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Ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe: Poles and Ukrainians beside the Curzon Line

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ABSTRACT. The article draws on anthropological fieldwork in southeast Poland to illuminate both the historical development of national identities and the contemporary revival of ethnic tensions. For many centuries Eastern Galicia, and within it the town and district of Przemyśl, exemplified what Ernst Gellner refers to as the diversity of the ‘Agrarian Age’. A drive towards homogenisation (associated with Gellner with modern industrial society) began here in the later Habsburg period, and reached its culmination after the imposition of a new and much sharper national boundary in 1945. The socialist period opened with a further burst of ethnic cleansing. Memories of this and of earlier confrontations this century are central to the antagonisms that have emerged in the new public sphere since 1989. It is important to move beyond Gellnerian abstractions and to examine both the social mechanisms and the symbols whereby ethnic and national sentiments are mobilised for political ends. In these case materials, as elsewhere in the region, symbols related to religion and to violence seem to be the most powerful, while the main agents of ethnic antagonism are ex-communists.

The term ethnic cleansing has become a commonplace in descriptions of post-communist Eastern Europe, notably the former Yugoslavia. It is also used increasingly in other parts of the world and in the academic literature (Ahmed 1995). It has entered into everyday usage in quite a few Eastern European countries. New phraseology aside, there has been some interesting

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discussion as to how far recent ethnic conflicts can be seen as the resurfacing of age-old conflicts, submerged under socialism, and how far they are the novel products of recent history. While Verdery (1993) is certainly correct to reject accounts that would dismiss the influence of the socialist period and uphold a simplistic ‘deep freeze’ model, it remains the case that in many parts of Eastern Europe the pre-socialist antecedents are extremely important for understanding recent ethnic tensions. In many places there are precedents within living memory of violent interventions which bear a strong resemblance to the ‘ethnic cleansing’ campaigns of the 1990s. This article explores a case which has not received widespread publicity to date. Although conflicts have not been viewed in the light of the scale of the former Yugoslavia, serious tensions between Poles and Ukrainians have persisted in at least some parts of Poland. Norman Davies’s characterisation of the socialist period as a ‘period of respite’ (1981: 525) seems prescient in the light of some recent developments. This article does not pretend to offer either a definitive historical account or a full sociological analysis of the present conflicts. Rather, using as a foil a general model of modernity and the nation-state derived from Ernest Gellner (1983; 1988) and focusing on a case in which the Poles have long had the upper hand, I shall present some of the historical background for one highly sensitive area and offer brief illustrations of current tensions. These tensions are a direct consequence of the ethnic cleansing that was carried out here in several phases in the 1940s. The details are specific, but at least some of the lessons may be relevant to other parts of Eastern Europe, past and present.

**Demarcating nations and states**

It is a commonplace to note that one of the most prominent ‘fault lines’ in European culture over the past thousand years is the division between Eastern and Western Christianity. On the plains of Northern Europe this religious division has coincided to a very significant degree with the linguistic division (by no means everywhere clear-cut, even in recent generations) between Eastern and Western Slavs. The principal political unit on the Eastern side has been Russia, but this polity was once known as Rúss and it had its capital in Kiev before its later consolidation in Moscow. On the Western side the principal political unit has been Poland, but here too the boundaries of the state and the composition of its people have been subject to changes, sometimes very radical. In between the centres of these polities, extensive territories that correspond very roughly to today’s Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania were not clearly and exclusively identified with either East or West. This situation fits well with Gellner’s model of traditional agrarian society, according to which there is no reason to expect any congruence between the boundaries of political units (states) and the boundaries of ethnic or national groups. This age is characterised by fuzzy cultural and linguistic boundaries and by great diversity within the polity. This diversity was well illustrated in the composition of the medieval Polish state, particularly after the territorial expansion of Kazimierz the Great in the fourteenth century and the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which brought the entire zone from the Baltic to the Black Sea nominally under the control of a single polity. Cultural diversity persisted after the dismemberment of the Polish state in the late eighteenth century. Norman Davies comments as follows on the situation which evolved in Eastern Galicia:

In the cities, including Lwów, the Poles enjoyed both numerical superiority and a favourable social and economic position. In the smaller towns, the Jews were preponderant. In the countryside, exclusively Polish, Catholic villages frequently existed side by side with exclusively Ruthenian, Uniate or Orthodox villages. In this situation, no simple line on a map could possibly have traced a meaningful divide between a Polish zone and a Ukrainian one. (1981: 508)

In this profoundly hierarchical polity, language and culture were closely connected to social position. Only members of the nobility considered themselves to be members of the Polish nation. It was easier for the landlords and other elites of Eastern cultural background to assimilate into this nation than it was for ‘ethnically Polish’ serfs (hence the possibility of dual classification, summed up in the phrase *natio Polonicae, gens Rutheniae*). E. H. Carr (1945: 3) notes the similarity between the situation of the Polish gentry and that of the Croatian landowner who would sooner have welcomed his horse into the Croat nation than his peasants.

With power relations in the early modern era generally favouring the West, significant changes were engineered in the cultural boundary that was most clear-cut throughout these border regions, the religious boundary. Encouraged by Rome as it embarked upon the Counter-reformation, Polish rulers became increasingly concerned to apply the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*: in other words, to convert their subjects in the east to Catholicism. The Union of Brest (1596) brought a large new church into existence, and the Uniates or Greek Catholics have been a source of constant controversy almost ever since. This union brought millions of Orthodox Eastern Slavs into communion with Rome, whilst allowing them to carry on practise their traditional rituals. Its supporters have hailed it as a solution to centuries of Christian schism, and also as a pragmatic compromise that was a far better outcome than the only likely alternative, which would have been the wholesale conversion of Eastern Slavs to the Latin version of Catholicism. Its critics, notably in the Orthodox churches during the communist period, have presented the Union as an example of the imperialism of the West, forcibly imposed upon recalcitrant Easterners by Polish rulers, in collaboration with Vatican diplomats and a small number of self-seeking Orthodox bishops. In practice the Union of Brest accentuated cultural diversity, while opening the door to a very long-term
process of Latinisation. The Greek Catholic church was a hybrid, poised between East and West, but constrained by unequal power relations to shift steadily in the direction of Western liturgical norms and ecclesiastical practices. The picture 'on the ground' became even more confusing as new permutations emerged. Although the great majority of those who later came to identify themselves as ethnic Poles were Roman Catholic, to significant pockets of Orthodox were now added some Greek Catholic speakers of West Slav dialects. Similarly, although the great majority of those who have come in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Ukrainian were either Orthodox or Greek Catholic, there also existed pockets of Roman Catholics, the so called Laciyny.

In Gellner's model, nationalism, defined as the principle that the political unit and the cultural unit should be fully congruent (1983: 1), is associated primarily with the material and communicational requirements of the age of industrialism. The nationalists distinguish the cultural diversity of the agrarian age by creating clearly bounded political units monopolised by the 'high culture' of a single 'nation'. Processes of standardisation and homogenisation are promoted through a national language and state-controlled educational institutions. The hierarchical divisions of labour characteristic of pre-industrial society, in which distinct cultural groups frequently occupy special niches in the economy, are swept aside and replaced by an egalitarian society that is more mobile as well as more literate and 'generalist'.

Despite the Central European roots of this author, it is difficult to operationalise this model in the region with which we are concerned. The Polish and Ukrainian national movements cannot be directly explained in terms of material and industrial transformation. Many Polish nationalists were profoundly influenced by Western ideas of the nation, particularly those asserted in revolutionary France. Nor can the motivation of the Greek Catholic priests who were among the principal disseminators of Ukrainian nationalism be reduced, as Gellner would seem to imply, to calculations about their career prospects in a Habsburg empire in which industrial progress was very unevenly diffused. The fuzzy borderlands between Eastern and Western Slavs had to accommodate themselves to the age of nationalism before industrialisation had had significant impact. Like other historians of nationalism, Gellner associates these parts of Europe primarily with the 'new' nations of the nineteenth century. Although the Polish national movement of this period may fit this image in some ways (e.g. it is in this period that a distinction begins to be drawn between the notion of nationality and the notion of citizenship), in other ways the Polish case falls closer to Western European countries. The nineteenth-century nationalists were able to draw on a long history of statehood and 'high culture' associated with Poland. The Ukrainian case, on the other hand, does correspond more closely to the features of Gellner's 'Ruritania.' Here the new high culture had to be created on weaker foundations and the element of intellectual 'invention' necessarily played a greater role.

In short, Gellner's abstract model has relatively little to say about the agents, mechanisms and time-scales of the changes with which he is concerned. It does not help us to understand the strength of feeling and commitment that nationalism proved itself to be capable of generating in regions such as Eastern Galicia. I want now to turn to examine these processes more closely in the city and hinterland of Przemyśl (Peremysl in Ukrainian), a crucible of cultural diversity for more than a thousand years, which in very recent times has experienced the full force of homogenisation pressures within the Polish state. The city lies beside the River San, mostly on the eastern bank, and has a population of around 70,000 today. Archaeological evidence testifies to settlement from the first millennium AD, but very little is known about this period. In later centuries Przemyśl seems to have exemplified the patterns of the Agrarian Age as identified by Gellner. The ethnic composition of the town was quite different from that of its rural hinterland. Roman Catholics and Jews were the most prominent groups in the city, while Eastern Slavs practising both Orthodox and Greek Catholic versions of Christianity were disproportionately stronger in the countryside. The city became a diocesan centre for both Eastern and Western churches (the former perhaps as early as the ninth century, the latter from the middle of the fourteenth century). There was very substantial opposition to the Union of Brest in this diocese. Massive external intervention was necessary, including the application of violence, before it was definitively ratified in 1692 (Benda 1982). Since this time the overwhelming majority of Eastern Slavs in the city have been Greek Catholics (though the persistence and sometimes orchestrated revival of Orthodoxy has in adjacent areas remained a divisive factor among Eastern Slavs).

After Poland's partition, the eastern borders with which we are concerned were divided between Russia and Austria. Eastern Galicia constituted the easternmost territories of the Habsburg Empire, and Przemyśl became an important administrative and military centre for the Austrian authorities. It was perhaps the most important city in Galicia after the two provincial capitals of Cracow and Lemberg (L'viv). The Austrian presence had a major impact on all aspects of life, including religion. Soon after partition, the Austrians requisitioned the large, imposing church of the Carmelite order (Roman Catholic). Later they reallocated it to the Greek Catholics, who eventually gave up their plans to build separately and transformed this handsome building into a Greek Catholic cathedral. In the later generations of the Habsburg Empire the Austrians made significant concessions to the Poles in Galicia, including virtually complete freedom in the realm of culture. The proportion of Roman Catholics in the population of the city of Przemyśl rose steadily in this period. At the same time the Austrians sought to balance concessions to an emerging Polish national identity by tacitly encouraging new political move-
ments among the Eastern Slavs of the province, notably the emerging nationalism that aspired to an independent Ukraine.

Przemyśl witnessed long sieges, suffering and starvation during the First World War, when the Russian czar paid a personal visit in the wake of his victorious army. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the re-emergence of a sovereign Polish state did not bring peace. Nor was there significant progress towards the creation of a culturally homogeneous modern state in Gellner’s sense. On the contrary, in the wake of Austrian ‘divide and rule’ strategies, Ukrainians proclaimed an independent republic of their own and in 1918–19 there was fierce fighting between Polish and Ukrainian forces. Attempts by Western diplomats in Paris to devise a new border, known as the Curzon line, which would have passed quite close to Przemyśl, went unheeded. The Poles triumphed militarily in Eastern Galicia and eventually (contrary to the express instructions of the League of Nations) divided up the main areas of Ukrainian habitation with the Soviet Union. This was the first outbreak of ethnic violence in Przemyśl, but it seems to have been critical for much of what followed later in the century. Polish nationalist groupings became extremely strong, and the city erected a monument to the ‘Young Eagles’ who had defeated the Ukrainian insurgents (the eagle is one of the oldest symbols of Polish national identity; see Mach 1992).

Approximately one-third of the population of the inter-war republic was not ethnically Polish. Government policies were summarised by a British commentator as follows:

the Poles ... treated the Ukrainian minority throughout the period after 1921 as unwisely as they themselves had been handled by Russian, Prussian or Austrian governments ... The result, of course, was no different in Poland from that in any other country. Persecution gave the Ukrainians the added consciousness and solidarity of a martyr group, and the severity of the Poles increased the insecurity of the south-eastern frontier of the republic. (Wanklyn 1941: 163-4)

The Polish state also intervened in ecclesiastical affairs: for example, it prompted the Vatican to create a separate 'Apostolic Administration' for the Carpathian mountain districts of the Przemyśl diocese, with the aim of containing the spread of Ukrainian consciousness by a strongly nationalist clergy. On the Ukrainian side, the failure of 1918–19 did not discourage nationalists from continuing to organise resistance. Their slogans from this period emphasised the need to cleanse Eastern Galicia as far as the River San of all ethnic Poles. During this period it became ever harder to maintain the diversity of the agrarian age: communities of Latin rite Ukrainians and Eastern rite Poles came under pressure to make their national choices. As usual, the power relations were more favourable to the Western side. The authorities sought for the most part to promote an inclusive view of the Polish nation that would allow, for example, Greek Catholics to hold Polish nationality. But popular opinion increasingly denied this possibility and

highly derogatory stereotypes of Ukrainians gained general currency. In Przemyśl, the ratio of Roman Catholics to Greek Catholics and Jews continued to increase steadily in favour of the former in the inter-war decades. Faced with these trends and attitudes, under the leadership of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, the Greek Catholic Church became even more firmly committed to the Ukrainian national cause.

Ethnic cleansing in the 1940s and socialist minorities policy

The legacy of the old antagonisms between Poles and Ukrainians in the inter-war decades was responsible, at least in part, for the willingness of many Eastern Slavs to fight in Nazi armies and to cooperate with occupying German forces during the Second World War. Between 1939 and 1941 the River San was the boundary between the zones of Nazi and Soviet occupation, and the German authorities on the west bank authorised the destruction of the monument to the ‘Young Eagles’ in Przemyśl. Much of the town was destroyed following the Nazi assault against the USSR in 1941. The elimination of the Jewish population was accomplished shortly afterwards. The Nazis did nothing to further Ukrainian hopes of establishing their own independent state. In the last years of the war, appalling violence was perpetrated against the civilians of the East Galician lands by all military parties. The activities of the Nazi and Soviet armies were increasingly overshadowed by the campaigns waged by Ukrainian nationalist forces, which were explicitly ideologised in terms of ethnic cleansing (for a Polish account see Piotrowski 1994). Polish 'partisans' were hardly less fierce in their responses. When these lands were finally 'liberated' by the Red Army, it soon became obvious that the great majority of pre-war Poland's Ukrainian population would now be outside the borders newly demarcated by Stalin. The frontier now followed the Curzon line, originally drawn up in very confused circumstances by British diplomats in 1920. It was also obvious that many Ukrainians in Przemyśl, now just a few miles inside Polish borders, could expect retribution from Poles for their wartime activities. Accordingly, the remaining phases of ethnic cleansing in Przemyśl and its hinterland impacted mainly upon the Greek Catholic (Ukrainian) population.

The first phase was the spontaneous, 'voluntary' population movement that accompanied the final phases of the war. As the front passed the city there were many scores to settle and members of the Ukrainian minority in the city who had been influential in its government during the war had particular reason to flee. People speak of many acts of criminality on all sides. The next phase in the move towards the creation of more homogeneous populations within the newly demarcated borders was an exchange of populations agreed with the Soviet authorities in 1945. Following this agreement, several hundred thousand Eastern Slavs, historically citizens of
the Polish state, were uprooted and resettled, often in very difficult circumstances, in the Ukraine. Even larger numbers of ethnic Poles were moved in the other direction, in circumstances no less traumatic. Most of these went to the territories which the new Polish state acquired from Germany, though significant numbers ended up elsewhere, including Przemyśl.

These massive involuntary migrations did not bring peace: as after the First World War, some groups maintained their appetite for violence. In the Boiko and Lemko districts of the Carpathian mountains, guerrilla fighting continued during the years 1945–47 as the ‘terrorist’ organisation UPA maintained its struggle for an independent Ukrainian state. After the assassination of General Karol Święcicki by members of this group, in April 1947 the Polish authorities implemented a drastic plan to put an end to the skirmishing. Alleging that the Boiko and Lemko villagers were giving support to the terrorists, virtually the entire remaining indigenous population was transferred to the former German lands at the other end of the Polish state. This resettlement was carried out without the random violence that characterised the excesses of the war years and the aftermath of the front. However, it was clearly calculated to destroy the integrity of these East Slav groups, and qualifies on this basis as a form of ethnic cleansing. A decree forbade the migrants to remain together in their new lands: no more than three families were permitted to move to the same settlement. In other words, these deportees were bound to be outnumbered by other migrants, mainly Roman Catholic Poles from the lands that had been incorporated into the Soviet Union, who were strongly anti-Ukrainian.

The controversy surrounding ‘Operation Vistula’, as the military action of 1947 was called, has increased in recent years as it has become possible openly to write about the events (Misila 1993). Poles have been taught to view the operation as a military necessity to guarantee the territorial integrity of their new state. Many Ukrainians, on the other hand, have always seen it as a deliberate attempt to break up the major remaining area of Ukrainian habitation within the new Polish state borders. They point out that, since UPA was not at all active in the more westerly Lemko districts, terrorist complicity cannot be a valid justification for the evacuation of these Lemkos. Some Ukrainians I have spoken with allege that the death of General Święcicki was actually perpetrated by the Poles themselves, to create the pretext for ‘Operation Vistula’.

Over the following four decades the socialist state pursued a minorities policy which, although it allowed small numbers of East Slavs to return to their Carpathian homelands from the late 1950s onwards, did little to prevent the steady assimilation of scattered Ukrainian communities into mainstream Polish society. This policy supported a single national Ukrainian Cultural Association, which sponsored a choir in Warsaw and published a weekly newspaper to which the Ukrainians in cities such as Przemyśl could subscribe. It did not grant any official recognition to distinct groups within the Ukrainian minority, and the policy was therefore particularly unpopular with those Lemkos (mainly from the most westerly district) who had never accepted Ukrainian national identity. In other respects, however, socialist policies promoted divisions within the minority. This was particularly evident in the realm of religion. The Greek Catholic church was not officially recognised by the state after 1946, following its liquidation by Stalin in the Soviet Union. The property of this church was confiscated by the state and, following the deportations of 1947, many valuable buildings were destroyed (Iwanusiw 1987). Greek Catholics were allowed to practise their faith under the umbrella of Roman Catholic parishes in a small number of settlements, but state support was confined to the Orthodox church, to which some of the former Greek Catholic properties were transferred. In this way the Polish socialist state promoted internal divisions within its largest East Slav minority, just as its predecessor had in the inter-war decades.

Following the massive population transfers, and with a single dominant political party facilitating manipulation of the media and the education system, a quite close approximation to Gellner’s ideal-type, the culturally homogenous national society, emerged during the socialist period – or so it seemed. Whereas roughly one-third of the population of the inter-war republic had been non-Polish, by the 1970s the proportion was officially only 1.3 per cent (Poland, 1977: 137). At the same time the new state, located roughly some 150 miles to the west of its predecessor and including many ‘developed’ districts formerly belonging to Germany, attempted to build up an industrial economy and a modern administrative system.

Przemyśl was not initially selected as an administrative centre, and its population grew less dynamically than that of Rzeszów, which was also the chosen location for new higher education facilities in the region. Its cultural heritage was recognised through the application of conservation orders throughout the central area, but even after Przemyśl itself became a county centre in 1975, it was unable to attract much funding for tourism or other development purposes. Nevertheless, in spite of its overwhelmingly agricultural environment, the city did develop an industrial base sufficient to ensure full employment. It attracted large numbers of ‘worker-peasants’, and also permanent migrants from the rural hinterland. Economic links with the neighbouring Soviet Ukrainian republic were minimal; even visits to relatives were difficult to organise and consequently rare.

Both in the rural hinterland and in the city of Przemyśl, Roman Catholics have become virtually hegemonic. Many of those who did not belong to this category unambiguously by birth endeavoured to pass as Poles. Mixed families would forget their East Slav ancestors. Even families with strong Ukrainian traditions on both sides, numbering at most a few thousand, ceased to use the Ukrainian language or to teach it to their children. The long-serving president of the local branch of the Ukrainian Cultural Society was a well-respected doctor, but even he changed his
Przemyśl was the centre of an Orthodox diocese long before it became the centre of a Roman Catholic diocese, and also that some of the building materials used for the Carmelites' church came from the site of an earlier cathedral of theirs. In their view, the transfer of ecclesiastical authority by the Habsburgs was totally legal and legitimate. Had there been any doubt about this, they would not have given up their plans in the mid-nineteenth century to erect an entirely new Greek Catholic cathedral. The Ukrainians therefore accuse the Roman Catholics of seeking to profit from the malign intervention of the communists.

The conflicts surrounding this church have not died down since 1991, for externally it still retains some visible signs of its history. In 1994 the Polish nationalists sought to alter the exterior of the Carmelite church by removing the tower and cupola that were added by the Greek Catholics in the nineteenth century. The country's conservation officer (a Pole) initially approved this plan and the crown of the cupola was dismantled. He then retracted his approval, to the fury of the nationalists in the city, who promptly sought his dismissal. They campaigned in the local press and presented evidence to the ministerial authorities in Warsaw alleging that, in allocating the greater part of his budget to the preservation of Ukrainian religious buildings, the conservation office was wilfully neglecting the region's Polish heritage. The officer was dismissed and though his successor has yet to give a green light to the further dismembering of the Carmelite church, his position is not an enviable one. The massive belltower which stands adjacent to the church is the next likely target for the nationalists because of the conspicuous Cyrillic inscriptions plainly visible on the bells. Meanwhile, the Greek Catholic church is nowadays officially referred to as the Byzantine Ukrainian church. This is an accurate indication of the national orientation of most members of this church, at least since the days of Metropolitan Andrew, but most people still speak of 'Greek Catholics'. This change of name seems to be deliberately intended to distance them further from Poland's Catholic tradition. Both in the city itself and in other parts of the diocese, Roman Catholic clergy have been prominent in the campaigns to quash any possible revival of Ukrainian culture.

This affair has been settled, at least provisionally, by appeal to the state in Warsaw. Yet in the crucial sphere of the economy, it is quite clear that the state is no longer able to exercise the degree of control it maintained during the decades of socialism. The post-communist government embarked almost at once upon a radical market-oriented economic programme, associated with the Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs and widely known as 'shock therapy'. This very quickly led to high levels of unemployment, as irrational socialist production systems were closed down. However there was a compensatory expansion in other sectors of the economy, particularly in the expansion of every sort of small-scale commerce. In the case of Przemyśl, from 1991 onwards there has been a massive increase in petty trading. Ukrainians are now able to cross the

Curzon line easily, and have a highly visible presence in the city which is their most convenient market centre. (Rather smaller numbers of Poles have taken advantage of the more relaxed political situation to travel and trade in the other direction.) Visiting Ukrainians sell goods cheaply for the convertible currency which they need at home. Most come from Lemberg (Lviv) and adjacent areas of Western Ukraine, but some come from much further afield (there is a direct train service to Odessa). It is said locally that the central bazaar in Przemyśl, which has expanded to take over the football field next door, is the largest in the country after Warsaw. Ukrainian customers have provided local Poles with opportunities to sell a wide variety of merchandise, generating significant incomes for all concerned. In spite of the discomforts and sordid character of a great deal of this activity, everyone in Przemyśl is aware of the economic benefits. Given the disintegration of the old national economy, they know that they have little alternative but to exploit their convenient location for the Ukrainian market. None of the nationalist groupings has called for action to curtail this trade, even though it is responsible for a very large Ukrainian presence in the town.

Evidently in the post-communist conditions there is much greater contact with Ukrainians than before. Once again Ukrainians have a visibility in the town, the difference being that they no longer live there but arrive by train and coach to trade (some of them are renting temporary accommodation; but more seem to sleep on their coaches or at the municipal camp-site; not even those who can claim that they lived in the city before 1945 and were never compensated for the appropriation of their property have any right to settle permanently). But it is also clear that on-going processes of economic cooperation do not inhibit the continued assertion of derogatory stereotypes about the Ukrainian nation. Indeed, it seems likely that the squalid character of much of the trade, which includes a thriving prostitution business, and the shoddy quality of most of the goods brought from the East, reinforce such stereotypes. At the same time, amidst all the daily poverty the highly exceptional instance of a Western car with Ukrainian plates will attract even greater opprobrium, and disparaging remarks about corruption and the mafia.

Nationalist pressure groups are continuing to exploit this situation, and to legitimate their activities in terms of the paramount need to prevent what they see as a resurgence of Ukrainian influence in a historically Polish town. In 1995 they were prominent once again, this time in a noisy campaign to oppose any commemoration on Polish soil of the Ukrainians who died fighting for UPA in the 1940s. The construction of monuments to 'martyrs' and the organisation of reburials have created sharp controversy. Polish nationalists have responded to 'provocations' by insisting that state law prohibits the commemoration of enemy dead. But for Ukrainians (as for many other peoples, cf. Weingrod 1995) the bones of dead heroes have a special emotional force. The campaigns to honour such men publicly are
continuing, and Greek Catholic priests have been prominent in a number of the ceremonies that have already been held.

The Ukrainian activists who wish to dig up cemeteries are probably unrepresentative of the minority group, just as the Polish nationalists are hardly representative of the 70,000 population of Przemyśl. Some local families have taken advantage of new opportunities in recent years to renew kin links in Ukraine, and commercial gain is not the sole motivating factor. There are more grounds for optimism if one looks at the younger generation of Poles, who do not seem to hold such negative views concerning Ukrainians, or to be very much interested in how Polish–Ukrainian relations are unfolding, nationally or locally (for more detail of this recent history and an evaluation of current minority needs in this region, see Fenczak and Gąsiorowska-Czarny 1995). Further investigation might reveal that nationalist rhetoric is limited in its appeal, and the emergence, at least among the young, of some ‘post-modern’ fragmentation of identities. The aggressive head of the Young Eagles did not even run in the local elections of 1994, presumably because he knew he would not win election. However, groups such as his, are, for the time being, still exercising disproportionate influence behind the scenes. They are maintaining noisy polemics in the local press (particularly a right-wing weekly that is supported by a municipal subsidy). In 1995 they were instrumental in opposing the organisation of a Ukrainian cultural festival in Przemyśl, through vicious poster campaigns and an arson attack on the Ukrainian club. In a climate of continued economic uncertainty and high rates of unemployment, it is not difficult to persuade people that public funds should not be allocated to such festivals, or to support other minority needs such as educational provision. In sum, the collapse of the old national economy and its partial compensation by the new pattern of petty trading are also significant factors in understanding the intensified invocations of Polishness by extremist factions which are exploiting the new possibilities for political organisation in order to poison inter-ethnic relations.

Discussion

The evidence from Przemyśl allows us to assess the consequences of past ethnic violence, and to address questions like ‘Does ethnic cleansing work?’ The genocide, expulsions and evacuations of the 1940s produced a radical change in the ethnic, religious and linguistic composition of the Przemyśl region of the new Polish state. This was the most dramatic stage of the overall transformation which made socialist Poland one of the most homogenous ‘nation-states’ in Europe, in stark contrast to the pre-socialist republic.

But the cleansing has not worked: the minority identities have survived, both in the city and in the rural hinterland. Although the numbers may now be minuscule, this has done little to weaken the force of the Polish nationalists’ attacks. There is no reason to suppose that even the total elimination of Ukrainians in this corner of Poland would have been enough to avert these attacks. The case of the Jews shows that a group can remain the object of ethnic-sectarian hatred even after the entire population has been eliminated, together with the great bulk of material traces of their culture (the ‘phantom limb’ effect). Clearly the explanations cannot be sought in any objective assessment of a group’s strength. What then is the explanation for the ability of small groups to manipulate ethnic passion?

The most obvious explanation is the argument that people seek scapegoats in uncertain and unstable social and economic conditions. It is beyond the scope of this article to enquire into how far such factors might explain the rise of ethnic tensions in the later Habsburg period and in the inter-war decades. What is clear in Przemyśl today is that the leading members of the nationalist groupings tend to be older men, many of whom have been relocated from Ukraine, with memories and family traditions that invoke the violent conflicts which took place earlier this century. For decades these antagonisms were overshadowed by the question of communist rule: the main enemy was the communist government, all blame could be directed there. But in the wake of communist collapse and faced with new kinds of existential threat, it is necessary to identify a new ‘Other’ (cf. Verderby 1992). The old antagonisms provide a store of potent images for skilful politicians to manipulate. Nationalist groups have been successful in mobilising some people around symbols such as the Carmelites’ church in Przemyśl and the graves of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the national cause. However, so far there is little evidence in this region that they are capable of mobilising larger numbers of citizens.

Seen from a long-term historical perspective, the creation of nation-states in Poland and Ukraine has been riddled with many of the same types of conflict, often violent, as can be found in other parts of Europe in the transition from agrarian imperial polities to modern, culturally homogenous sovereign states. However, this material does not lend support to blanket contrasts between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ variants of nationalism. Such distinctions were common in earlier generations, and it was perhaps inevitable that the increased visibility of ethnicity and nationalism following the demise of communism should have led to a revival of such views. But, like Gellner’s distinction between Western European and ‘Ruritian’ nationalism, these are useful only as ideal types. The Polish and Ukrainian cases show that elements of both types have existed in eastern regions of Europe. There is some irony in the fact that today’s Ukraine, with its huge Russian minority, has been obliged to move closer to the ‘civic’ model of national identity, usually associated with the West, while ‘ethnic’ thinking has become entrenched in the nowadays much more homogenous Polish ‘nation-state’.

Some of the patterns evident in the Polish–Ukrainian materials, including
the complex roles played by religious affiliations, can also be found in the diverse experiences of ethnicity and nationalism in Western regions of Europe (Irish, Basques, Catalans etc.). They may bear a closer resemblance to the patterns which can be found in several other parts of ex-communist Eastern Europe, but for several reasons the consequences are unlikely to escalate to anything approaching the situation in former Yugoslavia. First, Polish–Ukrainian relations are too important strategically to both countries for their governments to allow a slide into ethnic conflict (cf. Brzezinski 1993). Second, for millions of Poles, Ukraine is in the current situation a welcome vehicle of economic opportunity. Third, a still more decisive factor here is the absence of any realistic opportunity for Poles to open up the question of frontier revision and territorial claim: everyone is only too well aware that the moment they assert territorial claims against their eastern neighbour, they have no answer to German claims on large areas of territory that they obtained in 1945. For reasons of Realpolitik, the sharp boundaries of Gellner’s modern nation-state look likely to remain permanent, even though these boundaries have suddenly become much more permeable and porous than before.

Gellner’s analysis of the contrast between the organisational requirements of agrarian and industrial society is helpful in grasping the transformations of the Przemyśl region. The processes of nation-building in the modern sense were the work of the nineteenth century and are essentially similar. Poland’s long history of statehood and ‘high culture’ has given her some comparative advantages, but until the communist period did Poland approximate to Gellner’s model of the modern state, in which a standardised literary language and educational system became fully congruent with the political unit and a nationally integrated economy. If these are indeed the basic conditions of modernity, Ukraine is still a long way from meeting them and continues to experience economic chaos far worse than anything experienced in Poland under communism.

Gellner’s model is very abstract and, as we have seen, of little help at the micro level. It cannot explain, for example, why Andrew (Roman) Sheptytsky became a celebrated Greek Catholic hierarch, closely identified with the Ukrainian cause, while his brother Stanislaw was a Roman Catholic who became a general in the Polish army. The model is unhelpful in specifying the actual social agents of nationalism, and pays little attention to its symbols and meanings. Yet Gellner is surely right to emphasise its fundamentally modern character. Other scholars (e.g. Smith 1991) have shed valuable comparative light on the importance of religion and warfare for the genesis and long-term persistence of ethnic and national identities. In both Poland and Ukraine, comparatively small groups of nationalists have taken advantage of post-communist uncertainties to revive ethnic hatreds that have their roots in the past. However, this past is essentially post-1918 and therefore comparatively recent. Only the religious basis of group difference is really ancient, and this, too, has been complicated by the formation of the Greek Catholic church in the early modern period.

Finally, we may note that in an important sense the ethnic cleansing that was attempted here may have been counterproductive from the point of view of those who implemented Operation Vistula in 1947 (assuming that they were, at least in part, motivated by a desire to see a Poland ‘purified’ of all traces of Eastern culture). It can reasonably be argued that the forcible evacuations of the 1940s may actually have hindered, rather than facilitated, the assimilation of Ukrainians into the Polish mainstream. In the contiguous districts of East Slav settlement in Eastern Slovakia, the Ukrainians (Ruthenians) were not deported in the 1940s. The Greek Catholic church was legalized here as early as 1968. However, during the communist period (in spite of the usual socialist provisions safeguarding the rights of the minority culture) they followed a steady course of assimilation, much as Gellner’s model would predict (cf. Magocsi 1983). In Poland, in contrast, it may plausibly be argued that the injustices of ‘Operation Vistula’ in 1947 have strengthened an awareness of differences and impeded assimilation – whatever the official statistics might indicate. Comparisons can be drawn with Poland’s German minority. Apparently tiny during the socialist period, it would now appear to number several hundreds of thousands. No doubt for some people the admission of German nationality has economic attractions, but this recent resurgence may also indicate that Poland’s homogenisation project, with its exaggerated inculcation of national consciousness and nationalist representations of the past, has served to heighten rather than to diminish the force of a non-Polish cultural identity.

The rhetoric of Polish nationalism continues to draw heavily on the events of the Second World War, the heroism of Polish soldiers in battles such as Monte Cassino, and of Polish civilians in tragic moments such as the Warsaw Uprising. These were prominently commemorated in the early 1990s, and they are much more conspicuous in the new history books than in the old socialist volumes. Poles have become used to a feeling of pride and self-righteousness about their conduct as a nation during this period: for example, they have become accustomed to receiving apologies, as a nation, not only from the Germans but also from the Russians for atrocities such as Katyn. This ‘essentialised’ world of national apologies and reconciliation is another aspect of Gellner’s homogenised modernity. In the Polish case, comparatively few ethnic Poles seem able or willing to ‘deconstruct’ this nation-state etiquette. They do not see themselves as in any way responsible for the disappearance of large cultural groups that were a conspicuous feature of the pre-war polity. However, regardless of the complexities of the earlier deportations and violence, responsibility for the ethnic cleansing of Poland’s Ukrainians in 1947 does lie unambiguously with the Polish authorities. To acknowledge that injustice after almost half a century is difficult, and would infuriate the nationalists in Przemyśl, but it would be a major step towards a more tolerant, multicultural society in Poland.
Symposium on David Miller’s

On Nationality

edited by BRENDAN O’LEARY*

The publication of David Miller’s On Nationality provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on what political philosophy can bring to the subject-matter of this journal, nations and nationalism, a field in which ethicists and political philosophers have rarely tread, and when they have it has usually been to express analytical contempt, their professional vice. On Nationality makes a refreshing contrast to most previous writings within Anglophone political theory, being at once sympathetic towards nationality, yet guarded in its liberal reasoning. Below, David Miller first presents readers with a précis of the core arguments of his defence of liberal nationalism, though readers are advised to consult the text of the book for Miller’s fully fledged case.

It is on the full book that our reviewers focus their attention, and there are five of them. The first three responses are by the political theorists Margaret Moore, Brian Barry and Kelvin Knight. They display varying degrees of sympathy for Miller’s intentions. Moore highlights the tensions between Miller’s intrinsic and instrumental justifications of nationalism, and their contradictory implications for national self-determination. Barry suggests that Miller’s argument is fatally compromised by its apparent abandonment of ethical universalism, although he regards with equanimity the British prescriptions that Miller derives. Knight maintains that Miller does not resolve the tension between his commitment to liberal nationalism and communitarian socialism and the nature of the bureaucratic, hierarchical state of modernity. The last two reviews are by political scientists with interests in political philosophy, James Kellas and Brendan O’Leary. Kellas highlights the domestic provenance of Miller’s arguments, and questions Miller’s political judgements in a range of specific ethno-national conflicts, while O’Leary criticises Miller for being insufficiently liberal and nationalist in his logic and prescriptions.

The reviewers between them represent a range of national, ethnic and religious backgrounds (inter alia Canadian, Quebecois, British, English, Scottish, Irish, Anglican, Protestant, Catholic, atheist), but their responses

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