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## Integral Ukrainian nationalism in the comparative context

The viewing of socio-political phenomena through the prism of national paradigm is still visible in Europe, despite the citizenship paradigm still remaining strong in some countries, especially among the liberally minded members of metropolitan elites. The reason for this seems to lie in the formation of nations in the modern sense of this term and the resulting nationalisms that proliferated mainly at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The sense of common history, culture, language, or religion frequently appeared to unite people far more strongly than purely economic ties. These processes were connected with the emancipation of working masses, mainly townsmen and peasants. In the Western Europe, the processes in question marked their presence considerably earlier than in the Mid-Eastern part of this continent, including the territory of Poland. Neighbouring nations displayed varied cultural inspirations, e.g., Christian, neo-pagan or plainly secular. These inspirations not infrequently stimulated nationalisms that, extremely different in the axiological sense, had diverse socio-political aftermath (Grott, 2006; Szacki, 1997; Walicki, 1997). Sometimes, as in the case of nationalism propagated in Poland by the National Democracy (ND), the main objective was limited to shaping and strengthening the consciousness of common folk or wide social masses that were supposed to see themselves as the makers of history – initially by becoming a legitimate part of the nation, earlier associated exclusively with nobility, and later even as perpetrators of crimes against the humanity on a gigantic scale, as was the case with German nationalism in the Nazi version.

Victor Polishchuk (1925-2008), who died over a decade ago, was a Canadian journalist, lawyer and political scientist, born of the Ukrainian father and Polish mother. A large part of his mature life was devoted to political science investigations that resulted in a number of academic titles and degrees to his credit: a doctorate awarded by the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Wrocław in 1994, and then the post-doctoral degree awarded by the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Silesian University in 2002. Polishchuk's primary academic concern was the ideology of Ukrainian national-

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ism – largely because of his individual experiences and family history, to mention only the death of his aunt, murdered by Ukrainian nationalists (Grott, 2020: 7-9). It is, in fact, to the integral Ukrainian nationalism that his academic work titled *The Ideology of Ukrainian Nationalism*, published in 2020 is devoted. The book of 282 pages, neatly and meticulously printed, is in fact the reissue of the Ph.D. thesis of the Ukrainian academic, coming more than 25 years after its original publication.

Polishchuk's book has been preceded by the worthwhile *Introduction* by Professor Bogumił Grott, a historian of ideas and explorer of the issue of nationalisms. In this text, we find not only the valuable information concerning the details of the author's life, but also the discussion on Jerzy Giedroyc's selected assumptions concerning Polish policy towards Ukraine, as well as the detailed mention of differences between Polish and Ukrainian nationalism in the context of other European ones. This is how Professor Grott concludes the latter issue: "Ukrainian nationalism of the interwar period [1918-1939] did not follow the path of the Polish one, propagated mainly by Roman Dmowski's party, the ND. The theoretical foundation of the Ukrainian nationalism was extreme social Darwinism, bordering on racism, which before World War II promoted terror and, after its outbreak, plain genocide" (Walicki, 1997: 38). Although in the early version of the Polish nationalism, as promoted by the ND in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were some Darwinist elements – probably because of the party leaders and ideologists, such as Roman Dmowski or Zygmunt Balicki, being brought up in the spirit of positivism and secular values associated with this movement – it was, in fact, before the outbreak of World War I that the process of uniting the nationalism of Dmowski's party with the Polish version of Roman Catholicism was effectively initiated. The end of this process was marked by the publication of Dmowski's booklet *Kościół, naród i państwo* [The Church the Nation and the State], where we read: "Roman Catholicism is not a superfluous addition to being Polish, a kind of its ornamental colouring. but an integral part of its very essence" (Dmowski, 1927: 13). In the 1930s, practically all important Polish nationalist parties – first and foremost Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Party), including also relatively small splinter groups of national radicals, tentatively united under the banner of Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny ABC or Ruch Narodowo-Radykalny-Falanga – saw Roman Catholicism as the main point of reference for their ideas and political concepts (Grott, 1999).

*The Ideology of Ukrainian Nationalism* consists of *Foreword*, *Closing Remarks* as well as eight chapters of varying length. In the first chapter, the author presents Ukrainian nationalism as a political movement and ideological statement. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the biography of Dmytro Dontsov: the virtual father of Ukrainian nationalism. Two further chapters, devoted to the discussion of Dontsov's idea of the nation, highlight, for example, such important issues as the principle of leadership or the hierarchy of the nation in Dontsov's understanding. Chapters 5 and 6 point at the sources and inspirations of Ukrainian nationalism, as well as discuss its most important fea-

tures at greater length. In the next chapter, we find the discussion of Dontsov's attitude towards Ukrainian progressive thought. Ultimately, in the final chapter, the author attempts at the comparative analysis of Ukrainian nationalism against fascism, Nazism and Bolshevism.

Polishchuk emphasizes that a highly original element of Dontsov's nationalism was stressing the importance of the will as a power pushing the nation towards political activism: "The will, according to Dontsov, is by no means connected with reasoning; it needs neither justification, nor any logical motivation. On the contrary, Dontsov calls the will 'unmotivated', i e., free from any underlying motives" (Polishchuk, 2020: 144). He differentiates, however, between "the will of the nation" and "the will for power", characteristic of those members of the nation, who belong to the "minority with initiative" that emerges in the course of natural selection that singles out "better people" (Polishchuk, 2020: 141). The aforementioned features of Ukrainian nationalism unequivocally point at its connections with social Darwinism and racism. The "minority with initiative", according to Dontsov, should display no qualms, while it definitely ought to have determination in anything they do, as well as intolerance and ruthlessness towards those who violate the general order (Polishchuk, 2020: 110). Polishchuk claims that even though Dontsov did not coin the term of minority with initiative, this concept still remains one of the fundamental features of integral Ukrainian nationalism. In his book, we read: "The role of the 'minority with initiative' ['aristocracy', 'elite', 'class of better people'] was concisely defined by Dontsov in the following way: <Creative violence as WHAT, minority with initiative as WHO – these are the foundations of almost every social process, defining the way for the idea to win>" (Polishchuk, 2020: 109).

The author of *The Ideology of Ukrainian Nationalism* clearly points at the major role of violence, which, in Dontsov's doctrine, is seen as the successor of power. Approaching sarcastically the universal human values, including democracy, the Ukrainian ideologist claimed that "no rules can prevent the weaker submitting to the violence of the stronger" (Polishchuk, 2020: 151). With this manner of reasoning, he approached the war, along with any of its atrocities towards civilians, as the method helping the nations follow the path of progress. The consequence of this reasoning was the expansion, seen by Dontsov as one of the major propelling forces of the nation. Arguing for the necessity of the expansion, he referred to the philosophers of the rank of Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer or Herbert Spencer (Polishchuk, 2020: 155-158). Curiously enough, while referring to racist views he displayed the fascination not only with fascism, but also with Bolshevism. Contradictory as it may seem, one should observe, however, that both these doctrines, underlying totalitarian systems, in theory as well as in practice were characterized by fanaticism and ruthlessness (Polishchuk, 2020: 167): the features seen by Dontsov as indispensable for the proper development of the nation.

It is just essential to observe that, as Polishchuk stresses in his analysis, all the thoughts of the main ideologist of Ukrainian nationalism were expressed both in political resolu-

tions of Ukrainian nationalist organizations (such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists; OUN) and in their activities, such as the extermination of Poles in Volhynia and eastern Galicia during World War II or murdering by the OUN-UPA those Ukrainians, who were against integral Ukrainian nationalism. What is important, the author of *The Ideology of Ukrainian Nationalism* stresses that also after the political changes in the breakthrough year of 1989 some, Ukrainian nationalist organizations referred to Dontsov's ideas (Polishchuk, 2020: 258). This means that Polishchuk's analyses are valid also today, considering the current relations of Ukrainians with neighbouring nations.

Despite ethnic affinities, as well as both nations living in the same state for centuries, it is virtually impossible to compare integral Ukrainian nationalism in Dontsov's version with the Polish one, especially in its best-known variety, associated with the ideology of the ND. Within this party, there existed, from the very beginning, two varieties. One of them should be termed as the popular trend of early ND nationalism, which refers to the views of the ND activists and press spokesmen from the period before the outbreak of World War I – the views that, far from the ND ideological mainstream, as represented by Dmowski, Balicki, Jan Ludwik Popławski and their associates, dominated, nevertheless, in the party's powerbase, mainly in the Polish province. They found expression in booklets, occasional prints and the local ND papers, usually ephemeral, published in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the regions of Kujavia, Podlasie, Mazovia or Galicia. The characteristic feature of the views promoted therein was the openly critical perspective upon positivism as an ideological movement, empiricism, or social Darwinism – along with no visible tendencies to approach the idea of nation in absolute terms. The representatives of this popular trend of the ND nationalism were also against the instrumental treatment of the Roman Catholic Church and its teaching. Referring to the Christian ethic, which, in their view, should be the foundation of politics in the practical and theoretical dimension, they returned in the first place to the legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish romanticism and Messianism, with special stress upon Messianic as well as passion elements. The latter issue obviously entailed the promoting of patriotism in the martyrological version. In opposition to this particular trend, the representatives of the middle-class variety of early-ND nationalism, such as Dmowski, Balicki, Popławski and their collaborators, were critical towards Polish romanticism and Messianism, referring mainly to the legacy of positivism, empiricism and social Darwinism. Approaching the idea of nation in absolute terms, they treated the Roman Catholic Church as one of national institutions, putting Christian ethic on the same level as the national one. They were also sharply critical about Polish patriotism in the martyrological version. However, even this form of Polish nationalism – based upon secular values, originally inconsistent with the Christian axiology, as well as with teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and openly anti-Semitic – was largely distant from Ukrainian nationalism. Neither did it gain any following in the wider social context; as a result, the ND leaders already in the World War I era started the process of “combining the ND nationalism

and Roman Catholicism into the ideological whole". In practice, it meant just the implementation of Roman Catholic principles to the ND doctrine (Dwojnych, 2017: 43).

Many more parallels with Ukrainian nationalism may be observed in the history of the western neighbour of Poland, i.e. Germany, where nationalism assumed the most vulgar form of Nazism and where nationalist ideologists eagerly referred to the spiritual/religious realm in the sense of Germanized Christianity or neo-paganism. These issues have been convincingly elucidated at least in the book *Przedhitlerowskie korzenie nazizmu, czyli dusza niemiecka w świetle filozofii i religioznawstwa* [Pre-Hitler Roots of Nazism or German Soul in the Light of Philosophical and Religious Studies], the core of this publication being the treatises by Bogdan Suchodolski, *Dusza niemiecka w świetle filozofii* [German Soul in the Light of Philosophy], and Leon Halban, *Mistyczne podstawy narodowego socjalizmu* [Mystical Foundations of Nazism], as well as *Religia starogermańska i jej aktualne znaczenie w Niemczech* [Ancient German Religion and Its Current Significance in Germany] preceded with Bogumił and Olgierd Grott's extensive commentary (Grott, Grott, 2018: 29).

Suchodolski, an educationalist and philosopher, who immediately after the end of World War II paid attention to the cultural roots of Nazism, stressing, among other issues, the relativization of German morality with reference to the German nation, resulting from the noble philosophical traditions of this country: "Neglecting the precise statement of the content of moral actions, one enters the wilderness of collectivism; it is only then that the consent of many, if not all, becomes the ultimate moral resort" (Grott, Grott, 2018: 61). The Pope Pius XI also did not fail to notice the change of language functioning in the Nazi propaganda in his encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (Pius XI, 1937). The same problem was tackled by Ernst Cassirer in *The Myth of the State*. He observed that the same words, whose meaning was obvious and undoubtedly clear for ages, acquired new meanings in the totalitarian state of the Nazis: used anew, they were intentionally imbued with feelings and violent passions. The words, once used purely in semantic, descriptive function, suddenly started functioning as magic charms, "aimed at producing definite results and provoking definite emotions". As is known, magic words do not describe the things or relations between them – aiming to cause concrete, coldly calculated results (Cassirer, 2006: 313-314).

Halban, for his part, concentrated mainly on German tendencies towards creating a national religion. To some extent, this process consisted in the peculiar interpretation of Christianity. The Nazi theorists, as well as their precursors, claimed for breaking away from Christian universalism, as well as stressed the need of creating the Germans' own religion. Even though they did not see the necessity of breaking away from the Christian tradition, they interpreted the figure of Christ and Christian ethic in their own idiosyncratic manner. Rather than the Roman Catholic, they preferred the Protestant mode of thinking, based largely upon the idea of predestination. Paul de Lagarde believed, for example, in the Germanic nations being predestined to rule any other ones; going against

predestination meant standing up against God or divine Providence. Given this, even if the figure of Christ was ultimately accepted, it was to be deprived of all intrinsic qualities: Christ was meant to be a charismatic powerful leader rather than the Lamb of God, suffering without any complaints, always ready to sacrifice his life and blood for other people. Similar operations were called by Halban “the Germanization of Christianity” (Grott, Grott, 2018: 100-110).

Usually, though, according to the author of *Mystical Foundations of Nazism*, Nazi thinkers stressed hatred towards Christ and Christian ethic, postulating the return to ancient Germanic beliefs. Simultaneously, German mysticism and mythology, impenetrable to any foreign influences, was cultivated. The particularly strong cult of war and state, which even such eminent philosophers as Kant, Schelling, Fichte, or Hegel seemed to support, provided, according to Halban, for the consistent and durable foundations for the development of the totalitarian state (Grott, Grott, 2018: 81-82).

Stanisław Pigoń, an eminent Polish expert on romanticism, similarly stresses that the basic characteristic of German romantic movement in the context of the Polish one was the reluctance towards the cult of offering and totally different interpretation of Christianity: “Even though German romantics initially intended to create a new religion, they ultimately returned to Christianity. However, the reasons behind that were not intrinsic: searching for the sources of moods or profound symbols envisioning the infinite or the unconscious [*des Unbewussten*] rather than the pursuit of truth. The reasons of artistic nature, not the real-life ones” (Pigoń, 1922). The issue of anti-Christian, as well as anti-liberal ethos, becoming more and more crystallized in Germany in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also analyzed, in a similar manner to the aforementioned Polish scholars, by Friedrich Wilhelm Haack (Haack, 1999), George L. Mosse (Mosse, 1972), or Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (Goodrick-Clarke, 2001). Integral Ukrainian nationalism in Dontsov’s version, despite its predominantly secular sources, was in fact as anti-Christian as German Nazism.

As for Polishchuk’s analyses, some controversial or even weak points may be identified. The categorical statement that the phenomenon of Ukrainian nationalism comes down exclusively to the aforementioned Dontsov’s version (Polishchuk, 2020: 71) is hardly convincing, especially in the light of recent studies. It is enough to recall, at least, that Polish nationalism of the interwar period (1918-1939) had a number of varieties, associated with such parties as the ND, the National-Radical Movement, Piłsudski’s Camp of National Unity, or the Neopagan, as represented by Jan Stachniuk, even though it would seem that there was only one major party, i.e. the ND. Thus, from the academic perspective, it is far more plausible to maintain that Dontsov’s version largely dominated Ukrainian political thought based upon the paradigm of the nation and thus, exerted

the overwhelming influence upon the activities of Ukrainian nationalists from the 1930s until the present. There obviously existed, nevertheless, smaller, ideologically/axiologically different groups in the Ukrainian political landscape. They referred to the teaching of the Greek Catholic Church, or even derived from it, as well as tried to unite the nationalist idea with democratic values (Strutyński, 2019). Disregarding of the above facts entails further imprecise statements, such as “the common feature of fascism [Nazism] and Ukrainian nationalism was racism” (Polishchuk, 2020: 238). The statement in question is obviously true, but only with reference to Dontsov’s version of Ukrainian nationalism and its various off-shoots; besides, one ought to be aware that not every variety of fascism was inclined towards racism. The aforementioned flaws do not diminish, however, the general merit of Polishchuk’s book. Its main message, stressing the fundamental principles of integral Ukrainian nationalism, based upon social Darwinism and negating both Christian values, as preached at least by the Greek Catholic Church, and the universal ideas of humanism, referring to secular values, shall remain a timeless, worthwhile contribution to the academic literature concerning our topic.

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**Abstract:** This article presents main analytic problems that Victor Polishchuk tackles in his book *Ideologia nacjonalizmu ukraińskiego* [The Ideology of Ukrainian Nationalism]. Key features of integral Ukrainian nationalism in Dontsov's version have been presented here on the background of the nationalisms of two neighbouring countries, Germany and Poland, in order to identify the similarities and differences between them in the realm of axiological systems.

**Keywords:** nationalism, Dontsov, ethics, ideology

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