

A Polish View of Polish-Ukrainian Influences

Józef Łobodowski, Madrid

POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS HAVE developed over a long time and, in spite of propinquity, rather slowly and sporadically and without continuity in either the cultural or the political aspects. It is not difficult to discover the main reasons for this. Poland and Medieval Ukraine (Kievan Rus') embraced Christianity almost at the same time, although this new religion, which substituted for and overpowered paganism, came from very different and almost conflicting cultural centers: to Poland from the Roman Occident and to Ukraine from Oriental Byzantium. And when the Greek Church split from Papal Rome these differences became more and more pronounced. Until the fourteenth century relations were scanty and sporadic. Political and military conflicts over territorial borders [Red Rus' (Ruthenia) — Halych and Volodymyr], had been apparent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but became dormant for a long time: wars were few and conflicts were settled by brief encounters without enduring consequences (such as the conquest of Kiev by Bolesław the Brave and later by Bolesław the Bold, and the Battle of Zawichost). However, matrimonial ties between the reigning dynasties, though frequent in the beginning, no longer took place. Then, with the terrible invasion of the Tatars of Batu-khan, the Rus' of Kiev fell under the Mongol power from which it would not be free until the end of the fourteenth century. The Occidental Principalities also suffered under the oppression of the Asian hordes, but to a lesser degree. When Olgiard, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, inflicted upon the Tatars the final defeat (at the Battle of the Blue Waters), these principalities lost their independence, some

falling under the power of the Poles, others under the Lithuanians.

A very important change took place in the second half of the sixteenth century, with the Union of Lublin. In consequence of this, all of Ukraine became incorporated into the Kingdom of Poland, while the ruling duality disappeared. From that time there was a common regime for both the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the powers of the king and of the Grand Duke were joined in a single sovereign. This state of affairs lasted more than two centuries, until the partition of Poland between 1772 and 1785 by the three great powers: Russia, Prussia and Austria.

The influence of Polish culture became very strong after the Union of Lublin: a great part of the Ukrainian nobility and, above all, of the dominant aristocracy became Polonized, a process which was almost always preceded by a change of religion from the Greek Orthodox to the catholic. Slowly the Ukrainian nation lost its ruling classes to the Poles, while Polish culture and civilization became predominant. Furthermore, one must point out a significant historical process, both curious and unique. The Polish state was consolidated after its birth in a very short time, in a span of only two or three generations — very unusual in the Europe of that time. The first princes of the Piast Dynasty had their sovereignty limited to one part of the Warta River basin and the middle course of the Oder River; but after only half a century the Piast State was extended on the other side to the Baltic Sea (Pomerania), and on the other across the Vistula River to the Carpathian Mountains, engulfing the lands of Silesia and Masovia. Furthermore, the Piasts' domination reached Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Red Rus' (Ruthenia).

However, this rapid territorial and political development was not accompanied by a similar cultural expansion. It is important to underline that, whatever the cause, the Rus' of Kiev's cultural level had been very superior to that of Poland until the end of Medieval times, but that changes had since taken place. While Ukraine's main urban centers of civilization had been totally or partially ruined as a consequence of the prolonged domination of the Tatars and were thus undoubtedly suffering from a cultural lag, Poland — once peace was consolidated on its western frontiers following the final victory over the Teutonic Orders — had opened up to the influences of the European Renaissance, mainly in its best version, that is, the Italian. Immediately a national literature began to grow, something which had been practically non-existent. As a very young nation, late in its incorporation to European culture, the Poles had also been late in their dedication to literary creation. Before the sixteenth century cultural writing was in Latin. From medieval times there has been no trace found so far of any literary work worthy of mention in Polish,

with the exception of some religious texts and popular songs. But in the sixteenth century a miracle takes place: in the short period of a few decennia a national literature is born (above all, in a lyric poetry worthy of comparison with that of the Occident), and the Polish language acquires in that same short period an unexpected maturity and richness.

In Ukraine the cultural development was reversed. Medieval Kiev was a lively cultural center with noteworthy architecture, mural paintings and literature. According to the testimonies of foreign visitors the capital of Ukraine was, before its double destruction, a metropolis worthy of comparison with Byzantium (or Constantinople, or Tsargrad, for the Slavs, which means "The Imperial City"). This whole splendor disappeared almost without a trace during the long period of great national disasters. After the invasion of the Tatars Kiev was left in ruins, and the same happened to the country's other flourishing cities. With the exception of that in the before-mentioned Occidental Principalities (Halych, Volodymyr, Terebovlia, Peremyshl, Kholm) the whole cultural life was doomed, finding refuge only in the few convents that were left standing. Political circumstances determined the evident sluggishness to recoup what was lost. The Renaissance came late to Ukraine and could not mature, since a new wave of historical calamities shook the land, paralyzing its cultural development in the middle of the seventeenth century. Historians call it "The Great Ruin".

As Ukraine was first included in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and, later, by the Union of Lublin, in the Polish-Lithuanian State, Polish cultural influence was inevitable. But these influences soon became mutual. The religious Union of Brest of 1596, drawn up along the general lines of the unfortunate Florentine Union of the fifteenth century, was of great importance and had significant consequences, positive as well as negative. With it, some members of the Orthodox Church's hierarchy recognized the jurisdiction of Papal Rome, keeping, however, certain differences in their rites which had become traditional. The Union of Brest was rejected by the main body of the Orthodox clergy and the believers, but it contributed to the development of letters in that it provoked a great controversy which was to be fruitful in terms of both religion and politics. Thus the process of cultural influence, particularly marked in the upper levels of society, was to be accompanied by struggle to defend the respective national identities. This struggle was more violent in the religious sector: the representatives of the Orthodox Church offered a staunch resistance to Catholicism which, logically, was a strong factor in the Polonization. Ukrainian families who converted to Catholicism normally became "Poles" in the second generation. Thus, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Ukrainian nobility suffered

from the denaturalization of the majority of its members to the profit of the Poles. A century later some descendents of those families did return to their original national status. Generally speaking, though, these processes were very complicated and impossible of separation to the occidental psychology and mentality.

Political or purely national conflicts seldom bring about positive results; yet cultural conflicts are generally enriching. In Polish-Ukrainian relations equivocal situations are abundant, while losses and gains have been shared equally by both parties. An outstanding Ukrainian writer of the first half of the twentieth century, Bohdan Lepky, characterized the situation concisely: "Ukraine gave Poland her men, and received in exchange, ideas". This statement is worth comment. Polish culture was for a long time the unique intermediary by which the Ukrainians could find ready access to the ideas and accomplishments of the Occident. Thus, Renaissance humanism and Baroque art, for example, came to Ukraine through Poland. Some Ukrainian writers of that time wrote not only in their own native language but also in Polish and Latin, a feat both curious and significant.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the so-called Mohyla Academy was founded in Kiev, and Ukrainian letters achieved their own particular character, although their artistic values at this point still left much to be desired. Didactic forms dominate, with some panegyric and elegiac poetry such as the "Lament for the House of the Dukes of Ostrog". This cultural poetry was of a consciously elevated style having no links with the popular creations, which were rich with a great variety of forms, rhythms, and inspiration. In general, the manner of the popular poetry is very peculiar: epic in form yet full of deep lyricism. The main subject matter involves the heroic feats of arms of the Cossacks of Zaporozhe, which was a free republic situated in the lower course of the Dnieper River in the "Savage Lands" where no one ruled effectively. This popular poetry was to have a later influence (in the nineteenth century) upon Ukrainian and Polish poets, alike especially the Romantics.

Ukraine, its nature, people and folklore, appear in Polish literature very early in that seventeenth century which was so promising in its cultural aspects but achieved so very little because of wars and other catastrophes; but it is more important in the nineteenth century, when a "Ukrainian School" developed within the context of Polish Romanticism. This is, without any doubt, an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of world literature. Several poets and prose writers (among them Antoni Malczewski, Seweryn Goszczyński, Michał Grabowski, Michał Czajkowski and the great genius Juliusz Słowacki) not only considered Ukraine their homeland and the land of their fathers — therefore, the land

of their choice — but, when reference was made to the bloody conflicts between the two nations in the centuries past, always gave their sympathies to the Ukrainians. In search of a nonexistent analogy, we could say that it would be as if Byron, Shelley or Keats were to have fallen in love with Ireland and sided against his own England. This phenomenon is unique not only in Europe, but in the whole world. The “Ukrainian School” left an indelible mark in Polish literature, although it did not produce any immediate successors of note: they came later, in the middle of the twentieth century, in a radically different political situation which was bound to have a strong influence on writers’ attitudes. Today, as both nations are deprived of their political liberties and of the possibilities of a free cultural development, we have arrived at a paradoxical situation. Cultural relations between the two neighbor nations are practically nonexistent, and when they do come about at all it is under the tight control of the Communist authorities, who are not in favor of any real dialogue between the two nations. However, such relations do exist — and this is the paradox — in the nations of the Occident, among the political refugees from Ukraine and Poland.

If the “Ukrainian School” of the nineteenth century prevented the Poles from forgetting the problems involving Ukraine, Ukrainian writers of the same period also dealt with Polish problems and with their mutual relations. In the works of the great national poet Taras Shevchenko references to this subject abound, and he often stresses the close relation between the historic destinies of both nations. “When Poland fell,” he wrote in one of his most popular poems, “Ukraine was smashed.” By recouping what was lost and by overcoming common misfortunes one can abandon old animosities and cooperate within a framework of mutual understanding. Another great writer, a contemporary of Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish, expresses a similar interpretation of the past and an identical vision of the future. Thus, the themes of the Polish Romantic writers of the “Ukrainian School” find completion in the works of the most outstanding Ukrainian writers. In the intellectual and literary spheres, the historical sins of both nations have been overcome. It is unfortunate that such has not been the case in the political area, but that is another matter which will not be dealt with here.

The mutual literary influences between Poland and Ukraine are seldom manifested directly; almost always they consist of allusions to various historic and cultural contacts.

As mentioned before, during the nineteenth century, in the context of the national renaissance of the Ukrainian people (which had been almost bereft of its cultural classes), a process of re-nationalization took place in “Greater” Ukraine, which was part of the Russian Empire after

the second partition of Poland in 1793, just as happened in Galicia (Red Rus') which had been part of the Hapsburg Empire. Some Poles of Ukrainian descent, members of families which had become Polonized, remembered their backgrounds and, following their conscience, again became Ukrainians — but without severing their ties to Polish culture. Frequently this phenomenon affected only one member of a family while the remainder still considered themselves Poles. The most important case occurred within the renowned aristocratic family of the Counts Sheptytsky, which had become completely polonized in the eighteenth century and, of course, had embraced the Catholic faith. But one scion of the Sheptytysks, after a return to Ukrainianism, became a Basilian priest and archbishop of Lviv — that is, head of the Ukrainian Church (the Catholics of the Oriental rite) — thus becoming spiritual leader and spokesman of the Occidental part of the Ukrainian nation. His younger brother, Stanisław, continued to be a Pole. This was not an isolated case, though it is undoubtedly the most important and significant of many.

Of no lesser interest is another case which came to have a great influence in the development of modern Ukrainian poetry. At the end of the last century a landowner of Kiev, Tadeusz Rylski (Rylsky), also descended from a long-Polonized Ukrainian family, decided to return to the nationality of his ancestors. Once the decision was made, he acted accordingly: he changed to the Orthodox religion and married a Ukrainian countrygirl. Of this marriage was born Maksym Rylsky, one of the greatest Ukrainian poets of all time. Even though he wrote in Ukrainian he was raised in a cultural climate that was both Polish and Ukrainian, which in him became perfectly and organically fused. It was, then, no coincidence that Rylsky became the perfect translator of the epic works of the greatest Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, because his ancestry had perfectly prepared him for the task. And it was also no coincidence that it was Rylsky, with four other poets, who formed a group called "The Neoclassicists of Kiev". Though they were inspired by the poetic ideas of the French Parnassians, the Kievans soon developed along lines very different from the French. In the environment of the special circumstances that the Ukrainian nation was living through, the "Neoclassic" posture and attitude of these poets and their artistic practice became a powerful political and ideological weapon. This may seem paradoxical, but it is not so. The motto of these poets (Rylsky, Zerov, Klen, Drai-Khmara and Fylypovych) was *ad fontes*, towards the roots, which they construed to mean the Mediterranean culture, born in Greece and Rome. But, we may ask, what does this have to do with ideology, and above all, with politics? Just this: Moscow took the motto *ad fontes* to be a direct challenge. The "Neoclassicists of Kiev" had turned their backs on Marxism in their poetry

and their artistic theories, as well as on the "socialist realism" which had been compulsory since 1934. Reprisals were taken. Two of the poets were shot, another died in a concentration camp. Klen was saved by escaping from the Soviet Union to the free world. Maksym Rylsky, after a long period in jail, has given in to the Communist authorities' demands, saving his life but dying as a poet. Everything he has written since 1931 (the date of his detention by the G.P.U.) has no artistic value.

Ukrainian literature between the two world wars can be divided into three different, yet not isolated segments. Thus we must distinguish the literature of the Soviet Ukraine from that of the Ukrainian centers of Poland such as Lwów (Lviv) Warsaw and Kraków and both of these from the literature produced in exile, primarily in Prague, Berlin and Paris. For reasons already explained, since the bolshevik domination, only those writers outside the frontiers of their country have been able to express themselves with true liberty, without the pressure of Soviet censorship. The flourishing of all literary forms during the brief period that preceded this exile (1917-1934) will remain in history under the tragic heading of "The Liquidated (rozstriliane) Renaissance."

Literary relations between Poland and Ukraine were then very inadequate. Translations were scarce and the state of mutual knowledge left much to be desired. On the Polish side only one weekly, the "Polish-Ukrainian Bulletin" dedicated much attention at all to Ukraine and its culture. As the years went by, however, the situation improved. Mutual interest in each other grew, as did the number of translations in the respective languages. Unfortunately, the work of writers and intellectuals was hampered by the nonsensical politics of the Polish government, to which the clandestine organizations of the Ukrainian nationalists answered with acts of terror. In this climate of hostility honest initiatives for a better understanding and compromise had to meet with frustration.

During the year 1939 literary circles wanted to organize a Polish-Ukrainian Congress in celebration of the one hundred and thirtieth anniversary of the birth of the great poet Juliusz Słowacki, whose works refer often to Ukraine, its steppe landscapes, its people, and to its glorious and tragic past. Taking into account the atmosphere of the times, full of resentments and hate, the Ukrainian writers immediately declined any possible invitation to take part in this Congress, to no one's surprise. Thus, unfortunately, came to an end another possibility of rediscovering a *modus vivendi*.

In spite of everything, and even in the worse moments of Polish-Ukrainian relations, positive personal contacts and friendly relations between intellectuals of both countries have always taken place. One must remember that there is in that respect an old and noble tradition.

When Taras Shevchenko, the most important representative of the national rebirth in the first half of the nineteenth Century, was deported by the Tsarist regime to the inhospitable confines of Central Asia, he found some Poles to share his misfortune, with whom he eventually became friends. Something similar happened half a century later with another great Ukrainian writer, Ivan Franko, and again in the twentieth century with several Ukrainian poets residing in Poland, especially in Warsaw and Krakow, such as Evhen Malaniuk, Bohdan Lepky and others.

But it is clear that personal relations, as friendly and close as they may have been, have not been able to improve the general climate of relations, which always has been very strained. The territories under dispute, instead of becoming a bridge for cultural exchange have been a cause of unending conflict as the mutual claims incited further struggle. Thus one cannot distinguish a geographical situation from the historic destiny of neighbour nations: they are inseparable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Transliteration of Place Names and Proper Names

Acknowledgements

<i>I Historical Legacy</i>	1
IVAN L. RUDNYTSKY	
Polish-Ukrainian Relations: The Burden of History	3
ANDRZEJ KAMIŃSKI	
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Its Citizens: Was the Commonwealth a Stepmother for Cossacks and Ruthenians?	32
FRANK E. SYSYN	
Ukrainian-Polish Relations in the Seventeenth Century: The Role of National Consciousness and National Conflict in the Khmelnytsky Movement	58
OREST SUBTELNY	
Mazepists and Stanisławists: The First Ukrainian Emigres	83
<i>II Cultural Relations</i>	97
JÓZEF ŻOBODOWSKI	
A Polish View of Polish-Ukrainian Influences	99
GEORGE G. GRABOWICZ	
The History of Polish-Ukrainian Literary Relations: A Literary and Cultural Perspective	107
VASYL MARKUS	
The Religious Situation of the Ukrainians in Poland and of the Poles in Ukraine	132
<i>III Economic Ties and Communications</i>	147
VOLODYMYR N. BANDERA	
The Structure of Economic Interaction Among Neighbouring Nations in East Europe	149
GEORGES MOND	
Some Remarks on Polish-Ukrainian Relations as Seen Through Polish Eyes	170
BORYS LEWYTSKYJ	
Political and Cultural Cooperation Between the People's Republic of Poland and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic	195
ROMAN SZPORLUK	
The Role of the Press in Polish-Ukrainian Relations	212