutions were to serve mutual cooperation and to breed the idea of a reborn Slavic world [„Słowiańszczyzna”] (*Stanowisko...* 20 IV 1943: 5–6). Those assumptions were reconfirmed in the programmatic-ideological declaration of the peasant movement, issued in 1943 (Mańkowski, Nowak 1966: 245–258).

Other peasant parties, such as Chłopska Organizacja Wolności „Racławice”, „Orka” and „Chłopski Bój”, did not differ from SL „Roch” regarding the Ukrainian issue. They stressed the importance of the national awakening of the peasants who were seen as a broad core of the national society. Also, they saw it necessary to make the peasants more tightly attached to the State (*Nasz...* 1 II 1944: 5; *O jaką...* 15 IV 1944: 2; *Apel...* III 1943: 15–16; *Ideologiczne...* IX 1943: 3–8; *Przyszła...* 15 VIII 1941: 1–3).

The attitude of Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Wolność Równość Niepodległość to the Ukrainian issue must be perceived through the lenses of „Program Polski Ludowej” [the People’s Poland Program] in which the problem of national minorities was discussed in the context of the creation of civil society based on the principle of equal rights. Elections to representative institutions, wide-ranging forms of self-government as well as unlimited freedom of expression related to political issues were to become the foundations of such a society. Those entitlements were to be available to all citizens loyal to the state, disregarding differences constituted by their religious denomination or nationality. Those citizens who had betrayed the Polish Republic were in turn to be persecuted by law (Przybysz 1987: 13–23).

Other, small and disjointed socialist organisations did not usually declare their programs as regards the particular nationalities – class issues and the on-going struggle for independence were more important for them. Only the Vilnius Organizacja Socjalistyczna Wolność stated that all nationalities had to have equal legal status guaranteed – the fact of belonging to a particular nationality was not believed to provide justification for political persecution. The issue of national minorities was to be subordinated to the Polish *raison d'état* in its territorial-national and socialist-people's version and resolved according to the needs of that *raison d'état* (Przybysz 1992: 313–317).

Those views were close to the stances adopted on the issue of national minorities by the majority of the democratic and syndicalist groupings that saw the need to guarantee the national minorities a complete spectrum of civil and political rights as well as to provide them with freedom of cultural and economic development and freedom of religion (Przybysz 2001: 215–216).

In the years of 1943–1944, the Christian-Democratic movement was consolidated organisationally in the framework of Stronnictwo Pracy. The party's programs of 1944 raised the problem of the national minorities in the context of its vision of a reborn Poland seen as a national-Catholic state true to its specific spiritual unity. To become strong and powerful, Poland was to own an adequate territory that constituted a coherent whole when evaluated from the geographical, strategic and economic point of view – it was to include all territories belonging to the Polish civilisation. The Polish state was believed to belong solely to the Polish nation who was to play the role of the host within its boundaries but – according to the Polish historical tradition – was also to grant rights to national minorities. Such rights were to be granted only on the condition of remaining loyal to the Polish Republic. In the field of home affairs, the Polish culture was to be promoted on the basis of broadly conceived cultural-educational self-government, which aimed primarily at reinforcing the national idea. The discussed postulates were related to the solutions proposed by the Polish Christian Democrats in the inter-war period – the solutions had been rooted in ideas of social and national solidarism. Post-war relations between Poland, the Soviet Union and the other Slavic nations were to be premised on principles of cooperation between the neighboring countries and non-intervention in their domestic affairs (Przybysz 1992: 361–383).

At the turn of 1942 and 1943, Stronnictwo Pracy was split. As a result Stronnictwo Zrywu Niepodległościowego was called into existence (Andrusiewicz 1988: 154–155). The split did not, however, change the views of the Zryw activists regarding the Ukrainian issue. They believed that once the war was ended, Ukrainians should be provided with an opportunity to develop their own culture and to live by their national tradition in Poland. Conversely, surrendering the areas inhabited by the Ukrainians was thought to be a betrayal of the most fundamental ideals and was interpreted as being tantamount to undermining the moral and material resources enabling the formation of a block of Central European states. The Poles were believed to be endowed with a special responsibility for the fate of both the Polish and Ukrainian nation (Przybysz 1987: 118–123; *Idea...* 18 III 1943: 3; *Sprawy...* 10 V 1943: 7–8; *Rznać Lachów...* 25 IX 1943: 3–5).

The major groupings representing the political camp of Sanacja, such as Obóz Polski Walczącej and Konwent Organizacji Niepodległościowych, were in support of an equal legal status of the Ukrainian minority as well. The former of the organisations drew on the tradition of Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, while the latter on the tradition of Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem. The attitude of those parties to the problem of the national minorities was based on a general reference to the tradition of the multi-national II Polish Republic, while stressing the necessity to obey the principles stating the superior status of the idea of the state over the idea of the nation (Przybysz 1992: 106–111; 150–152). It needs to be stressed that Konwent rejected the possibility for changing the national composition of the Polish state by means of population relocation (exchange) (Garnuszewski 1995: 78; *O czym...* 30 VI 1944: 2–3). The ideas of „sanation” (i.e. recuperating „health” by the Polish state), minor programmatic differences and similar conceptions of the future national policy in 1944 all contributed to the unification of the groupings in the formula of Stronnictwo Niezawisłości Narodowej.

Ruch Miecz i Pług was another of the political groupings that advocated the equal status of the national minorities. Even though the membership in the national political movement made that group emphasise that its members served the cause of the Polish nation only (*Z cyklu...* XII 1942: 5–8), the representatives of the other nationalities were to be granted the same rights as Poles (Przybysz 1992: 307).

Krajowa Reprezentacja Polityczna and Rada Jedności Narodowej supported the idea of equal status for the Ukrainians as well. *The proclamation by Krajowa Reprezentacja Polityczna*, addressed to the Ukrainian Nation, issued on 30 July in 1943, stated that the loss of the Polish Eastern Borderlands [*kresy wschodnie*] could not be reconciled with the Polish *raison d'état* – those territories were thus to become an area where the two brotherly nations coexisted in peace. This idea was to be justified by the civil and economic contribution made there by the Polish nation (*Odezwa...* 9 VIII 1943: 1). Rada Jedności Narodowej, which replaced Krajowa Reprezentacja Polityczna, took a similar stance in this respect. In its declaration, it stressed that Poland would base its attitude to the national minorities on the principle of equal political status and the provision for conditions enabling the minorities unrestrained cultural, economic and social development within the framework of the united statehood and common public good shared by all citizens (Przybysz 1992: 345).

The problem of Ukrainian autonomy was voiced by Stronnictwo Demokratyczne and Polscy Socjaliści. The first of those groupings expressed the necessity to elaborate a solution that could accommodate the Ukrainians' aspirations without infringing upon the Polish interests. Foreseeing that the Soviet Union would win the war, which excluded the possibility of creating a Ukrainian state, the democratic and tolerant Poland was presented as an alternative to the Soviet Ukraine. A territorial autonomy, organised on the basis resembling cantons, was proposed to be introduced in the territories inhabited by the Ukrainians (Torzecki 1993: 200; *O ugodę...* 7 II 1942: 1–2). Stronnictwo Demokratyczne highlighted the necessity to grant the representatives of the national minorities full civil and political rights, to guarantee them freedom of development and religion as well as to protect them against any attempts to fuel chauvinism and instigate nationalistic fighting (Przybysz 1992: 196–202). Polish socialists assumed, in turn, that the borders were to be set according to the principle of national self-determination. The national minorities inhabiting Poland were to be granted full civil rights and territorial or professional-cultural autonomy (*Deklaracja...* 1 IX 1941: 2). As much as the Polish socialists only formulated a general premise regarding the issue of Ukrainian autonomy, Stronnictwo Demokratyczne precisely delimited the territorial shape of the Ukrainian canton (Torzecki 1992: 378).

The creation of Poland as a homogenous nation-state was the third of the postulated directions in which the future policy concerning national minorities could develop. That view was represented *inter alia* by Stronnictwo Narodowe that published its statement on the issue in October of 1943. In that program, it was stipulated that the scope of rights and liberties must take into account the Polish national interest as well as being dependent on the actual attitudes of the Ukrainians to the Polish state and the Polish nation. The principal idea was that Polish politics was to focus on efforts to strengthen the state, its forces and welfare, while at the same time all citizens were to be treated equally albeit any symptoms of disloyalty to the state were to be persecuted without remorse. At the same time, it was proposed that part of the Ukrainian population should be relocated from the territories of the region of Małopolska Wschodnia to central regions of the country, while some Polish population was to be moved to the territories left by the Ukrainians (Przybysz 1992: 210–211). The attitudes shown by the Ukrainians during the German occupation were evaluated negatively – they were interpreted as evidence of anti-Polish resentment in the Ukrainian aspirations (*Ukraińcy...* 26 VII 1940: 3). The progressing differentiation of the development of the Ukrainian national awareness was also mentioned, which varied depending on the territory inhabited by the Ukrainians (*Forsowanie...* 29 XI 1940: 6). „Szaniec” expressed a similar stance, according to which the Ukrainians were to undergo fast and effective assimilation (i.e. Polonization) (*Nasze cele...* 29 II 1943: 1–2).

Konfederacja Narodu treated the Ukrainian problematic as an element of its conception of a Slavic Empire [„Imperium Słowiańskie”]. The Ukrainians were treated exclusively as an ethnic group within the Polish nation that was characterised by lacking national awareness. Their interests were not taken into account, while defining the Polish rights to the territory east of the Bug River, the territory was treated in terms of an area where natural expansion, economic and cultural, was to take place, which was seen as a necessary premise of Europe’s expansion to the East and to the South. Because of some hopes attached to the idea of a future union with that part of Ukraine that stretched along the Ister (Dniestr) River, it was assumed that the „Polish” Ukrainians should be necessarily granted a more than tolerated status, on the condition that they remained fully loyal (Jan z Chociebuża: 2).

A single-nation Poland was also aimed at in the programmatic conceptions of Polska Partia Robotnicza [Polish Workers’ Party] (further

referred to as PPR). Nevertheless, as much as the formerly discussed groupings intended to achieve this goal while recognizing the Riga borderline proposal, the communists' rejection of the proposal was seen as a method to change the national structure of the country.

PPR demanded that to those eastern territories that belonged to Poland before 1 September of 1939 which had been for ages inhabited by the ethnic Ukrainian majority the principle of self-determination should be applied. The communists did not indicate any alternative solutions other than the inclusion of those territories into the USSR because the very existence of the Polish state was to guarantee the solution advocated by them. Attempts to increase the territorial boundaries of the Polish state were compared to Hitler's model of national living space (*Lebensraum*). The solution advocated by the communists was in turn to guarantee peace in the East and to strengthen the Polish position in the West and along the coast. Their proposals were to facilitate establishing good neighborly relations and alliances with all of Europe's nations. The working class was perceived as a defender of national rights and liberties, while the freedom and independence of nations was believed to be a necessary condition of social progress. The practical implementation of the proposal to move the Polish border to the line indicated by the Bug and San Rivers would mean that only a small number of Ukrainians would remain in Poland. It was envisioned that they would be granted equal rights irrespective of their nationality and religious denomination (Góra 1958: 11–169).

Stronniectwo Ludowe „Wola Ludu” [People's Party „The People's Will”], the foundation of which had been initiated by PPR, expressed a similar stance regarding the issue. According to this party, the fate of the borders of the future Polish state and the territories inhabited by Ukrainians was to be decided by the inhabitants by ballot (Wojtas 1976: 138).

It is to be stressed that the postulates to create the Polish state as a single-nation state were voiced by some other political groupings as well. The activists of PPS WRN in Lvov could serve as an example – they claimed that because of some economic reasons, part of the population should be relocated. While cultural autonomy should be offered, simultaneously methods leading to assimilation must be implemented (Torzecki 1993: 210). In the christian-democratic press, there appeared in turn postulates to deprive the Ukrainians in Poland of political rights because of their anti-Polish actions during the war (*Wolny...* XI 1943: 1–2).

The differences in stances regarding the Ukrainian issue depended frequently upon the personal views of the activists and those were not always conditioned by their membership in any particular ideological camp. The differences appeared despite the common experience with German occupation and the shared experience of functioning in the structures of *Polskie Państwo Podziemne* [Polish Underground State] which had a typically Polish national character.

As a result, in the Polish political thought of the period between 1939 and 1945 a clear stance concerning the most important issues related to the Ukrainian community in Poland was absent. Similarly, the evaluation of the policy carried out *vis-à-vis* the national minorities by the II Polish Republic did not belong to the most important questions that the Polish political parties dealt with in the period of anti-German resistance.

The representatives of *Delegatura na Kraj* were aware of the divisions bred by the different attitudes to the Ukrainian issue (Torzecki 1992: 378). The implementation of national policy programs in the reborn Poland was to be dependent upon those views that gained the upper hand in *Polskie Państwo Podziemne* and those attitudes that prevailed in the Polish society. First and foremost, however, they were to depend upon which political force, when and in what manner came to power in the country.

The creation of *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego* [Polish Committee of National Liberation] and the signing of a treaty by the Committee on 9 of September in 1944 which concerned the relocation of the Ukrainian population from Poland, meant that the PPR conception of the national consolidation was to be implemented. On the basis of that treaty in the period between 1944 and 1947 around 480 thousand Ukrainians were relocated from Poland, while the majority of the still remaining Ukrainians (about 140 thousand) were relocated in 1947 within the framework of so called „Wisła” [Vistula] action when they were moved to so called „Ziemie Odzyskane” [Recuperated Territories]. Those actions were supported by both the political groupings licensed by PPR, such as *Stronnictwo Ludowe*, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, and by the representatives of the legal opposition, such as *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* and *Stronnictwo Pracy*. In the period following July of 1944, the conceptions of the national policy that had been elaborated within the resistance movement and underground structures in the period of the German occupation had thus been largely rejected. In the result of the undertaken ac-

tions, the problem of the Ukrainian national minority lost the political significance that it had had before.

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