



Reply

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REPLY

BY IVAN L. RUDNYTSKY

I am grateful to the commentators for their thoughtful consideration. Professor Adams compliments me for my "courageous assessment of the insignificance of the Ukraine as a political entity prior to 1917." I am appreciative of the compliment, but I am sorry to say that it is based on a misapprehension of my point of view. As the problem is a historically important one, I will try to restate my argument.

The strength of a political movement must be measured in relative terms, taking into account specific circumstances. If one uses Western standards, all nongovernmental, societal political forces in nineteenth-century Russia may easily give the impression of being "insignificant." This refers not only to Ukrainian nationalism but also to Russian revolutionary and oppositionist movements, all of which had a narrow stratum of active supporters. This was the outcome of a system in which a despotic, hypertrophic state faced an atrophied, politically inarticulate, and cowed society. The outward expressions of the pre-1917 Ukrainian national movement may have been modest, and the number of persons actively engaged in it limited. Still, its strength should not be underestimated by a historian. Its vitality was proven by the fact that it survived systematic repression by a powerful state; and it always bore within itself the potential for a radical transformation of the political structure of Eastern Europe as a whole.

Perceptive contemporary observers were able to assess the political significance of the Ukrainian problem. Here are the comments of a German traveler, Johann Georg Kohl, who visited the Ukraine in the 1830's:

Such is the aversion of the people of Little to those of Great Russia that it may fairly be described as a national hatred, and the feeling has rather strengthened than diminished since the seventeenth century, when the country was annexed to the Moscovite empire. . . . Before their subjection, all the Malorossians were freemen, and serfdom, they maintain, had never been known among them. It was the Russians, they say, that reduced one-half of the people to slavery. During the first century after the union, Little Russia continued to have her own hetmans, and retained much of her ancient constitution and privileges, but all these have been swept away by the retrograde reforms of the last and present century. . . . To this day, the battle of Poltava is remembered throughout Little Russia with feelings similar to those with which the battle of the White Mountain is remembered in Bohemia. . . . Should the colossal empire of Russia one day fall to pieces, there

is little doubt but the Malorossians will form a separate state. They have their own language, their own historical recollections, seldom mingle with their Moscovite rulers, and are in number already more than 10,000,000.¹

It is noteworthy that these striking observations and predictions were made before the emergence of modern Ukrainian nationalism as an organized movement. The following excerpts are from a report which the Austrian consul in Kiev, Eduard Sedlaczek, submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna in 1893:

The Little Russian national movement continues to grow, although the greatest caution is being observed. . . . I know personally many a civil servant and teacher whose attitude in office is regarded as blameless who, however, in an intimate circle betrays a frame of mind far from friendly toward the government. . . . The present time is characterized by a substantial increase in studies on Little Russian history and ethnography, published in Russian. This is the natural outcome of censorship, which deals severely with Little Russian publications. . . . These [informal] groups, which are spread throughout the entire country, have a purely literary and scholarly outlook, and so offer nothing palpable to the police, but in fact they serve to strengthen the Little Russian patriotic awareness.²

This report illustrates the condition of the Ukrainian movement during the era of reaction. To obtain a notion of the impressive progress it was able to achieve in the subsequent twenty years, there is no better witness than S. N. Shchegolev, a member of the Russian Black Hundred. He was the author of a thick work on Ukrainian nationalism, published in 1912, which has been called "a handbook for the police."³ Regardless of the author's tendency and purpose, the book is rich in factual information drawn from the contemporary press. The reader gets the distinct impression that all of "South Russia" was, on the eve of the First World War, honeycombed by the activities, overt or covert, of the Ukrainian national movement. The study of Shchegolev's work reveals the deep roots out of which blossomed the Ukrainian "miracle" of 1917; it also shows the erroneousness of the view of Professor Adams, according to whom the Ukrainian revolutionary parliament, the Central Rada, was "a tiny and isolated group of nationalist intellectuals." In reality the Rada was the crest of a powerful mass

¹ J. G. Kohl, *Russia: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkoff, Riga, Odessa, the German Provinces of the Baltic, the Steppes, the Crimea, and the Interior of the Empire* (London, 1844), pp. 527-29.

² The report of Eduard Sedlaczek, drawn from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, has been published by Dmytro Doroshenko. See Дмитро Дорошенко, «Український рух 1890-их рр. в освітленні австрійського консула в Києві,» *З минулого: Збірник, т. I* (Праці Українського Наукового Інституту, т. 48) (Warsaw, 1938), pp. 59-70. The passages quoted are on pp. 63-65.

³ С. Н. Щеголевъ, *Українское движение какъ современный этапъ южнорусскаго сепаратизма* (Kiev, 1912).

movement.⁴ The Rada's main problem and difficulty was not lack of popular support, as Professor Adams implies, but, quite to the contrary, the inadequacy of leadership: the national elite was neither numerous enough nor sufficiently experienced politically to master the spontaneous rising of the masses and to grasp power firmly in a large country under complicated and trying internal and international conditions.

In writing my paper, I deliberately limited myself to the prerevolutionary epoch. Professor Adams' contribution, however, is mainly devoted to the Revolution of 1917-21. This puts me in an awkward position. I lack space to offer a concerted discussion of the history of the Ukrainian Revolution, while, at the same time, I cannot leave some of Professor Adams' statements unchallenged.

Professor Adams' conception of the Ukrainian Revolution is basically one of a wild and chaotic peasant revolt, of a *jacquerie*. This picture, which may have been induced by his scholarly interest in the Makhno movement of the Southern Ukraine, is an extremely one-sided one, almost to the point of caricature. I do not think of denying the existence of those "anarchistic" features, but they were not the dominant ones in the history of the Ukrainian Revolution.

Let us, for instance, refer to the conservative regime of 1918, headed by Hetman Paul Skoropadsky. According to Professor Adams, Skoropadsky was simply a "puppet of the Germans." I contend that this view is a gross oversimplification. General Skoropadsky, a scion of a family distinguished in Ukrainian annals, returned during the Revolution to the service of his homeland, in very much the same manner as his former comrade-in-arms, General Mannerheim, returned to the service of Finland. Skoropadsky played an important role in the events of 1917 in the Ukraine, long before the coming of the Germans. It is true that the hetmanate of 1918 needed German protection for its survival, but it also found support among the conservative and moderate Ukrainians.⁵

⁴ A test of strength of the Ukrainian movement was the election to the Russian Constituent Assembly in the late fall of 1917. "The five million votes obtained in the clear by the various Ukrainian lists constitute an impressive showing from any point of view, and must be augmented by at least another half million votes as the Ukrainian share of the joint lists agreed upon with other parties. . . . In the face of such a clear-cut demonstration of strength, it is simply not possible to contend that the Ukrainian movement was a weak and artificial thing, concocted by a group of hyper-nationalistic intellectuals." Oliver Henry Radkey, *The Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 18 and 30. The validity of this test has been explicitly recognized by Lenin himself. Rosa Luxemburg, like Professor Adams, believed that the Central Rada was without a mass basis, and she criticized Lenin for the "coddling" of Ukrainian nationalism. In justifying his policy Lenin referred to the results of the election to the Constituent Assembly as a proof that the Ukrainian movement was a force to be reckoned with. It is to be noted that in the eight provinces of the Ukraine the Bolsheviks obtained only 10 per cent of votes. Cf. Juriij Borys, *The Russian Communist Party and the Sovietization of Ukraine* (Stockholm, 1960), pp. 159-60.

⁵ The background of the Skoropadsky coup has been recently studied by Oleh S. Fedyshyn from German archival sources. It appears that Skoropadsky was not hand-picked

During its short duration, the hetmanate could show a number of creditable achievements, including the foundation of two Ukrainian-language universities, in Kiev and Kamenets-Podolsk, and of an Academy of Sciences, of which the present Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR is a lineal continuation. Skoropadsky's political life did not end with the fall of the hetmanate. Actually, he gained moral stature during the years of exile, and a considerable segment of the Ukrainian community outside the borders of the USSR continued to look upon him, during the interwar period, as the legitimate pretender to the Ukraine's throne. All this is not intended as an apologia for Skoropadsky or the regime headed by him in 1918, but is meant as a warning against simplistic clichés in the treatment of the history of the Ukrainian Revolution.

The failure of the Ukrainian Revolution is obvious: it did not succeed in giving permanence to an independent, democratic national state. A perceptive student, however, whose vision is not limited to success and failure, might feel the obligation to weigh the causes of this failure and to try to discern what, in spite of defeat, the permanent achievements of the Ukrainian Revolution have been.

Among the new nations emerging in Eastern Europe at the end of World War I none had greater handicaps than the Ukraine. The country's normal development had been warped and retarded by the dead hand of Russian tsarism. There was, in 1917, a staggering backlog of unfulfilled tasks, which had to be shouldered all at once, whereas other stateless nations had been able to solve these preliminary problems gradually, over decades. For instance, there did not exist in old Russia one single school with Ukrainian as the language of instruction. The Ukraine was faced simultaneously with the task of creating a network of elementary schools and of forming an independent government, an army, and a diplomatic service. One may also add that imperial Russia, in whose shadow the majority of the Ukrainian people had lived for such a long time, was a very poor training place for self-government and civic maturity. There was a standing joke in Ukrainian circles: "Why won't Britain annex us as a colony? Then we would be ready for independence in ten years." The social tensions in the country were acute. In the Ukraine, in contrast with Great Russia, the movement of social protest did not flow in orthodox Bolshevik channels; still, it offered a favorable ground for subversive propaganda coming from Moscow, and it impeded the consolidation of the democratic Ukrainian People's Republic.

by the Germans. The right-wing conspiracy against the socialistic Rada government was formed by Skoropadsky on his own initiative. German military authorities arrived independently at a decision to get rid of the "uncooperative" Central Rada. The two parties reached an agreement only a few days before the coup of April 29, 1918. See Oleh S. Fedyshyn, "German Plans and Policies in the Ukraine, 1917-1918" (unpubl. doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1962).

Internationally, the Ukraine had first to shoulder, in 1917, the unwelcome heritage of the war against the Central Powers, then, in 1918, the burden of the German occupation, and finally, in 1919, to face the lack of recognition and the political hostility of the victorious Entente. Isolated and deprived of any outside support, the Ukraine had to sustain a war on three fronts: against Soviet Russia, against the White Army of General Denikin, and against Poland. The Polish-Ukrainian struggle merits a special mention, as it is usually overlooked by Western historians, who approach the Ukrainian Revolution as a part of the Russian Civil War. The Polish-Ukrainian conflict was by no means a local affair affecting Galicia only; it exercised a fateful impact on the whole development of the Ukrainian cause. Galicia was the section of the Ukraine with the highest level of national consciousness. In civic discipline and public order the territory compared favorably with all the other East European countries of that time, and the population was impervious to Communist propaganda. It was the intention of the Ukrainian leaders to use Galicia as the stronghold and the base in the struggle against Soviet Russia. This was prevented by the Polish attack, which diverted the best Ukrainian forces from the anti-Bolshevik front in the critical months of the winter and spring of 1919. On the other hand, the political obtuseness and rigid centralism of the White Army prevented the coalition of all anti-Communist forces. Despite these tragic circumstances, the Ukraine offered a stubborn, protracted resistance and kept on fighting. Viewed in this light, even "peasant anarchism," by which Professor Adams has been so impressed, may be understood as an elemental groping of the Ukrainian masses after liberty, independence, and a just social order.

Professor Adams is right in stressing that Ukrainian patriots also worked in the Soviet camp. Nevertheless, the Soviet regime occupies a very different place in Russian and Ukrainian history. In Russia, the victory of the Bolsheviks was over their internal opponents; Soviet Russia is, for better or worse, the legitimate heir of the traditional Russian state. The position of the Ukraine is, in this respect, analogous rather with that of the "people's democracies" established after World War II. The Soviet regime was imposed on the country from the outside; the weak local Communists (among whom ethnic Ukrainians formed only a minority) would never have been able to secure power in the Ukraine without outside intervention. The "Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic" represents a compromise between the fact of Russian domination and those conquests of the Ukrainian Revolution which could no longer be obliterated. It speaks for the farsightedness and political flexibility of Lenin that he, modifying his original centralistic program, perceived the necessity of neutralizing the forces of Ukrainian nationalism by appropriate concessions.

The permanent achievements of the Ukrainian Revolution were,

first, a profound "mutation" of the collective mind of the Ukrainian people, their crystallization into a modern nation, and, second, a shift in the international power structure of the eastern half of the continent. "The East European upheavals of 1917-20 have led to three great results: the victory of Bolshevism, which entered into the historical inheritance of Muscovy-Russia, the re-establishment of Poland, and the re-emergence of the Ukraine as the third great force of the East European area, alongside Great Russia and Poland."⁶ It is noteworthy, for instance, that the changes which took place in Eastern Europe after the Second World War represent not only an expansion of Moscow's imperial sphere, but also the fulfillment of the territorial program which the Ukrainian movement advocated for generations: the consolidation of all lands of Ukrainian speech in one Ukrainian body politic. This, in turn, has brought a shift in the balance of forces between the Ukraine and Russia, whose full impact only the future will be able to tell.

Professor Adams informs us that he has "often clashed with Ukrainian nationalist scholars," and he complains that "nationalistic dross has long hampered effective investigation in this area" of modern Ukrainian history. Professor Adams graciously exempts me from this criticism, but I cannot help feeling that his complaints are out of place. Ukrainian scholars in Western lands are few, and there is little danger that they will be able to "brainwash" anyone. As far as modern Ukrainian history is concerned, it is difficult to see what "nationalistic dross" has impeded its study. Is it not rather true that Ukrainian history, modern or old, has not yet been discovered as a separate area of studies by Western scholars, and is treated, if at all, only incidentally, on the margin of Russian history? The expression "nationalist scholars," as used by Professor Adams, implies a judgment of value. I have not heard that a historian of Russian background, working in the United States, has been ever labeled "nationalistic," even if he displays obvious symptoms of Russian patriotic fervor. Why this difference in treatment? The answer, I think, is that views and interpretations traditionally expounded by Russian scholarship have received wide currency and are given credence, without questioning of their premises. Conceptions which run counter to this orthodoxy are not weighed for their scholarly validity but are automatically ruled out of court as allegedly biased and "nationalistic." I do not, of course, expect that views defended by Ukrainian historiography should be accepted uncritically; but they merit a proper hearing.

A great Russian statesman, Sergius Witte, once said:

We have not yet fully realized that since the times of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great there has been no Russia, but a Russian Empire. If some 35 per cent of the population are ethnic minorities, and the Russians

⁶ W. Kutschabsky, *Die Westukraine im Kampfe mit Polen und dem Bolschewismus in den Jahren 1918-1923* (Berlin, 1934), p. 1.

are divided into Great Russians, Little Russians, and Belorussians, it is impossible to conduct in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a policy which disregards this historical fact of capital importance, which disregards the national traits of the other nationalities, composing the Russian Empire, their religion, language, etc.⁷

The “historical fact of capital importance” stressed by Witte nearly half a century ago has even now not been fully digested by many American scholars in the field of East European and Slavic studies. The history of “Russia” is usually approached as one of an essentially homogeneous area rather than one of a multinational empire, comparable, in this respect, to the former Ottoman and Austrian empires. This results, I believe, in a one-sided and inadequate understanding of the East European historical process. To correct this would require a profound revision of the traditional historical perspectives, and this is opposed by the great force of intellectual inertia. “Nationalist historians,” of whom Professor Adams complains, may be given credit for performing a useful function—that of gadflies, who awaken sluggish thought from its dogmatic slumber.

The commentary of Professors Pritsak and Reshetar raises many questions, particularly that of the classification of the Ukraine as Eastern or Western, and that of historicity and nonhistoricity. On the first point, I am inclined to agree with Oscar Halecki that the Ukraine is Eastern *and* European; the second question was treated in the article. These, and other issues raised by Professors Pritsak and Reshetar, are worth substantial debate at some time, but further comment does not seem appropriate in an article on the modern Ukraine. The reader of the commentary will see that there are many interesting topics for discussion in the field of Ukrainian history, and I am appreciative of Professors Pritsak and Reshetar’s intensive study.

⁷ С. Ю. Витте, *Воспоминания*, III (Moscow, 1960), 274.